

“Girl You Better Apply to Teachers’ College”: The History of Black Women Educators
in Ontario, 1940s – 1980s

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Abstract:

“Girl You Better Apply to Teachers’ College” examines the role of black women educators in Ontario from the 1940s to the 1980s. In an attempt to contribute to historical analysis on black identity, citizenship and racial difference in Canada, this dissertation investigates the ways in which black Canadian women confronted and navigated socially constructed boundaries of racial alienation, limited institutional support and inequality within Ontario school systems.

In post-World War II Canada, black women’s experiences in the teaching profession served as sites of struggle and contestation in a myriad of ways. Their presence as racialized educators, though smaller in number, represented the various ways in which black women disrupted mainstream notions of education in Ontario and challenged Canadian nationhood more broadly. This dissertation project argues that black women teachers’ engagement with Ontario’s education system was comprised of a set of difficult, messy and complex processes; beginning with access to education, their ability to get into teachers’ college, the constant questioning of their professional status and the material realities that shaped their choices inside Ontario schools, black women teachers worked to prove their legitimacy and dedication to the vocation.

At a time when education was used to teach young pupils how to be ‘good moral citizens’, black women’s presence within these schooling institutions served to challenge the ways in which education was imparted and also revealed a system ill-equipped to deal with its changing student population. Largely using oral interviews, school board minutes, newspapers, yearbooks, and community records, “Girl You Better Apply to Teachers’ College” argues that black women educators’ sense of belonging in the

professional sphere circumvented subtle and overt forms of racial and social exclusion in Ontario schools. In an effort to locate themselves within the Canadian national narrative, black female educators navigated concepts of citizenship and created a new kind of belonging that was parallel to and, at times, intersected with concepts of Canadian statehood.

This dissertation is dedicated to the countless black women educators who forged a path of resistance in the face of difficult challenges. I stand on your shoulders and hold in my heart the deepest gratitude.

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God's gift to you, as you are to them." This could not be more true for the Aladejebi family. Every member of my family has walked this dissertation journey with me. They stayed up with me on the late evenings when I needed to finish my ideas, they felt the same pain and frustration I did when my drafts needed to be reworked, and they lifted my head up when I was too exhausted to see the completion of this work. Olujenyo, Funmilayo, Shola, Jenyo, Tolu and Dunning, thank you for believing in my capabilities, for praying with me when I felt lost and for guiding me in ways only you know how. I love you all and I hope you are proud of this work.

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Introduction:

***“The school was born out of sweat and tears”:* Locating Black Women Educators in Twentieth Century Canada**

We definitely want to nurture a sense of belonging and community, but we also want to make sure that our standards are very high — where students can read, write, speak, clearly and perform very well.¹

When Toronto’s Africentric Alternative School (AAS) first opened its doors on September 8, 2009, principal Thando Hyman-Aman described the optimism that she and other school staff members felt about the new school. Alongside staff members, teachers, parents and community leaders, Hyman-Aman was excited to explore and demonstrate the ways African-centred approach to schooling could combat disproportionately high dropout rates among black students in Toronto schools. Adamant that pupils at the Africentric Alternative School would learn the same curriculum as students in other schools across the city, Hyman-Aman emphasized that the culturally relevant resources utilized at the school would assist in student success and learning.² When speaking to news reporters about how the school would operate, Hyman-Aman cautioned community critics by asserting the school’s focus on high academic performance as a distinctive marker of Afrocentric learning.³

¹ “Toronto’s 1st Africentric School Set to Open,” *CBC News*, September 04, 2009.

² *Ibid.*

³ While the terms Afrocentric and Africentric reflect a similar philosophy promoting an African-centred approach to education and schooling, TDSB’s use of the term reflects a movement away from the early usage of the term Afrocentric during the American Civil Rights movement and rooting it more strongly to the continent of Africa, through the inclusion of the ‘i’. According to Dr. Patrick Kakembo, director of the African Canadian Services in Nova Scotia, the shift from Afro to Afri reflects an evolution of the term and differing consciousness among people in Canada. However, despite the growing popularity of the term Africentric in Canada, Afrocentric is the widely accepted and commonly used term in mainstream North America. Noor Javed, “Afro vs. Afri,” *The Toronto Star*, February 2, 2008.

A year after its opening, amidst much controversy, principal Thando Hyman-Aman was temporarily suspended from her position pending an investigation surrounding parental allegations that she mistreated a student. This would not be the first time that Hyman-Aman would be challenged by parents and community members in regards to her administrative duties at the school. In fact, eight days after the school opened, Hyman-Aman received heavy criticism from some parents and community members who presented a list of 21 grievances which stemmed from their beliefs that the curriculum used in the school was not Africentric enough.⁴ It seemed that Hyman-Aman, an educator at the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) for over sixteen years and strong community activist, was well aware of the increased scrutiny and attention she would face as the principal of Toronto's first Africentric school.⁵ Controversy and suspicion around her suspension would continue to mount as Hyman-Aman was temporarily replaced by retired white male principal, George Brown Jr. Hyman-Aman was quickly cleared of any wrong doing upon board investigation and returned to her post six-weeks later.

Three years after her appointment, Thando Hyman-Aman would resign from her position surrounded by community speculation that she was kicked out or “worn down” by bureaucratic tensions.⁶ Hyman-Aman would explain her decision by stating,

⁴ Ron Fanfair, “Hyman-Aman Says it was Time to Move On,” *Share News*, Wednesday July 25, 2015.

⁵ At the time, Thando Hyman-Aman had a decorated resumé which included a strong commitment to curriculum development on equity and diversity. She helped to write the school board's equity policy and designed lessons on African heritage. She also hosted a radio show called “The African Woman and Family” and participated in several public speaking events about racism in the classroom and issues facing black girls in school. In addition, Hyman-Aman served as a course director and adjunct professor at York University's Faculty of Education. Louise Brown, “Africentric School Principal Ready for the Hot Seat,” *Toronto Star*, Saturday May 30, 2009; Louise Brown, “Africentric School's Principal Leaving,” *The Toronto Star*, June 18, 2012.

⁶ Ron Fanfair, “Hyman-Aman Says it was Time to Move On,” *Share News*, Wednesday July 25, 2015.

Like everything else, when change comes, it does so with some high emotions and needs. I have said to the parent community and I still maintain that I will be part of an Africentric community because the school was born out of the sweat and tears of many advocates in the Black community, many of whom I have worked with.⁷

Possibly connected to her request to be transferred to another school within the TDSB, Hyman-Aman's emphasis on the high emotional needs of the Africentric school should not be taken lightly. Working in one of the most demanding and high profile schools in the country, Hyman-Aman recognized that despite her best efforts, much work still needed to be done to combat school disengagement among black students in Toronto. Despite its controversial beginnings, the Africentric Alternative School saw increased enrolment numbers and students produced strong standardized test scores that convinced many critics about the importance and relevance of Africentric arts, history and culture in assisting with black student engagement in school.⁸

Although Hyman-Aman's position as school principal in one of the largest boards in the country can be perceived as an indication of the progress educators of African descent have made in tackling systemic inequalities, the controversy surrounding the creation of the school, Hyman-Aman's appointment, suspension and subsequent request to be transferred from the school also spoke of the increased scrutiny, questioning of qualifications and systemic limitations facing black women educators in Ontario schools.

Tensions around Thando Hyman-Aman's administrative leadership and ongoing

⁷ Ron Fanfair, "Hyman-Aman Says it was Time to Move On," *Share News*, Wednesday July 25, 2015.

⁸ Kate Hammer, "Africentric School Principal Leaving Job," *The Globe and Mail*, June 19, 2012. In their report of the Africentric Alternative School, Carl James, Philip Howard, Julia Samaro, Rob Brown and Gillian Parakeh found that between the 2011 – 2012 academic year, students in grades 1 to 4 at the school were achieving higher academic levels in reading, writing and mathematics than TDSB school averages. They also reported EQAO testing at the school showed a much higher rate of improvement than other schools in the board and across the province. James et al. found that the school created a sense of community for black students, developed a model of inclusivity and created a Parent and Community Engagement Model that emphasized the vital role that parents and community members had in the education of black students in the city. York University Centre for Education and Community and the TDSB Research and Information Services Department, *Africentric Alternative School Research Project Year 2 (2013-2014) Report*, 3-4.

challenges facing black students in Toronto schools are instead reflective of a longer, more complex story about the experiences of many black women educators in Canadian school systems.

Facilitated by increasing urbanization and industrialization, the post-World War II period saw unprecedented changes to Ontario's school system. As Canada emerged from WWII with more urban centers, technological advancements and increased national prosperity, state administrators focused on the need for Canada's younger generation to obtain better and greater access to education.⁹ At the same time, as a result of a booming post-WWII economy and an expanding welfare state, rising expectations of government intervention and support, coupled with anxiety about unemployment, families, health, and sexual deviation, there were escalated concerns about the meaning of citizenship and democracy within the nation.¹⁰ Concurrently, the post-war baby boom increased the number of school aged children across the country and facilitated the creation and development of elementary and secondary schools to service these young pupils. Emerging from these changes was the idea that schools played an important role in the education of Canadian citizens. For it was within school walls that children learned about what defined good citizenship and the democratic principles of Canadian identity.¹¹

This dissertation project explores questions of Canadian citizenship and belonging through the lived experiences of black female educators. As part of this analysis, my research addresses the following questions: What were the historical connections in black Canadian communities that attracted black women into the field of education? What did

⁹ Doug Owsram, *Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby-Boom Generation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 113.

¹⁰ Franca Iacovetta, *Gatekeepers: Reshaping Immigrant Lives in Cold War Canada* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2006), 11.

¹¹ Doug Owsram, *Born at the Right Time*, 127.

teaching offer black women that other professions did not? Were black women's professional identities important both to their communities and their individual identities? What impact, if any, did movements for gender and racial equality in Canada have on black women's lives? Black Canadian women's experiences as school teachers in the twentieth century reveal complex stories of professionalism, gender, race, segregated labour markets and social justice activism that began in the nineteenth century but continued into contemporary schooling practices. Black women teachers engaged with these interconnected experiences in varying degrees revealing broader systemic forms of access and the limitations that many female educators faced based on the intersections gender, race, class and place of birth. As part of the educational expansion in post-WWII Canada, black women educators gained teacher training and certification, taught in various Ontario schools and created pedagogical practices that both borrowed from provincial curriculum mandates but also challenged their overarching Eurocentric focus.

This project sets out to examine two broader themes centred around national identity and black female (up)rootedness. The first intervention this dissertation seeks to make is to highlight the presence of black women educators as a way of disrupting the national narrative of Canadian teacher identity and its schooling system as primarily 'white', middle-class and female. Educational historians of the nineteenth and twentieth century including Alison Prentice, Rebecca Priegert Coulter, Sheila L. Cavanagh, and Kristina Llewellyn have written significant works highlighting the importance of women teachers who shaped education and teaching practice in Canada.¹² These historians use

¹² Susan E. Houston and Alison Prentice, *Schooling and Scholars in Nineteenth-Century Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988); Rebecca Priegert Coulter and Helen Harper, eds., *History is Hers: Women Educators in Twentieth Century Ontario* (Calgary: Detselig, 2005); Kristina Llewellyn,

women's stories to challenge the ways in which education was interpreted and reinterpreted under white male dominance. Exploring individual and collective social identities and locations, these scholars examine the multiple ways in which women educators viewed the profession and interpreted their female identities within male hierarchical spaces.

The edited collection, *History is Hers: Women Educators in Twentieth Century Ontario*, serves as an example of the scholarship addressing the richness of women teachers' lives and is based on 200 oral histories of women who taught in Ontario from the 1930s to the 1990s. In the anthology, Rebecca Priegert Coulter examines the importance of women teachers' federations and professional organizations by calling attention to the contradictions and complexities of women educators who were both subjected to state policies and programs but were also active agents of the state.¹³

While these narratives about women educators remain crucial to our understanding of the parameters and gendered notions of citizenship and identity, these works are primarily, and at times, exclusively, about white educators. The treatment and presence of black women within this body of literature often stands as either an addendum to historical sites of knowledge or situates women of colour as outsiders in the professional teaching workforce.¹⁴ This study brings attention to the stories of black women educators as an extension of the critical discussion initiated by Coulter and Harper in *History is Hers*. While black women did not represent the 'typical' teacher in

Democracy's Angels: The Work of Women Teachers (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012).

¹³ Rebecca Priegert Coulter, "'Girls Just Want to Have Fun': Women Teachers and the Pleasures of the Profession," in *History is Hers: Women Educators in Twentieth Century Ontario*, 161.

¹⁴ Goli M. Rezai-Rashti, "Women of Color and Teaching: Exploring Contradictory Experiences of Immigrant Women Teachers," in *History is Hers: Women Educators in Twentieth Century Ontario*, 98.

Canada, their experiences were an integral part of and, at times, parallel to the experiences of their white counterparts. I argue for an even more inclusive history of Canadian women teachers, which roots these women's stories in the historical legacies of the black experience in Canada and properly situates black women's presence in the professional teaching realm as part of a longer and far more complex trajectory in the history of education in Canada.

Within the historiography of Canadian women teachers, Kristina R. Llewellyn's work on women teachers in the post-WWII era establishes important frameworks for understanding the ways in which citizenship was socially constructed in Canadian classrooms and through the professional careers of women teachers. In *Democracy's Angels: The Work of Women Teachers*, Llewellyn argues that women teachers were both included and excluded in schooling institutions and often "depicted their teaching selves as change-makers both structurally, in terms of their post war work lives, and symbolically, in terms of their representation during the interview process."¹⁵ Relying on the interviews of twenty women teachers, *Democracy's Angels* seeks to understand how school structures shaped women's identities. As in Coulter and Harper's text, all but one of the women teachers Llewellyn investigates are white, middle-class and Christian.¹⁶ While Llewellyn challenges her audiences to reflect on the ways in which women teachers exerted power within Canada's patriarchal educational system, she crafts citizenship education in post-war Canada from the perspective of white femininity. In response to these racial absences, this dissertation fills important gaps in the study of

¹⁵ Kristina R. Llewellyn. *Democracy's Angels: The Work of Women Teachers*, 11.

¹⁶ Kristina Llewellyn explores the story of a Chinese-Canadian educator who struggled to prove herself professionally and "needed to appear Caucasian" given the limited constructions of Canadian womanhood embodied through white, middle-class, and heterosexual ideals. Kristina R. Llewellyn, *Democracy's Angels: The Work of Women Teachers*, 11.

teaching and the role of education in creating a particular kind of democratic Canada; one that remained firmly entrenched in the nation's British and French influences. It endeavours to complicate this narrative of gender, citizenship and education in order to centre and understand, in more nuanced ways, how women's identities were structured within school settings when we consider race, place of birth, language and other markers of belonging. Highlighting the importance of racial hierarchies in twentieth century Ontario schools, this dissertation sets out to understand what happens when teachers, positioned as "mothers of the school and guardians of the nation," were black.¹⁷

Within African Canadian historiography, the lives of women teachers such as Mary Ann Shadd Cary and Mary Bibb testify to black women's long and historical presence in the field of education.¹⁸ However, the experiences and contributions of these black women educators, which emerged out of black feminist discourses and writings in the 1980s and 1990s, is placed within the context of early African Canadian settlement rather than a focus on black women's engagement with schooling institutions and educational pedagogies.¹⁹ The stories of women like Shadd Cary and Bibb, while representing an important foundation in African Canadian historical scholarship, often lodge black women's educational experiences as separate from mainstream institutional

¹⁷ Kristina R. Llewellyn, *Democracy's Angels: The Work of Women Teachers*, 51.

¹⁸ Afua Cooper, "The Search for Mary Bibb, Black Woman Teacher in Nineteenth-Century Canada West," *Ontario History* Vol. 83, No. 1 (1991): 39-54; Afua Cooper, "Voices Heard Over the River: Henry and Mary Bibb, and the Role of the Black Press in the Underground Railroad Abolitionist Movements," in Karolyn Smardz and Veta Tucker, eds., *A Fluid Frontier: Slavery, Freedom and the Underground Railroad in the Detroit River Borderlands* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2012); Mary Ann Shadd Cary, *A Plea for Emigration or Notes of Canada West, in Its Moral Social and Political Aspect, With Suggestions Respecting Mexico, W. Indies and Vancouver's Island, for the Information of Colored Emigrants* (Detroit: George W. Pattison Printer, 1852); Jane Rhodes, *Mary Ann Shadd Cary: The Black Press and Protest in the Nineteenth Century* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998); Jim Beardson and Linda Jean Butler, *Shadd: The Life and Times of Mary Ann Shadd Cary* (Toronto: NC Press Ltd., 1977).

¹⁹ Peggy Bristow, et. al., *We're Rooted Here and They Can't Pull Us Up: African Canadian Women's History* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1994); Annette Henry, *Taking Back Control: African Canadian Women Teachers' Lives and Practice* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998).

mandates by focusing on their contributions solely as race and community based. In this regard, this dissertation aims to expand knowledge of the study of the history of education in Ontario by examining the politics of locating black Canadian women within African Canadian history while simultaneously recognizing their presence in state supported education systems.

This brings me to the second major theme of this dissertation, that of (up)rootedness. In their 1994 publication of the seminal text titled, *'We're Rooted Here and They Can't Pull Us Up': Essays in Canadian Women's History*, Peggy Bristow, Dionne Brand, Linda Carty, Afua P. Cooper, Sylvia Hamilton, and Adrienne Shadd sought to lend a feminist framework to writing black Canadian history. These authors worked to "challenge prevailing notions of Canadian history" by rooting the experiences of black women within the larger and longer trajectory of black enslavement beginning in the seventeenth century. Building on the works of Maureen Elgersman, Afua Cooper, and James Walker, *'We're Rooted Here and They Can't Pull Us Up'* remembered that the black female presence in Canada was indeed rooted in historical experiences of enslavement and exploitation, but also community building and active participation within the nation-state. This dissertation seeks to further complicate this notion of rootedness by suggesting that black women's experiences within Canadian schools was constantly in flux and based on the multifaceted subjectivities of black womanhood.²⁰ It seeks to centre black women's experiences as characterized by particular experiences in Canada, but also complicated by migration, education, black and women's mobilization and activism and much more.

²⁰ Karen Flynn and Funke Aladejebi, "Writing Black Canadian Women's History: Where We Have Been and Where We Are Going," (Companion to Women's and Gender History Working Paper, September 2015).

Since the publication of ‘*We’re Rooted Here and They Can’t Pull Us Up*’, scholars of black Canadian women have worked to find black women’s roots within the Canadian landscape, inside the margins and isolated spaces of uprootedness. As a result, this dissertation leans on the work of Annette Henry, whose publication *Taking Back Control: African Canadian Women Teachers’ Lives and Practice*, calls for a feminist approach to examine how black women teachers’ consciousness and intersections of race, class and gender, contributed to and shaped pedagogical practices.²¹ As an extension of the ways in which Henry explores the oral histories of black Canadian educators, this dissertation utilizes her analysis of black women teachers’ “liberatory education” both inside and outside of mainstream teaching institutions, to understand how black women constructed their professional identities. As Henry contends, “Teaching was also a form of political resistance to challenge Eurocentric domination. For many, teaching was a means of race upliftment. Black women teachers in Ontario often fought in antislavery, abolitionist and anticolor-prejudice movements.”²² Building on Henry’s analysis, I argue that the importance of black women’s professional lives as educators was fundamental to challenging and restructuring white dominated schooling institutions. Black women’s lives as educators were indeed part of nation building practices and the multiplicity of black activism in Canada. While Henry focuses on the experiences of five African Caribbean teachers at an urban elementary school in southern Ontario, her ethnographical approach to examining the semi-autobiographical accounts of educators does not situate these experiences within a broader story of educational history in Canada. As such, this project distinguishes itself from that of Henry’s in its numerical expansion of oral

²¹Annette Henry, *Taking Back Control: African Canadian Women Teachers’ Lives and Practice* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 2.

²² *Ibid.*, 81.

histories and its integration of historical analysis in order to understand the various influences that impacted black women teachers' professional identities.

Considering that labour and employment were important markers in the lives of the participants in this study, the work of women's labour historians such as Joan Sangster, Joy Parr, Judith Fingard, Katrina Srigley and Karen Flynn were helpful in rethinking access to employment and the muted ways that black women teachers crafted their professional identities.²³ Karen Flynn's *Moving Beyond Borders: A History of Black Canadian and Caribbean Women in the Diaspora* makes important interventions in the study of black women, labour, diasporic movements and migration in the twentieth century. By examining the transnational lives of black women nurses, Flynn highlights questions of migration, education, work, activism and family in order to demonstrate black women's multiple and contradictory subject positions in Canada.²⁴ Flynn's analysis of black professional women's lives utilizes oral histories to locate black women as producers of knowledge and to challenge historical narratives of Canada. Flynn's extensive documentation of black women's lives situates the importance of black women's oral testimonies and diverse transnational experiences as she charts migration from the Caribbean, Britain, United States and across Canada. While Flynn focuses predominantly on the lives of black nurses, this work examines the continuities and

²³ Joan Sangster, *Transforming Labour: Women and Work in Postwar Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010); Joy Parr, "Women Workers in the Twentieth Century," in W.J.C. Cherwinski and Gregory Kealey, eds., *Lectures on Canadian Labour and Working-Class History* (St. John's, Nfld.: Committee on Canadian Labour History, 1985), 79-88; Judith Fingard, "From Sea to Rail: Black Transportation Workers and Their Families in Halifax, c. 1870-1916," *Acadiensis* Vol. 25, No. 2 (Spring 1996): 49-64; Katrina Srigley, *Breadwinning Daughters: Young Working Women in a Depression-Era City, 1929-1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012).

²⁴ Karen Flynn, *Moving Beyond Borders: A History of Black Canadian and Caribbean Women in the Diaspora* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 4.

changes between black women's professional career choices with an emphasis on accreditation, geographic location and resistive pedagogical approaches.

In order to understand the realities of black women in the teaching profession, my interpretations of black women's experiences are theoretically grounded in black feminist thought. Building on important contributions by scholars such as Patricia Hill Collins, Hazel V. Carby, bell hooks, Anh Hua, Heidi Safia Mirza, Agnes Calliste, and Njoki N. Wane, this dissertation foregrounds a transnational approach to viewing black feminist thought and activism.²⁵ Black feminist thought, most popularized by Patricia Hill Collins, argues for a specialized knowledge and consciousness created by and for black women. Situating black women as producers of knowledge, black feminist thought brings attention to the expressions of everyday consciousness that were self-defined and central to black women's survival; one that remained Afrocentric and feminist in nature.²⁶ In reclaiming black women's intellectual traditions, Hill Collins argues that black feminist thought is a specialized knowledge created by black women and one that interprets black women's realities by those who live it.²⁷

Elaborating on this definition, Njoki Wane's "Black Canadian Feminist Thought: Tensions and Possibilities," challenges scholars to review how black Canadian feminist thought can be defined as different from its American counterpart. Grounding black

²⁵ Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 1990); Anh Hua, "Black Diaspora Feminism & Writing: Memories, Storytelling and the Narrative World as Sites of Resistance," *African and Black Diaspora: An International Journal* Vol. 6, No. 1 (January 2013): 30-42; Hazel V. Carby, "White Woman Listen! Black Feminism and the Boundaries of Sisterhood," in Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, ed., *The Empire Strikes Back: Race and Racism in 70s Britain* (Birmingham: Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, 1982), 87-109; Heidi Safia Mirza, ed., *Black British Feminism: A Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997); Agnes Calliste and George J. Sefa Dei, eds., *Anti-Racist Feminism: Critical Race and Gender Studies* (Halifax, Nova Scotia: Fernwood Publishing, 2000); Njoki N. Wane, Katerina Deliovsky and Erica Lawson, eds., *Back to the Drawing Board: African-Canadian Feminisms* (Toronto: Sumach Press, 2006).

²⁶ Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 26.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 22.

women's experiences both in oral testimonies and their writings, Wane envisions black Canadian feminist thought as connected to women's experiences as mothers, academics and community leaders. She uses this idea to promote the complex and multilayered experiences of black Canadian women, showcasing that their "day-to-day realities make it imperative for them to consider the simultaneous nature of their oppression and exploitation."²⁸

To connect the ways in which black feminist thought travels across migratory and diasporic spaces, this project also borrows from Katherine McKittrick's work on the (dis)places of black femininity in order to situate black Canadian women's experiences. Applying a spacial analysis to understand the ways in which black geographic subjects produce space within the context of domination and objectification, McKittrick explores the places of black Canadian contradictions.²⁹ Here, McKittrick explains that blackness in the Canadian context is both present and invisible. Her work becomes incredibly important for understanding how the presence of black Canadian women in schooling institutions disrupted national narratives of European citizenship and nationhood. Working within systems of oppression and domination, black women teachers found diverse ways to exist and position the histories of black Canadian communities within the nation.

This research project builds upon a recognition of black women's distinct consciousness to understand their entrance into the professional workforce and examine

²⁸ Njoki N. Wane, "Black Canadian Feminist Thought: Tensions and Possibilities," *Canadian Woman Studies/Les Cahiers De la Femme* Vol. 23, No. 2 (Winter 2004):149. Also see: Njoki N. Wane and Notisha Massaquoi, *Theorizing Empowerment: Canadian Perspectives on Feminist Thought* (Toronto: Innana Publishers, 2007).

²⁹ Katherine McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 92.

the ways they organized and interpreted their identities once working inside these institutions. Black women's power of self-definition and the constraints placed on them in seeking this space are fundamentally important to the organizational structuring of this work. In much the same ways that Hill Collins utilized black feminist thought to understand black women's "struggle for institutional transformation," this project focuses on avenues where education centered black women's activism and agency.³⁰ Establishing black feminist theory alongside diasporic and transnational understandings of how black women teachers amalgamated their experiences as a practice of personal and cultural survival is the distinguishing marker of this dissertation.

The oral herstories of black Canadian women are a prominent feature in this dissertation. Seeking to address the silences of black professional women in the historical canon, this dissertation utilizes oral testimonies as an important way of allowing black women to tell their own stories. Oral historians Kristina Llewellyn, Pamela Sugiman, Karen Olsen and Linda Shopes and other scholars remind us of the feminist practice of oral history and its importance in complicating national histories through its integration of the lived experiences of marginalized groups.³¹ For example, Mary Chamberlain's "Diasporic Memories: Community, Individuality, and Creativity-A Life Stories Perspective," discusses Caribbean migrant workers' stories in creating alternative models of nationhood to account for the emotional rather than geographic

³⁰ Katherine McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle*, 142.

³¹ Karen Olsen and Linda Shopes, "Crossing Boundaries, Building Bridges: Doing Oral History Among Working-Class Women and Men," in Sherna Berger Gluck and Daphne Patai, eds., *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History* (New York: Routledge, 1991): 196; Kristina Llewellyn, "Teaching June Cleaver, Being Hazel Chong: An Oral History of Gender, Race and National 'Character,'" in Catherine Carstairs and Nancy Janovicek, eds., *Writing Feminist History: Productive Pasts and New Directions* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013), 178-199; Kristina Llewellyn, "Productive Tensions: Feminist Readings of Women Teachers' Oral Histories," in Kristina Llewellyn, Alexander Freund and Nolan Reilly, eds., *The Canadian Oral History Reader* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015).

borders that characterized African Caribbean migration and identities.³² Chamberlain encourages us read oral stories for symbolic meanings in order to explore choices of language and repetition, and to examine how frameworks of family and belonging are remembered. According to Chamberlain, black diasporic memory is a necessarily layered one that links “the black experience and provides a cultural continuity with those back home and overseas.”³³ This dissertation expands on the knowledge of oral histories, memories and diasporic experiences that influenced black women’s recollection of their professional lives in the mid-to late twentieth century. I use oral history practice to illuminate the ways black women teachers (re)casted themselves through their diverse narratives. The use of oral herstories highlights the tones, silences, pauses, laughter, and body language of interview participants to reveal the diverse possibilities of black women teachers’ memories, narratives and identities. As Pamela Sugiman argues, these oral narratives “tell us something about the importance of interpretation for the construction of history and about the imposition of time and memory in the process of research and storytelling.”³⁴

Seeking to situate these memories and sites of identity formation within broader frameworks, this research project inserts black women’s experiences as part of Canadian educational history; one that exists alongside national narratives of citizenship, identity and belonging. Here, rather than placing black women as separate beings within the education system, I hope to utilize oral history to locate their experiences within that system and discuss the ways in which broader social, political, and economic issues

³² Mary Chamberlain, “Diasporic Memories: Community, Individuality, and Creativity-A Life Stories Perspective,” *Oral History Review* Vol. 36, No. 2 (Summer/Fall 2009): 178-9.

³³ *Ibid.*, 186.

³⁴ Pamela Sugiman “Passing Time, Moving Memories: Interpreting Wartime Narratives of Japanese Canadian Women,” *Histoire sociale/Social History* Vol. 37, No. 73 (2004): 57.

affected both their classroom and community practices. While this work uses a historical approach to collecting and charting the experiences of black women teachers, oral history inserts an interdisciplinary analysis in its interpretation of lived experiences. Therefore, I integrate a variety of frameworks alongside black feminist thought and critical race theory to interpret and understand black women's stories. As a result of the significance of self-definition and naming black women's experiences in this project, I argue that black women teachers were quintessential members of in-between spaces, where their experiences within school settings made them simultaneously hyper-visible as minority teachers and invisible to Ontario's Eurocentric curriculum.

Considering education was used to teach young pupils how to be 'good moral citizens', black women's presence within these hegemonic institutions served to challenge the ways in which education was imparted and also revealed a system ill-equipped to deal with its changing student population. Black Canadian women's active involvement in schools exemplified the ways in which some blacks negotiated their citizenship rights and identities in predominately 'white' spaces. It is through this disruption, as well as its limitations, that we can begin to see how Ontario schooling system limited black students' opportunities and access to equal education, but could not completely eliminate the growing presence and increasing discontent of black populations within its school systems. In order to situate these oral interviews within the context of a broader national narrative of citizenship and belonging, additional research by way of normal school³⁵ and teachers' college yearbooks, government documents, and various publications on education in Ontario were also consulted. I use these sources to

³⁵ Ontario's normal schools were renamed teachers' colleges in 1953. Elizabeth Smyth, "Learning to Teach: Ontario's Elementary School Teacher Education 1960 – 1974," *Education Research and Perspectives* Vol. 33, No. 2 (2006): 82.

speak to the larger implications of schooling as an extension of state policies and constructions of the ‘ideal’ citizen.

Scholars including Rinaldo Walcott, Jennifer Kelly, Neil Bissoondath, and Himani Bannerji ask us to consider the ways in which communities of people are constructed as “undesirable” within the nation based on constructions of race and gender. Launching strong criticisms against multiculturalism, in her study *The Dark Side of the Nation: Essays on Multiculturalism, Nationalism and Gender*, Himani Bannerji forces us to reevaluate how multiculturalism facilitated a process of whitening for North Americans of European descent and simultaneously darkened “Other” racialized communities. According to Bannerji, multiculturalism obscured cultural difference through the language of diversity and excluded racialized communities from Canadian state apparatuses. Bannerji contends, “As a population, we non-whites and women (in particular, non-white women) are living in a specific territory. We are part of its economy, subject to its laws, and members of its civil society. Yet we are not part of its self-definition as ‘Canada’ because we are not ‘Canadians.’”³⁶ To fully understand how black women teachers faced both ideological and systemic exclusion, this dissertation builds on the framework of cultural theorists who argue the ideal Canadian citizen was constructed through the marginalization of racialized populations.³⁷ Integrating larger racial and gender activist movements with black women’s stories, my project also features the dynamic changes occurring within Canada’s growing social movements in the twentieth century. Since the organization of various feminist and black cultural groups transformed black women educators’ consciousness and school interactions, black

³⁶ Himani Bannerji, *The Dark Side of the Nation: Essays on Multiculturalism, Nationalism and Gender* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, 2000), 65.

³⁷ *Ibid*, 67.

and feminist activist goals, organizational mandates and orientations are extensively outlined throughout this work, but more heavily weighted in the final two chapters of this dissertation. As such, this project utilizes these broader historical moments to argue that blackness in Canada is fashioned under specific understandings of inclusion and exclusion. In supporting this point, sociologist Rinaldo Walcott contends that blackness in Canada “interrupts and unsettles Canadianness.”³⁸ Consequently, my discussion of institutional and social practices of exclusion within schools seeks to understand the ways in which racialized female bodies experienced the nation and unsettled its constructions of identity and belonging.

Black women in Canada held precarious positions within mainstream educational institutions, where they struggled for representation and legitimacy but concomitantly were able to gain professional careers. In order to discuss black women teachers’ access, motivation, and ‘choice’ to enter the professional working sphere, this research project is based on the oral interviews of 26 black female educators who taught in Southwestern Ontario from the 1940s to the 1980s. There is a particular focus on educators from Chatham, Windsor, London, and Toronto, where larger African Canadian populations resided. Sharing their experiences over two years of oral history research (2010-2012), black women recounted personal memories, incorporated local and family histories, and used personal, community and teaching documents to describe their experiences within Ontario schools in the twentieth century. Interviews lasted between one and four hours and respondents were solicited through free advertising over social networks and retired teachers’ organizations, appeals to African Canadian community organizations, word-of-

³⁸ Rinaldo Walcott “Who is she and what is she to you?": Mary Ann Shadd Cary and the (Im)possibility of Black/Canadian Studies” in Rinaldo Walcott, ed., *Rude: Contemporary Black Canadian Cultural Criticism* (Toronto, Insomniac Press, 2000), 37.

mouth, and the snowball technique. In addition to signing consent forms, interview participants were given the option of using pseudonyms. Although several chose to use their real names, all research participants were given pseudonyms in order to protect their anonymity, particularly around more difficult and intimate discussions and analysis.

The majority of research participants in this study described themselves as having a variety of ethnocultural roots, but identified as Canadian, Caribbean and American-born. Interviewees were broadly divided by their professional activities into two major historical periods. The first category examines women who entered teacher training colleges and school systems in the 1940s and 1950s, most were Canadian-born and they tended to reside and teach in the Chatham, Windsor, and London geographic areas. The second set of interview participants began their teaching careers in Ontario in the 1960s and 1970s. These women tended to be Caribbean-born educators who taught in larger urban areas like Toronto and often had previous training and certification from their countries of origin. The majority of women from both historical periods came from working and middle-class backgrounds where their families struggled to find steady employment and economic stability. As a result, the families of women educators in this study viewed education as a way to access better social and economic mobility. Whether they were born in Canada or the Caribbean, interview participants recalled having early exposure to white (British) values, ideals and cultures through elementary schooling institutions.³⁹

While the women I interviewed for this project highlighted a wealth of experiences and knowledge, there are also silences in the stories these women recounted.

³⁹ This was also the case among the black (Canadian and Caribbean born) women who worked in the medical field. See Karen Flynn, *Moving Beyond Borders: A History of Black Canadian and Caribbean Women in the Diaspora* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 52.

While my positionality as a black woman educator allowed for some commonalities which may have made it easier to discuss similar gendered and racial experiences with interviewees, my status as researcher, nationality and age meant that discussions of sexuality and intimate relationships were virtually excluded from our discussions. It is possible that because participants viewed these interviews as a discussion about their professional identities, sex and intimacy were seen by participants as irrelevant to their stories of work and teaching, although some subtleties were present during the interview process. For example, some interviewees would briefly mention dating as young women or discuss travelling to new cities with their boyfriends; however, they quickly shifted conversations when asked to expand on the impact these relationships had on their lives.

In her analysis of the heterosexual worries that governed Canadian (white) female educators, Sheila Cavanagh argues that throughout the course of the twentieth century, public and professional bodies were increasingly concerned with the gender identities and sexualities of female teachers. According to Cavanagh, “Female teachers had to curtail their independent and undomesticated sexualities for fear of igniting controversy and, ultimately, dismissal.”⁴⁰ Professional expectations led to strong moral restrictions on love, marriage and heterosexuality as part of the professional teaching ethos. As such, it is quite possible that this same professional culture was understood by black women educators in this research project who recognized the risks of ‘inappropriate’ sex and public expressions of their sexual identities.⁴¹ Since sex and sexuality were not major points of discussion during interview sessions, there is an implicit and assumed heterosexuality of research participants that could not be clearly evaluated without

⁴⁰ Sheila L. Cavanagh, *Sexing the Teacher School Sex Scandals and Queer Pedagogies* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2007), 6.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 6-9.

disrupting researcher-interviewer relationships. With this in mind, within women's accounts of their professional lives, there can be multiple perspectives and truths to their experiences, some of which cannot be fully explored within the context of this dissertation project.

The terms black Canadian and African Canadian are used interchangeably in this dissertation to reference persons of African descent. I use the term African Canadian to reflect the dual experiences that women have both as African descended people and their current trajectory within Canada (whether Canadian born or migrants to Canada). I use this interchangeably with the black Canadian experience not as an essentializing term, but as a way to encompass diverse, multiple forms of identities for African descended peoples and to account for the varied transnational experiences of my interview participants. Due to the fact that black women educators who participated in this study spoke about the fluidity of their Caribbean, Canadian, American and black identities, I use these terms to encompass constructions of blackness in relation to broader homogenizing state and institutional forces that sought to limit constructions of blackness as linear and unchanging. As sociologist Rinaldo Walcott claims, "Black Canadian is for me syncretic, always in revision and in a process of becoming. It is constituted from multiple histories of uprootedness, migration, exchanges and political acts of defiance and self-(re)definition."⁴² On the grounds that this dissertation focuses heavily on black women's journey to self-discovery and definition, black, as a marker of politicized collective racial identity has not been capitalized.⁴³ Instead, I use the lower case 'b' to

⁴² Rinaldo Walcott, *Black Like Who? Writing Black Canada* (Toronto: Insomniac Press, 2003), 103.

⁴³ Kathleen Fitzgerald explains that in North America, racial terminology changed over time. During the Black Power movement of the late 1960s, black replaced the term 'Negro' despite the hesitation of some black communities to adopt the title. Black with a capital 'B' has been used to reference peoples of African

incorporate the diverse national and ethnic identities that research participants used to define themselves. For example, some interviewees described themselves as Grenadian, Trinidadian-Canadian, and other ethnic/national identifiers, rather than as black. While they understood the importance of race as a signifier of difference in Canada, not all research participants politicized their blackness in the same ways. The use of the lower case ‘b’ allows for a fluidity of blackness and its manifestations in order to consider the number of cultural and political issues that contextualized and shaped the individual identities of women who participated in this research project.

I also use ‘mainstream’ to discuss white dominated schooling systems in Ontario largely to account for and acknowledge the separate and segregated schooling systems that marked black Canadian experiences as early as the nineteenth century. I utilize ‘mainstream’ to highlight the fact that black Canadians, historically although not exclusively, have experienced separation from white dominated schools. Ultimately, I refer to mainstream to indicate the ways in which Eurocentric notions of education within Canadian schooling institutions were normalized and re-entrenched through dominant notions of power and privilege. According to scholar Augie Fleras, mainstream institutions were not designed to reflect the realities of racial minorities, nor did these institutions move to advance the interests and agendas of racialized peoples.⁴⁴ As such, I use mainstream to help illuminate both covert and overt practices of institutional racism

descent but also reflects a politicized version of black identity that articulated both cultural and aesthetic value in the late twentieth century. Kathleen Fitzgerald, *Recognizing Race and Ethnicity: Power, Privilege, and Inequality* (Colorado: Westview Press, 2014), 25; Also see: Doug Blandy and Kristin G. Congdon, eds., *Pluralistic Approaches to Art Criticism* (Ohio: Bowling Green State University Press, 1991).

⁴⁴ Augie Fleras, *Racisms in a Multicultural Canada: Paradoxes, Politics and Resistance* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2014), 145.

and gender discrimination within Ontario schools, even amidst dominant national discussions of multiculturalism and racial diversity.

This dissertation is divided into five chapters charting black women's entrance into teacher training programs in Ontario to their contributions in anti-racist education in the 1980s. Structured thematically, these chapters loosely trace continuities and changes between women's experiences from the 1940s to the 1980s. Although black women teachers continue to be an important part of Ontario's education system, I study this period to document black women's early presence in state sanctioned school systems and to speak to a void within the historiography of African Canadian education, and the education system more broadly, that largely focuses on white teachers and black pupils rather than educators.

Chapter 1 explores the ways by which African Canadian women entered the teaching profession in Ontario. Although black Canadian educators had long been teaching within their own communities as early as the mid-1800s, population changes and immigration accounted for a rise in Canada's black and student populations at the turn of the twentieth century. To contribute to the limited archival and numerical data available on early black educators, this chapter provides statistical evidence on black teacher enrolment in training programs, their certification levels and additional qualifications by the middle of the twentieth century. Using teachers' college yearbooks and census data, this chapter contends that despite increasing access to teacher training programs in the twentieth century, black women drew their motivations from a variety of external socio-economic circumstances. Reiterating black women's experiences within larger social and political trends happening within Ontario's education system such as the

consolidation of its school system and the continued (white) feminization of teaching, this chapter considers the blurred lines between ‘choice’ and access in its examination African Canadian women’s early professional training.

Chapter 2 charts black women educators’ movement from teachers’ colleges into Ontario schools. Increasing immigration to Ontario in the late 1960s not only meant that school enrolment dramatically increased but also that special programs, such as English as a Second Language (ESL), were needed in order to ensure that immigrant children, particularly those who did not speak one of the two national languages, adjusted to Canadian life. Under the dominant notions of racial categorization which equated blackness with difference and ‘foreignness’, this chapter asserts that black women were particularly sought out by school administrators who believed that because they were also non-white, they could better understand racially diverse student populations, some of whom were black. As a result of their racial and gendered positionality within predominately white school boards, black women held paradoxical positions as both hyper-visible and invisible within Canadian school settings. In some instances, they were hired as visible racialized women, perceived to be better equipped and able to handle Ontario’s changing and multiracial classroom dynamics. In other cases, they were made invisible on account that Ontario curriculum mandates largely ignored the presence and contribution of black identities in Canada. Problematizing the meaning of diversity within Ontario classrooms, which was understood to be linguistically rather than racially or culturally ‘diverse’, black women teachers articulated a different knowledge and awareness of black belonging through the questioning of administrative (streaming)

practices, mediating between black communities and schools, and acting as cultural liaisons within their individual classrooms.

The third chapter titled, “‘I’m not here to crack, I’m here to do the job’: Black Women’s Engagement with Workplace Practices and Educational Pedagogies” envisions how black women came to recognize and understand their ‘othered’ experiences inside Ontario schools. Despite their credentials, diverse work experiences and additional qualifications, black women teachers experienced early lessons of systemic racism that regulated and positioned them as outsiders-within. This chapter highlights women’s workplace experiences in Ontario schools to discuss how their educational philosophies developed, transitioned and changed over time. Black women educators both utilized and rejected provincial curriculum mandates in order to gain some control over services and teaching practices that would not only benefit their particular communities but also improve their professional careers. Offering an oppositional gaze towards inequalities within the education system, some black women educators found ways to take control away from cultural gatekeepers who represented Ontario’s curriculum from a specific Eurocentric perspective. Instead, some black women educators developed ways not only to cope with school isolation and microaggressive tactics, but also created resistive strategies that allowed them to educate the children from diverse racial backgrounds. When educating black children in particular, some black women found that their experiences as the racialized ‘other’ transferred over into their pedagogical approaches which focused on preparing students for their lives as minorities in white mainstream society.

Chapter 4 broadens the scope of black women's lives as professional teachers outside of classroom spaces. This chapter examines the rise of radical black activism in the city of Toronto in the 1960s and 1970s. Seeking to affirm the presence of black Canadians within the state, black activism influenced educational initiatives throughout the city to combat systemic forms of discrimination and isolation in employment, housing and education sectors. Drawing attention to the educational programs created by grassroots black Torontonians, some of whom were black women educators, this chapter identifies those who were part of Canada's growing activist movement. In addition to some reliance on the oral narratives of black women teachers, this chapter focuses on cultural programs and initiatives, in a context where racial minorities did not receive adequate support within Ontario schools, and suggests that black female educators were galvanized by black radical movements across North America and often adapted definitions of radicalism to suit their own particular brand of activism. Outlining the growing racial consciousness among black women educators in the late twentieth century, this chapter argues that black women's activism disrupted national narratives of Canadian egalitarianism and pressured the Toronto Board of Education to adopt stronger anti-discrimination and anti-racist policies within its schools.

The final chapter of this dissertation analyzes black women's involvement in Canada's women's liberation movement in the late 1970s and 1980s. Already encouraged by national cultural organizations that criticized racial inequality in Canada, black women were also informed by and participated in the growing women's rights movement in Canada. Specifically reviewing the mandates of the Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario (FWTAO), I argue that while many black educators

embraced the fight for racial equality, others were ambivalent about universal (white) sisterhood as it was promoted by consciousness-raising women's groups in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Instead, some black women teachers sought out organizations like the Congress of Black Women of Canada to speak to their multiple sites of oppression as racialized women.

Each chapter features intimate recollections of black women's experiences, their engagements with African Canadian communities and state educational institutions. They reveal the complex and contradictory ways black women felt marginalized within Ontario school systems and built lasting careers and friendships within these very systems of oppression. Each chapter forces us to think about how racism, discrimination, belonging and identity were understood, absorbed and rejected by black women educators.

In conclusion, this dissertation project situates itself as a gendered women's history. Although men, particularly black male teachers, figure less in this analysis, their stories emerge in relation to black women's accounts of hiring and promotion practices, recollections of male partners and friends who influenced their early lives and community partnerships and cultural coalitions built outside of school settings. Supporting historians Franca Iacovetta and Linda Kealey analysis of gendered histories, this work also questions rigid disciplinary frameworks and labels to reevaluate the ways in which women's history has taken up identity construction and relationships between the genders.⁴⁵ Iacovetta and Kealey ask us to examine how these fields are interconnected and challenge us to explore intersectional approaches when researching and writing

⁴⁵ Franca Iacovetta and Linda Kealey, "Women's History, Gender History and Debating Dichotomies," *left history* Vol. 3 No. 2 (Fall 1995) and Vol. 4, No. 1, (Spring 1996): 223.

history.⁴⁶ Indeed, this project proposes to expand on this spectrum of writing women's history to consider the complex nature of relationships between the genders, while featuring the stories of black women and firmly rooting them within both the history of Canada and women's history more broadly.

This dissertation demonstrates that black women teachers occupied true intersectional spaces of isolation and belonging within Ontario schools. They navigated these complex spaces the best ways they knew how and worked to create inclusive spaces for students, despite having experienced exclusion themselves. Even along the margins of Canada's education system, black women educators sought to bridge the gap between black communities, social activist organizations and mainstream schooling systems.

⁴⁶ Franca Iacovetta and Linda Kealey, "Women's History, Gender History and Debating Dichotomies," 228.

Chapter One:

“There weren’t that many of us to begin with”: Black Women Teachers and Ontario’s Education System, 1940s – 1960s

I didn’t want to teach them [white students]. And I think it came out of when I was in teachers’ college. Oh goodness they were racist...I was the only black person; there was [sic] three of us out of hundreds...¹

Except for the historical movements of Black Loyalists in the eighteenth century, War of 1812 refugees, escapees from American slavery in the nineteenth century, and the relatively small numbers of immigrants in western Canada and the prairies, prior to the 1960s, non-whites and white ethnic minorities faced enormous barriers in entering Canada due to Canadian immigration laws. According to Joseph Mensah, Agnes Calliste, James Walker, John Schultz, W.W. Anderson and R.W. Grant, Frances Henry, Valerie Knowles and others, Canadian immigration policy prior to the 1960s was based on racist attitudes, which deliberately sought to exclude racialized bodies from entering Canada. Strict regulations limited the entry of black migrants except for specific instances where they filled labour market needs, primarily as domestic service workers or miners.² Increasing pressures for immigration reform in the 1960s culminated in the implementation of the 1967 “points system,” which formally eliminated racist criteria in the assessment of potential immigrants.³ The legislation gave preference to immigrants who met requirements in areas such as education, employment and occupational

¹ Cecily Tremaine. Interview by author. Audio recording, Toronto, On., May 09, 2011.

² Agnes Calliste, “Race, Gender and Canadian Immigration Policy: Blacks from the Caribbean, 1900-1932,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 28 (Winter 1994): 131-148.

³ For further discussions of Canada’s immigration policies see: Joseph Mensah, *Black Canadians: History, Experiences, Social Conditions* (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2002); Valerie Knowles, *Strangers at Our Gates: Canadian Immigration and Immigration Policy, 1540 – 1997* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2007); WW. Anderson and R. W. Grant, *The New New-comers* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, 1987).

experience, age, and fluency in English or French; dramatically reducing an individual immigration officer's ability to create barriers for prospective immigrants, based exclusively on the criterion of race.⁴ The points system allowed for the entry of non-European immigrants into Canada including a significant number of young, educated Caribbean migrants.⁵ As thousands of migrants arrived from Jamaica, Trinidad, Barbados, Guyana and Haiti, as well as from Britain having migrated there in the 1940s-1960s, Caribbean immigration more than doubled in the country.⁶ Despite the earlier presence of blacks in Canada, the arrival of large numbers of Caribbean migrants represented for many Canadians the *visible and noteworthy* arrival of blackness within the nation.

Arriving in the same year the 1967 points system was implemented, Cecily Tremaine came to Canada from Trinidad via England as part of this wave of blacks who migrated as a result of changing immigration policies. Upon arrival, Tremaine began working at Canadian Life Insurance Company as a filing clerk and it was here that she received her first taste of racial inequality in the Canadian labour system. After she was

⁴ Canada, Immigration Act, 1967. Also see: Louis Parai, "Canada's Immigration Policy, 1962-1974," *International Migration Review* Vol. 9, No. 4 (Winter, 1975): 449-477; Alan G. Green and David A. Green, "Canadian Immigration Policy: The Effectiveness of the Point System and Other Instruments," *The Canadian Journal of Economics* (Nov. 1995): 1006-1041; Reginald Whitaker, *Canadian Immigration Policy Since Confederation* (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 1991); Joseph Mensah, *Black Canadians*, 61-85; Valerie J Knowles, *Strangers at Our Gates* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1988); Ninette Kelly and M.J. Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic: A History of Canadian Immigration Policy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998).

⁵ For more on Canada's immigration policy and rising Caribbean migration, see James W. St. G. Walker, *The West Indians in Canada* (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 1984); Agnes Calliste, "Race, Gender and Canadian Immigration Policy: Blacks from the Caribbean, 1900-1932," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 28 (1993-1994): 134-48; John Schultz, "White Man's Country: Canada and the West Indian Immigrant, 1900-1965," *American Review of Canadian Studies* 12 (1982): 53-64; W.W. Anderson, *Caribbean Immigrants: A Socio-demographic Profile* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, 1993); Frances Henry, "Caribbean Migration to Canada: Prejudice and Opportunity," in Barry B. Levine, ed., *The Caribbean Exodus* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1987).

⁶ Caribbean immigration numbers more than doubled after 1967, rising from 3,700 of the immigrant population in 1966 to over 8,000 in 1967. James Walker also describes a 'second stage' migration of Caribbean immigrants from Britain and elsewhere who also contributed to increasing numbers of Caribbean migrants in Canada after 1967. James W. St. G. Walker, *The West Indians in Canada*, 11-12.

refused a promotion within the organization despite her qualifications and hard work, Tremaine became enthralled with black activism and civic engagement in the 1960s and began working in various African Canadian community organizations like the Black Education Project and West Indian Social and Educational Research project (WISER). While active in community projects such as these, Tremaine attended the teacher education program at York University part-time while she was a single parent to her son. The experience led Tremaine to assess her positionality as a black Caribbean woman living abroad facing obstacles to equal education and employment.⁷ After years of community work and her increasing disillusionment with leadership in black community organizations, Tremaine began her teaching career in 1977.

Tremaine's experience was not a singular one; as I discuss below, her motivations for entering Canada and choosing a career as an educator were common among other black women in Canada. Cecily joined hundreds of black women who taught in Ontario classrooms between the 1940s and 1980s, as 'outsiders-within.'⁸ According to black feminist theorist Patricia Hill Collins, black women occupied positions as 'outsiders-within' in organizations that privileged white male membership. As a result, black women were treated as 'outsiders' even though they had access to and a legitimate place in the institutions where they worked.⁹ For the black women in this research project,

⁷ Cecily Tremaine. Interview by author.

⁸ My research reviewed a significant number of *visibly* identifiable African Canadian men and women who were enrolled in teacher training programs in Ontario. Their pictures were documented in the yearbooks of London, Windsor, Toronto, Hamilton, Lakeshore and Stratford Normal Schools. These normal schools predominantly served residents in the Southwestern Ontario area. I identified 215 visibly 'African Canadian' women who graduated from the above listed teachers' colleges. Based on these normal school yearbooks, I was able to create a database. Here after, this database will be referred as "Teachers' College Yearbook Database, 1940s-1980s."

⁹ Patricia Hill Collins, "Learning from Outsider Within: The Sociologist Significance of Black Feminist Thought," *Social Problems* Vol. 33, No. 6 (Oct-Dec. 1986): 14-32; Patricia Hill Collins, *Fighting Words: Black Women and the Search for Justice* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1998), 3-10.

their multiple positions as racial minorities, immigrants, and workers in Canadian schools forced the negotiation of their material realities surrounding lower economic and employment opportunities, with ideas of belonging and cultural survival.

This chapter will explore the reasons black women entered the teaching profession. It hopes to interrogate the historical legacies in the black community that attracted so many women into the profession and assess whether these women attached any particular importance to teaching in the development of their communities and individual identities. Through the use of oral histories, newspaper articles, teachers' college yearbooks and pamphlets, and education reports, this chapter will discuss the motivations behind black women's decisions to enter the teaching profession and highlight some of the challenges they faced as educators. By examining the limitations and options that not only pushed but also attracted black women into the field, I will explore how black Canadian women's experiences within Canadian schooling institutions remained fundamental to identity formation and their personal understandings of Canadian-ness.

Blacks in Canada and Early Schooling Practices

Although Canada had its own institution of slavery beginning in the seventeenth century, it was with the arrival of Black Loyalists to Nova Scotia in 1783 that education became an increasing concern for black communities in Canada. With the start of the American Revolution, Black Loyalists, enslaved Africans and their descendants owned by Loyalist Americans left the thirteen colonies for the Caribbean, England, Quebec, Sierra Leone and Nova Scotia where they were promised land allotments, as well as

equal rights and freedoms as loyal British subjects.¹⁰ Joining a smaller number of free and enslaved populations already in Nova Scotia, this large influx of Loyalists soon realized that the Nova Scotian government was unable to fulfill promises of land and economic support. Instead, Black Loyalists were settled in racially segregated districts, with small land allocations in the least desirable regions of Nova Scotia. They lived in marginal, segregated communities that, as historian James Walker contends, stemmed from racism and Canada's history of slavery. Associating blacks with a subordinate role in society, "occupational and residential exclusivity" meant that blacks were shut out from the existing (white) churches and schools and created segregated settlements and institutions in areas such as Digby and Shelburne.¹¹

In the case of Ontario, early records in the *Upper Canadian Gazette* documented small numbers of blacks, enslaved and free, within the province. As slavery became entrenched in the United States through legislative bills such as the Fugitive Slave Acts of 1793 and 1850, blacks in the United States felt threatened by the encroaching nature of enslavement and pushed further north into Upper Canada where the importation of new slaves was prohibited. Enacted first in 1793, the U.S. Fugitive Slave Act gave American slaveholders the right to recover escaped enslaved persons and penalized those who assisted in their escape. The 1850 bill strengthened the enforcement of this act by

¹⁰ Robin Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*, 24-60; Harvey Amani Whitfield, *Blacks on the Border: The Black Refugees in British North America, 1815-1860* (Burlington: University of Vermont Press, 2006), 4; Mary Beth Norton, "The Fate of Some Black Loyalists of the American Revolution," *Journal of Negro History* Vol. 58, No. 4 (Oct., 1973): 402-403.

¹¹ James W. St. G. Walker, *Racial Discrimination in Canada: The Black Experience* (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association Booklet No. 41, 1985), 8-9. See also: Robin Winks, "Slavery, the Loyalists, and English Canada, 1760-1801," *The History of Immigration and Racism in Canada*, Barrington Walker, ed. (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 2008); James W. St. G. Walker, *The Black Loyalists: The Search for a Promised Land in Nova Scotia and Sierra Leone 1783-1870* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1992); Harvey Amani Whitfield, *Blacks on the Border: The Black Refugees in British North America, 1815-1860* (Burlington: University of Vermont Press, 2006).

levying harsher punishments and allowing for the capture of enslaved persons anywhere in the United States, including Northern states where slavery had been abolished.¹² As the United States increased restrictions on enslaved and free black populations, Upper Canada began the process of gradual abolition through the implementation of the “Act to Prevent the Further Introduction of Slaves and to Limit the Term of Contract for Servitude within this Province.” Passed on July 9, 1793, Upper Canada’s anti-slavery law prevented the importation of black slaves into the province and freed children of slaves within the province after the age of twenty-five.¹³ The combination of the enactment of both the Fugitive Slave Act and the Abolition Act in the same year, encouraged an influx of significant concentrations of former slaves and freeborn blacks to settle in areas like Sandwich, Harrow, Anderdon, Gosfield, Colchester, Chatham, London and Brantford.¹⁴ With increasing numbers, blacks encountered open hostility from white settlers, were refused accommodations in hotels and taverns, and resided in separate isolated communities, similar to their Nova Scotian counterparts.¹⁵ While race was an important and, at times, primary determinant for the status of black Canadians, gender also defined male and female conditions of social, economic, and political survival in Canadian society differently. In Buxton and Chatham for example, many black men

¹² Jacqueline L. Tobin, *From Midnight to Dawn: The Last Tracks of the Underground Railroad* (New York: Doubleday Broadway Publishing Group, 2007), 6-7.

¹³ *Statutes of the Province of Upper Canada*, 33 George III (1793), c. 7, “An Act to prevent further introduction of slaves, and to limit the term of contracts for servitude within this province.”

¹⁴ Kristen McLaren, “We Had No Desire to be Set Apart: Forced Segregation of Black Students in Canada West and Myths of British Egalitarianism,” *Social History/Histoire Sociale* Vol. 37, No. 74 (2004): 71; Fred Landon, “The Negro Migration to Canada After the Passing of the Fugitive Slave Act,” *The Journal of Negro History* Vol. 5, No. 1 (Jan. 1920): 22; Robin Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*, 142-146. Also see: Donald Simpson, with Paul E. Lovejoy, ed., *Under the North Star: Black Communities in Upper Canada Before Confederation (1867)* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2005).

¹⁵ Robin Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*, 178-232; Linda Brown-Kubisch, *The Queen’s Bush Settlement: Black Pioneers, 1839-1865* (Toronto: Natural Heritage, 2004), 7-14, 147. William Renwick Riddell, “Slave in Upper Canada,” *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* Vol. 14, No. 2 (May 1923-Feb 1924): 249-253.

owned property and businesses, were entitled to the right to vote, received early education in Latin and Greek, and often worked in nearby farms away from their family homes. Black women, however, reared children, cleared and farmed family land, sold wares at local markets, were denied property rights and were largely educated in the domestic sciences.¹⁶ According to Peggy Bristow, black men and women experienced varying systems of oppression that distinguished their experiences within Canada but often relegated them as labourers, domestics, and servants to white majority populations. Therefore, early social, economic and educational segregation in various Canadian communities created a system of subordination that would affix blacks into the lowest levels of Canada's racial, gendered and class hierarchies and continue to characterize their lived experiences into the twentieth century.

As blacks increased in numbers, particularly in the southwestern Ontario region where, according to Kristen McLaren, they comprised about twenty to thirty percent of the population, the white majority portrayed them as morally inferior and of a subordinate class.¹⁷ Implementing diverse methods such as changing school district boundaries and removing black students from schools, white administrators and community members ensured that the racial mixing of pupils was restricted and that blacks had limited access to education. Since education was one important way of obtaining moral, social and economic mobility, these limitations ensured that black subjugation continued.¹⁸

¹⁶ Peggy Bristow, "“Whatever you raise in the ground you can sell it in Chatham”: Black Women in Buxton and Chatham, 1850-65,” in *We're Rooted Here and They Can't Pull Us Up': Essays in African Canadian Women's History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 69-126.

¹⁷ Kristen McLaren, “We Had No Desire to be Set Apart,” 72.

¹⁸ Alison Prentice argues that in building school systems in nineteenth century Ontario, school promoters believed that regulation and socialization should be part of the common schooling experience. Educational reformers responded to societal hopes and fears and conceived of schools as protective environments. Prentice contends that nineteenth century reformers believed that formal schooling and education were necessary not only to elevate the moral and intellectual capacity of Upper Canadians, but also to encourage

Consequently, although the implementation of policies such as the School Act of 1847 afforded funds and tax allocations to create common schools for all Canadian taxpayers, according to Ontario's provincial Superintendent of Education, Egerton Ryerson, "the prejudices and feelings of the people are stronger than the law."¹⁹

That prejudice, according to McLaren, emanated from fears among white Canadians who believed that "black children would prove to be a bad moral influence upon their own children if both were allowed to attend the same schools."²⁰ By the time the Common School Act of 1850, which was supported by Superintendent Ryerson, became institutionalized, racial and religious separation in Ontario schools was already common practice. Establishing separate schools for Protestant, Roman Catholic and black families, the School Act of 1850 was supposed to promote individual choice in supporting schools; however, the legislation was used to force many black students into separate institutions. While there were occasions where black children were permitted into common schools, they were often forced to sit on separate benches or isolated within these classroom spaces. More often than not, black children were not allowed into common schools and were required to attend separate black institutions.²¹

In response to black exclusion from public schools, black teachers and parents created their own institutions with little assistance from white administrators. Black women such as abolitionist, teacher and newspaper editor, Mary Ann Shadd Cary and

their economic development. Alison Prentice, *The School Promoters: Education and Social Class in Mid-Nineteenth Century Upper Canada* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977), 46.

¹⁹ Robin Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*, 369.

²⁰ Kristen McLaren, "We Had No Desire to be Set Apart," 71-72; *An Act for Amending the Common School Act of Upper Canada; and an Act for the Better Establishment and Maintenance of Common Schools in Canada* (Montreal: S. Debishire and G. Desbarats, 1847).

²¹ Robin Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*, 368; Afua Cooper, "Black Women and Work in Nineteenth – Century Canada West: Black Woman Teacher Mary Bibb" in *'We're Rooted Here and They Can't Pull Us Up': Essays in African Canadian Women's History*, 148-9; James Walker, *Racial Discrimination in Canada*, 11.

educator Mary Bibb opened schools in Sandwich and Windsor in order to accommodate black students who were excluded from common schools in the area. These black separate schools often struggled to maintain attendance, received inadequate supplies, and remained underfunded and temporary in operation.²² McLaren argues that where black community members and teachers were forced to open separate schools for black pupils, black educators ensured that these facilities were also open to white and Indigenous students in order to promote integration.²³ Therefore, while many white Canadians were trying to marginalize and relegate black communities, some black Canadian educators envisioned a more expansive view of schooling: they believed that education could serve a broader purpose of racial integration and equality.

It is important to note that while the Common School Act of 1850 encouraged separate schooling, racial separation within the province remained uneven and dispersed. Robin Winks explains that in Toronto and Hamilton, integrated schools existed and many Canadians celebrated their tolerance and belief that racially mixed schools were symbolic of British egalitarianism and Christian morality.²⁴ At the same time, historians James St. G. Walker, Claudette Knight, Donald Simpson, Jason Silverman and others contend that separate schooling practices significantly affected black Canadian communities and continued to mark their experiences into the twentieth century. Separate schools flourished in Niagara, St. Catharines, Dresden, Simcoe, Chatham, Buxton, Sandwich,

²² Afua Cooper, "Black Teachers in Canada West, 1850-1870: A History" (M.A. Thesis, University of Toronto, 1991), 72. Claudette Knight, "Black Parents Speak: Education in Mid-Nineteenth Century Canada West," *Ontario History* Vol. 89, No. 2 (December 1997): 269-284; Donald G. Simpson, *Under the North Star: Black Communities in Upper Canada Before Confederation (1867)*, 264; Jane Rhodes, *Mary Ann Shadd Cary: The Black Press and Protest in the Nineteenth Century* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 26.

²³ Kristen McLaren, "We Had No Desire to be Set Apart," 71-72.

²⁴ Robin Winks, *Blacks in Canada*, 31, 368; Hildreth Houston Spencer, "To Nestle in the Mane of the British Lion: A History of Canadian Black Education, 1820 to 1870," (PhD dissertation, Northwestern University, 1970), 11.

Gosfield, Mulden, Anderdon and Colchester, where the last segregated school closed in 1964, ten years after the historic *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka (1954)* was won in the United States.²⁵ The foundations of racial prejudice that began with the earliest arrivals of blacks in Canada documented an uneven legacy of white institutional neglect, limited toleration and active hostility concerning black education. These circumstances directly influenced black women's entrance into the teaching profession through the nineteenth century and into the twentieth.

Black Female Access to Employment Opportunities

At the turn of the twentieth century, Canada experienced economic prosperity through massive industrialization, the expansion and development of its western provinces and the completion of the national transcontinental railway system that connected settlers and industries from Montreal to Vancouver.²⁶ Schooling institutions also emerged as places to invest in human capital and train the growing workforce to serve in the industrial economy. As a result, a growing number of technical and vocational schools emerged throughout the country reflecting demands for career related education and taught students skills that included mechanical trades, woodworking,

²⁵ Robin Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*, 385; Constance Backhouse, *Colour-coded: A Legal History of Racism in Canada, 1900-1950* (Toronto: Osgoode Society for Canadian Legal History, 1999), 250; George Sefa Dei, *Teaching Africa: Towards a Transgressive Pedagogy* (Toronto: Springer Dordrecht Hiedelberg, 2010), 27; Marvin Schiff, "End School Segregation, Essex County Negroes Demand," *Globe and Mail*, November 9, 1964; *Submission to the Public School Board of the Township School Area "B", Township of Colchester South*, November 9, 1964. Archives of Ontario. RG 76-3-0-203 box 13; Jim Etherington, "Negro Ratepayers Charge School Segregation," *The London Free Press*, November 10, 1964, HEIRS Black History Collection; "Ontario Ending Negroes' Schools," *The Globe and Mail*, March 13, 1964. For more on Ontario's last segregated school, see Funke Aladejebi, "The Story of S.S.#11: Ontario's Last Segregated School" (Master's Thesis, York University, 2007); James T. Patterson and William W. Freehling, *Brown V. Board of Education: A Civil Rights Milestone and its Troubled Legacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

²⁶ R. Douglas Francis, Richard Jones and Donald B. Smith, *Journeys: A History of Canada* (Oxford, UK: Nelson Education, 2010), 286-290; Alvin Finkel and Margaret Conrad, *History of the Canadian Peoples, Volume II: 1867 to the Present* (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman Ltd., 1993), 369-373; Roger Riendeau, *A Brief History of Canada*, Second Edition (New York: Facts on File Inc., 2007), 306-307. See also: Peter Li, *The Making of Post-War Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1996).

domestic science and stenography.²⁷ In addition, Ontario legislated free schooling and compulsory education for children between the ages of seven to twelve through the Ontario School Law of 1871, which hoped to standardize education across the province.²⁸

At the same time, a rising number of wage earning women were moving away from their farms and homes and into the urban industrial labour force. Historian Carolyn Strange contends that in the early twentieth century, young working-class women were moving to urban centres in Toronto and Montreal to escape domestic and farm work. She argues that, “as the growing service sector drew women into department stores and offices as well as factories, the trickle of women leaving domestic service became an unstoppable torrent.”²⁹ Strange explains that these working women were migrating outside of the home and family and entering shop and factory labour for the individual wages and increasing leisure time these positions offered. This was more evident in the field of education where women comprised of about 77 percent of public school teachers in Canada by 1900. While they were still paid less than their male counterparts, the average salary of public school teachers was comparable to those of industrial workers.³⁰

Although white working women gained increasing access to education and employment in the early twentieth century, conditions for black women reflected minimal improvement. In her analysis of black Nova Scotian women in the nineteenth century, historian Suzanne Morton argues that the separate spheres ideology, which determined

²⁷ R.D. Gidney and W.P.J. Millar, *How Schools Worked: Public Education in English Canada, 1900-1940* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2012), 262-265.

²⁸ Marta Danylewycz and Alison Prentice, “Teacher’s Work: Changing Patterns and Perceptions in the Emerging School Systems of Nineteenth and Early Twentieth-Century Central Canada,” in Alison Prentice and Marjorie R. Theobald, eds., *Women Who Taught: Perspectives on the History of Women and Teachings* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 140.

²⁹ Carolyn Strange, *Toronto’s Girl Problem: The Perils and Pleasures of the City, 1880-1930* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 4.

³⁰ Paul Axelrod, *The Promise of Schooling: Education in Canada, 1800-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 48-49.

that the domestic sphere was a woman's domain while the public sphere was reserved for men, was often employed by white women and did not reflect the material realities of black women's lives. Morton also asserts that while black women also shared lower paying jobs with white working-class women, employment was particularly difficult for black women and vulnerable to loss. This meant that black women often did not find work in factories as their white counterparts did, but rather, as Morton explains, as a result of racism, black women "regardless of status in the community, property holdings, or occupation of the husband, married women and widows charred, and young women were servants."³¹

Trapped by the legacies of slavery and racialization, black women in the nineteenth century were valued for their productive and social reproductive capabilities, and often found themselves in positions of servitude and service. Maureen Elgersman, Kenneth Donovan, Patience Elabor-Idemudia, Linda Carty, Dionne Brand and others document black women's presence in early Canada as they laboured predominantly in the domestic service field.³² They argue that Canada's labour market, structured by race, class and gender, created systematic patterns in which black women were believed to be 'naturally' suited for specific types of work. So much so that up until the 1940s, eighty percent of black women worked as "domestics, mother's (sic) helpers, housekeepers,

³¹ Suzanne Morton, "Separate Sphere in a Separate World: African-Nova Scotian Women in Late 19th-Century Halifax County," *Acadiensis* Vol. XXII, No. 2 (Spring 1993), 67 – 69.

³² Maureen Elgersman, *Unyielding Spirits: Black Women and Slavery in Early Canada and Jamaica* (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1999); Kenneth Donovan, "Slaves and Their Owners in Ile Royale, 1713 – 1760," *Acadiensis* XXVI, 1 (Autumn 1995): 3-32; Patience Elabor-Idemudia, "Gender and the New African Diaspora: African Migrant Women in the Canadian Labour Force," in Isidore Okpewho, eds. et al., *The African Diaspora: African Origins and New World Identities*, (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1999); Peggy Bristow et al., *We're Rooted Here and They Can't Pull Us Up': Essays in African Canadian Women's History*.

general helpers and laundresses.”³³ This became even more prevalent, according to historian Linda Carty, as Canadian immigration patterns allowed for the limited entry of black women solely for the purposes of their employment as servants and domestic labourers.³⁴

In addition to recruiting European women to work as domestic labourers, in 1910 the federal government recruited about one hundred Guadeloupian women to work in middle-class Quebec homes to fill the domestic positions abandoned by Canadian born white women.³⁵ While Canada’s first Caribbean domestic scheme was considered to be successful by employers, according to Agnes Calliste, the program ended a year after its implementation amidst state fears of sexual immorality and single parenthood, thereby perpetuating stereotypes of uncontrolled black femininity.³⁶ While European women were viewed as domestic servants who would become wives and mothers of the nation, Caribbean domestics, most of whom were black, were regarded as temporary workers who had the potential to become economic and social liabilities.

Whereas white women struggled with the sexual division of labour that limited their employment positions into feminine work, black women, many of whom worked and faced both the sexual and racial division of the labour market, were always searching for better employment options. The Second World War, as historian Dionne Brand argues, made it possible for black women to enter employment fields that were once

³³ Patience Elabor-Idemudia, “Gender and the New African Diaspora: African Migrant Women in the Canadian Labour Force,” 237.

³⁴ Linda Carty, “‘Labour Only Please:’ African Canadian Women and the State,” in *We’re Rooted Here and They Can’t Pull Us Up*, 94.

³⁵ Joan Sangster, *Transforming Labour: Women and Work in Postwar Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 20.

³⁶ Agnes Calliste, “Race, Gender and Canadian Immigration Policy: Blacks from the Caribbean, 1900 – 1932,” *Journal of Canadian Studies*. Vol. 28, No. 4 (Winter 1993-1994), 134.

unattainable.³⁷ As more men either enlisted or were drafted into military service, labour shortages in farm and factory industries increased the recruitment of women as wartime labourers. Brand explains that while black women were able to gain a foothold in factory work during the 1940s, they held precarious positions of employment where they performed dangerous and grueling work for lower pay and status. At the same time, black women continued to be limited to employment either within their own communities, through government agencies that assisted their communities, or in limited positions in the public sector.³⁸ Despite societal pressures for them to reenter domestic work after the Second World War, some black women looked to careers like teaching to gain access to the professional workforce. Black women's push for teacher training was a response to these larger socioeconomic trends that limited employment and educational options for racialized persons. Compounded by the fact that there was a teacher shortage Ontario in the 1940s and 1950s, black women teachers were strategically recruited to fill these labour market voids.

WWII and Canada's Sex-segregated Labour force

When World War II ended in 1945, the nation's wheat and industrial products were in high demand, oil and natural gas were discovered in western Canada, and Canadians experienced relative prosperity, stayed in school longer and demonstrated their

³⁷ Dionne Brand, *No Burden to Carry*, 181; Agnes Calliste, "Race, Gender and Canadian Immigration Policy: Blacks from the Caribbean, 1900 – 1932," 132.

³⁸ Statistical data and scholarship concerning black participation in the Canadian labour market from the 1920s to the 1980s is limited, however we can assume that Blacks were often over-represented in low-level jobs or semi-skilled manual labour despite high education and official language ability. As late as 1996, Joseph Mensah's analysis of blacks in Canada reveals that despite having similar education and official language abilities to all Canadian women, black women earned less and had fewer options for employment. Black women often had higher labour force participation rates yet experienced higher unemployment rates. Mensah analysis draws directly from the 1996 census to reveal that black women had an unemployment rate of 19.8 percent, nearly double the unemployment rate for the average (white) Canadian woman. Furthermore, only 0.19 percent of black women held senior management employment positions in comparison to the 0.44 percent of average Canadian women. Joseph Mensah, *Black Canadians*, 150-153.

purchasing power by participating in consumer markets. This led to the increasing demand and expansion of public services, creating opportunities for employment in the professional, technical, clerical and sales fields.³⁹ And yet, the postwar period was an era of contradictions that recognized the increasing presence and importance of working-women but still promoted the belief that a woman's full-time job was and should always be the maintenance of her domestic duties within the heterosexual nuclear family.

Despite entering the labour market in increasing numbers, women were encouraged to leave the paid workforce after marriage, partly due to federal funding cuts that were made to childcare, tax exemptions that were denied to married women and the fact that women were barred from most civil service jobs.⁴⁰ Gendered notions of women's secondary role in society, and particularly in the formal workforce, afforded little support for them as workers and mothers. In addition, restrictions on women's entrance into specific types of jobs reinforced a sexual division of labour that, as Joan Sangster argues, structured women's work options. Sangster contends that "women workers were more likely to be in part-time and interrupted employment, in lower wage brackets, and save for *teaching* and nursing professionals, in jobs with fewer benefits and less security."⁴¹ This meant that while women gained increasing employment in the rapidly growing service sector,

³⁹ Doug Owrarn, *Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby Boom Generation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 19; R.D. Gidney, *From Hope to Harris: The Reshaping of Ontario's Schools* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 25-26; Joy Parr, "What Makes Washday Less Blue? Gender, Nation, and Technology Choice in Post War Canada," in James Opp and John C. Walsh eds., *Home, Work, and Play: Situating Canadian Social History, 1840 – 1980* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2006), 78-91.

⁴⁰ Joan Sangster, *Transforming Labour*, 18. For more on Post World War II employment, see: Doug Owrarn, *Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby Boom Generation*; Veronica Strong-Boag, "Canada's Wage-Earning Wives and the Construction of the Middle-Class, 1945-60," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (1994) 5-25; Mona Lee Gleason, *Normalizing the Ideal: Psychology, Schooling, and the Family in Postwar Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999); Jennifer A. Stephen, *Pick One Intelligent Girl: Employability, Domesticity and the Gendering of Canada's Welfare State, 1939-1947* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007); Pat Armstrong and Hugh Armstrong, *The Double Ghetto: Canadian Women and Their Segregated Work* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1978).

⁴¹ Joan Sangster, *Transforming Labour*, 20, my emphasis.

they were paid less than their male counterparts and often restricted to ‘feminine’ type work in nursing, secretarial and clerical work, and teaching. Women’s increasing presence in teaching was particularly high in the postwar period, so much so that by 1951, more than seventy percent of all teachers were women.⁴²

Educational historians Alison Prentice, Marta Danylewycz, Sheila Cavanagh, Janet Guildford and others argue that as the number of elementary educators became over-represented by women, albeit with changing points of access based on geography and differing social expectations around women and work, the profession underwent a process of feminization and ghettoization where women were believed to have a natural appetite for working with young children and willing to work for low wages.⁴³ Male educators tended to dominate the senior grade levels and held most administrative positions, which included principals and inspectors, perpetuating ideas that elementary women teacher training was inferior or that the work involved with teaching young children was relatively unskilled and intended primarily for nurturance.⁴⁴ In addition, as result of a growing teaching shortage within the province, marriage bans were eliminated in Ontario in the 1940s and married women comprised at least 28 percent of women

⁴² Doug Owsram, *Born at the Right Time*, 116.

⁴³ Alison Prentice, “The Feminization of Teaching in British North America and Canada, 1845-75,” in Susan Mann Trofimenkoff and Alison Prentice, eds., *The Neglected Majority: Essays in Canadian Women’s History, Vol. 1* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977), 49-69; Kristina Llewellyn, *Democracy’s Angels*; Janet Guildford, “‘Separate Spheres’: The Feminization of Public School Teaching in Nova Scotia, 1838-1880,” *Acadiensis* Vol. XXII, No. 1 (Autumn 1992): 44-64; Marta Danylewycz and Alison Prentice, “Teacher’s Work: Changing Patterns and Perceptions in the Emerging School Systems of Nineteenth and Early Twentieth-Century Central Canada,” in Alison Prentice and Marjorie R. Theobald, eds., *Women Who Taught: Perspectives on the History of Women and Teachings* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 136-159; Rebecca Priegert Coulter and Christopher John Greig, “The Man Question in Teaching: An Historical Overview,” *The Alberta Journal of Educational Research* Vol. 54, No. 4 (Winter 2008): 420-431.

⁴⁴ R.D. Gidney, *From Hope to Harris*, 21; Kristina Llewellyn, *Democracy’s Angels*, 62.

teachers in 1951.⁴⁵ Ultimately, despite their increasing presence in the profession, women teachers were still expected to maintain “heterosexual marriageability” where they demonstrated conventional femininity and motherhood.⁴⁶ The ‘nurturing’ nature of the profession connected women’s educational work to that of caring/mother-work and served as an extension of women’s appropriate gender roles. For black women, many of whom were already married and participating in the workforce, the elimination of marriage bans did little to change their access to the profession.

This new celebration of working wives and mothers was not previously extended to black women who often participated in the workforce despite their marital and family status. Scholars Suzanne Morton, Dionne Brand and Lawrence Hill all document the longstanding tradition of black Canadian women working in formal and informal labour markets, many of whom were married and had children.⁴⁷ So much so that by the time the Canadian Negro Women’s Association (CANEWA) was created in 1951, the organization of Mother’s Day Tea social events, funds and provisions to aid working women with struggling families and the creation of scholarships for black students acknowledged black women’s role not only as workers but also as wives and mothers.⁴⁸ In fact, many leaders and members of the Canadian Negro Women’s Association held long standing careers before and after marriage. Such was the case of Alcenya Crowley who married Canadian podiatrist William Crowley in 1951. In her oral testimony about the history of the CANEWA, Crowley reflected common attitudes about marriage and

⁴⁵ Sheila Cavanagh, “Female Teacher Gender and Sexuality in Twentieth Century Ontario Canada,” in Rebecca Priegert Coulter and Helen Harper, eds., *History is Hers: Women Educators in Twentieth Century Ontario* (Alberta: Detselig Enterprises Ltd., 2005), 115.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 112, 123-130.

⁴⁷ Suzanne Morton, “Separate Sphere in a Separate World,” 67 – 69; Dionne Brand, *No Burden to Carry*; Lawrence Hill, *Women of Vision: The Story of the Canadian Negro Women’s Association, 1951-1976* (Toronto: Umbrella Press, 1996), 13-21.

⁴⁸ Lawrence Hill, *Women of Vision*, 17-20.

motherhood in twentieth century black communities. She explained, “If your marriage fails, you never want to be totally dependent on a man, and many women would be a lot better off if they weren’t. I had qualifications and more than adequate training so it made it a little easier, but it didn’t mean that I got the best jobs.”⁴⁹ Crowley’s emphasis on training and employment despite her marriage to a successful doctor reinforced notions that the separate spheres and male breadwinner ideologies were not applicable to some black women’s lives.

As working wives and mothers, black and white women shared a similar gendered experience, however, it was not until white women were afforded the privileges of recognition as working mothers, did black women’s positions as wives and mothers gain any consideration. The recruitment of all women teachers in the twentieth century, then, was a result of multiple factors which included prevailing gender roles that perceived women as natural caregivers, but also served as a response to the province’s expanding school systems and increasing need for educators.

‘Because of the shortage’: Ontario’s Teacher Shortage, 1950s – 1960s

As a consequence of Canada’s growing population and rising immigration at the end of World War II, the need for government involvement in social services and state funded projects in education dramatically increased.⁵⁰ In Ontario, education policies,

⁴⁹ Lawrence Hill, *Women of Vision*, 35.

⁵⁰ For more in Canada’s Post WWII population and immigration, see: Franca Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People: Italian Immigrant in Postwar Toronto* (Toronto: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1992); Donald H. Avery, *Reluctant Host: Canada’s Response to Immigrant Workers, 1986-1994* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1995); Roderic P. Beaujot and Donald Kerr, eds., *The Changing Face of Canada: Essential Readings in Population* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press Inc., 2007); Freda Hawkins, *Canada and Immigration: Public Policy and Public Concern* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press and the Institute of Public Administration of Canada, 1972). For more on social services see: Nancy Christie, *Engendering the State: Family, Work and Welfare in Canada*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000); Jennifer Stephen, *Pick One Intelligent Girl: Employability, Domesticity and the Gendering of Canada’s Welfare State, 1939 – 1947* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007); Margaret Little, *No*

including the “Porter Plan” (1949), which introduced grade divisions to allow for tailored course instruction for students, were written to facilitate the greater expansion of government commitments and financial contributions in the education sector.⁵¹

According to various stakeholders, increased state intervention was designed to improve the economic well-being of Canadian citizens particularly in the areas of employment, farm subsidies, health care and educational programming.⁵² Across the provinces, citizens were re-evaluating Canada’s position in global markets and one of the major ways they assessed the nation’s economic viability was through its education system. The *Chatham Daily Star* reported that as Canada’s position in the world markets was changing as a result of increasing foreign investments, so too was its need for highly educated, trained men and women to deal with these technological advancements. The paper reported that seventy-five percent of provincial expenditures on education would be put to building new technical and vocational schools across Canada and that these schools would “go a long way toward fitting our young people to take their place in modern industry, and toward assuring Canada’s prosperity in the future.”⁵³

The government was spending more money on education (at all levels) than ever before and implemented programs like the Technical and Vocational Training Assistance Act of 1960 (TVTAA), which heavily subsidized operating costs for schools teaching

Car, No Radio, No Liquor Permit: The Moral Regulation of Single Mothers in Ontario, 1920 – 1997 (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1998); Shirley Tillotson, “Class and Community in Canadian Welfare Work, 1933 – 1960,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* No. 32, Vol. 1 (Spring 1997): 30-52.

⁵¹ Education Minister, Dana Porter, introduced what became known as the ‘Porter Plan’ to develop specific courses of studies based on age. Divisions in the school curriculum under this policy included: primary (grades 1-3), junior (4-6), intermediate (7-10), senior (11-13). R.D. Gidney, *From Hope to Harris*, 32; Kristina R. Llewellyn, “Gendered Democracy: Women Teachers in Post-War Toronto,” *Historical Studies in Education* Vol. 18, No. 1 (2006): 8; Kurt Clausen, “Educational Reform in Ontario: The Importance of Pleasant Avenue School, 1962-1975,” *Historical Studies in Education* Vol. 26, No. 1 (Spring 2014): 70.

⁵² Alvin Finkel and Margaret Conrad, *History of the Canadian Peoples, Volume II: 1867 to the Present* (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman Ltd., 1993), 333.

⁵³ “Government Aids Schools in Chatham, Wallaceburg,” *Chatham Daily News*, February 24, 1962.

vocational subjects. The act also ensured the expansion of vocational training programs with the intention of preparing students for the job market.⁵⁴ Educational institutions became evermore present in discourses surrounding the construction of ideal nationhood, economic success and continued to be places that housed democratic, ‘modern’ and Christian ideals that began in the eighteenth century. Schools, as educational historian Paul Axelrod argues, continued to be places where students would learn the value of good citizenship, moral responsibility, and patriotism.⁵⁵

These changes were compounded by the growing popularity of educational progressivism which, according to R.D. Gidney, encouraged a shift away from learning traditional academic subjects to more practical learning.⁵⁶ Educational progressives

⁵⁴ R.D. Gidney explains that the Technical and Vocational Training Assistance Act of 1960 detailed the federal government’s proposal to pay seventy-five per cent of the capital costs for the expansion of technical and vocational education, along with a significant proportion of operating costs for programs where at least fifty per cent of school time was devoted to vocational subjects. Originally meant to be in operation for three years, the program remained for at least six years. R.D. Gidney, *From Hope to Harris*, 44-46. The province also spent more money on its students. Between 1952 and 1960, the national average spent on each student rose from \$204 to \$348, with money spent on expansion of school buildings, increased salaries for school teachers, and school board expenses. Hugh A. Stevenson, “Developing Public Education in Post War Canada to 1960,” in J. Donald Wilson, Robert M. Stamp, and Louis-Philippe Audet, eds., *Canadian Education: A History* (Scarborough, Ontario, Prentice Hall Ltd., 1970), 390; Harry Smaller, “Vocational Education in Ontario’s Secondary Schools: Past, Present – and Future?” *Labour Education Training Research Network: Center for Research on Work and Society, I* (Toronto; York University, 2000), 1-33.

⁵⁵ Paul Axelrod, *Scholars and Dollars: Politics, Economics, and the Universities of Ontario, 1945-1980* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 13.

⁵⁶ Educational progressivism became widely accepted in the 1930s and marked a shift away from more traditional learning styles that focused on core academic subjects such as English, mathematics, science, modern languages, history and science. The focus was now on the idea that education was meant to reach everyone and include pupils of various social classes. Progressivism encouraged ideas that education should prepare the child for economic stability through increased vocational and technical programs and subjects focusing on efficiency and class equity. It also focused on a more holistic approach to educating Canadian pupils based on their needs. Educational historians Paul Axelrod, Robert Stamp, and R.D. Gidney reveal that school policies in the 1940s and 1950s represented an amalgamation of progressive and traditional ideas where administrators understood dominant values of discipline and order while also encouraging an activity based, child-centered curriculum. For more on progressive education in Canadian schools, see: Paul Axelrod, “Beyond the Progressive Education Debate: A Profile of Toronto Schooling in the 1950s,” *Historical Studies in Education*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (Fall 2005) 227-41; Robert M. Stamp, “Growing Up Progressive? Part I: Going to Elementary School in 1940s Ontario,” *Historical Studies in Education* Vol. 17, No. 1 (Spring 2005): 187-98; R.D. Gidney, *From Hope to Harris: The Reshaping of Ontario’s Schools*, 35; Amy von Heyking, “Selling Progressive Education to Albertans, 1935-53,” *Historical Studies in Education* Vol. 10, Nos. 1&2 (1998): 67-84.

believed that in order to prepare children for the modern world, the school needed to be responsible for the development of the whole child, which encompassed his/her physical, mental and social wellbeing. As such, child centredness, along with teaching the whole child, was an important progressive education goal that continued into the end of the 1960s.

Between 1945 and 1965, in response to concerns about population growth, training and standardization, Ontario worked towards a homogenized administrative model for its schools, began consolidating its boards, and hiring directors, superintendents and staff to work in these schools. Architecturally, rural schools changed from single-room buildings where all grades were taught by a single teacher, to smaller rooms in larger buildings, and decreased pupil sizes in each class.⁵⁷ In urban centers, special education programs increased, school districts expanded in North York, Scarborough and Etobicoke, more high schools were built and audiovisual technology became increasingly used in classrooms.⁵⁸

The most notable change within Ontario schools during this period, however, was its increasing student population. In Ontario, according to W.G. Fleming, the number of six year olds who were eligible for school attendance rose from 59,000 in 1941 to 137,000 in 1966, an increase of over 132 percent.⁵⁹ Equally important was increasing immigration in the province that added to school-eligible student populations. Where students of African descent were concerned, there were significant increases in their numbers in Ontario as well, due primarily to a rise in Caribbean immigration, which was

⁵⁷ W.T. Newnham and A.S. Nease, *The Professional Teacher in Ontario: The Heritage, Responsibilities and Practices* (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1965), 135-136.

⁵⁸ R.D. Gidney, *From Hope to Harris*, 29; Hugh A. Stevenson, "Crisis and Continuum: Public Education in the Sixties", 496.

⁵⁹ W.G. Fleming, *Ontario's Educative Society Series, Vol. I: The Expansion of the Educational System*, 47.

predominately Afro-descended. Caribbean immigration rose from 0.9 percent in 1959 to 4.9 percent of Ontario's immigrant population in 1968. Similarly, immigrant populations from Africa rose from 0.4 percent in 1959 to 1.3 percent of the province's immigrant population in 1968.⁶⁰

While these rising immigration rates led to a more diverse population base in Ontario, the black population in Canada still remained relatively small until the late 1960s. In 1951, blacks comprised 0.13 percent of the nation's population; by 1971, this percentage increased to 0.3 percent and later rose to about 2 percent in 1996.⁶¹ In Ontario however, the black population was higher than the national average since the province boasted 62 percent of Canada's black population, with 47.9 percent of the nation's black population residing in Toronto, one percent in Windsor, and one percent in London.⁶² This meant that although Canada's black population was increasing in number, it still remained small in comparison to other immigrant groups. When combined with other immigrant groups that were now deemed "suitable"⁶³ for the growing Canadian nation, the province not only had to provide facilities and educators for these new students, but it also became clear that they needed to create state-sponsored programs to help immigrant students adjust 'appropriately' to Canadian life. With insufficient classrooms and services to accommodate the baby boom generation (those born between 1945 and 1964) and the

⁶⁰ W.G. Fleming, *Ontario's Educative Society Series, Vol. I: The Expansion of the Educational System*, 60.

⁶¹ Joseph Mensah, *Black Canadians: History, Experiences and Social Conditions*, 53.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 79.

⁶³ In his discussion of African Americans from Oklahoma who attempted to immigrate to Canada in the early twentieth century, R. Bruce Shepard recounts the history of white racism, particularly under the Wilfrid Laurier government (1896-1911), which sought to stop black immigration into Western Canada. Shepard argues that preferential treatment was given to European immigrants and black immigration was restricted deeming them as unsuitable to the climate and requirements of Canadian settlement. R. Bruce Shepard, *Deemed Unsuited: Blacks from Oklahoma Move to the Canadian Prairies in Search of Equality in the Early 20th Century, only to Find Racism in Their New Home* (Toronto: Umbrella Press, 1997).

influx of new migrants, a teacher shortage forced teacher-training colleges to expand and shorten the length of time necessary for certification.

As a result of Ontario's teacher shortage, "emergency" teacher training courses allowed for more flexible entrance requirements to incentivize potential teacher candidates. Candidates could either enter teachers' college directly from grade 13 for one year or they could complete their training over the summer months over two years. Teacher candidates entered one of thirteen teachers' colleges in Ontario, which up until 1963, were government administered, publicly funded and free of charge.⁶⁴ Of the new candidates entering teacher-training colleges during this period, the majority opted for summer rather than the full-year programs.⁶⁵

Beginning in 1955, special courses allowed students to take summer classes for eight weeks, then take three weeks of observation and practice teaching. Once a teacher candidate successfully completed a year of teaching, he/she could apply for the completing summer course to become a full-time teacher.⁶⁶ Despite the initial implementation of summer courses, and a significant intake of teacher candidates, the Ontario College of Education soon discovered that additional teachers were still required to fill Ontario schools and allowed for teachers' colleges not only to accept graduating students from grade 13, but grade 12 graduates as well.⁶⁷ While summer courses were offered to both elementary and secondary school educators, the standard requirement was that general education via high school was needed to teach in elementary schools and

⁶⁴ Elizabeth Smyth, "Learning to Teach: Ontario's Elementary School Teacher Education 1960 – 1974," *Education Research and Perspectives*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (2006): 82.

⁶⁵ R. D. Gidney, *From Hope to Harris*, 53.

⁶⁶ W.T. Newnham and A.S. Nease, *The Professional Teacher in Ontario: The Heritage, Responsibilities and Practices* (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1965), 53.

⁶⁷ Ontario Department of Education. *Report of the Minister's Committee on the Training of Elementary School Teachers*. 1966.

university education was required for secondary school teaching.⁶⁸ These summer programs continued until 1967 when, amidst increasing criticism that the accreditation process was not rigorous enough and allowed for an influx of less qualified teachers in the field, there was a push to move teacher training into university institutions.

While Ontario was expanding its training programs through these means, the need for educators was so great that the Department of Education interviewed teachers in Britain wishing to move to Ontario and offered them positions on behalf of specific school boards. This allowed the boards to recruit at least 100 British teachers in the 1954 academic school year alone along with educators with professional training from other provinces and the British Commonwealth, who were validated to teach by “Letters of Standing.”⁶⁹ In that same academic year, the Minister of Education, Mr. H.R. Beattie, reported that “a total of 629 Letters of Standing were granted in the school year 1954-55 to well-prepared teachers coming to Ontario from other provinces in Canada, from the British Isles, or from other countries in the Commonwealth.”⁷⁰ While records did not indicate if all citizens from Commonwealth countries, particularly from the Caribbean and Africa, were allowed to take advantage of this, Canada’s history of employment and immigration patterns suggest that preference may have been given to white Commonwealth immigrants (UK, Australia and New Zealand) who would allegedly be

⁶⁸ R. D. Gidney, *From Hope to Harris*, 53-55; Julian Kitchen and Diana Petrarca, “Teacher Preparation in Ontario: A History,” *Teaching and Learning* Vol.8, No. 1 (2013/2014): 61.

⁶⁹ Letters of Standing were granted on the basis of equivalent academic and professional standing obtained outside the Province of Ontario. *Schools and Teachers in the Province of Ontario, Part II, Secondary Schools, Teachers’ Colleges and Technical Institutes*, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, November 1958.

⁷⁰ Ontario Department of Education. *Mr. H.R. Beattie - Minister’s Diary 1961*, 96-98. Archives of Ontario. RG 2-152, barcode B289565.

better suited to the Canadian climate and able to assimilate in the country.⁷¹ As a result of these changing requirements and recruitment practices, the number of elementary school teachers in the province rose from 12,000 in 1950 to over 93,000 by 1970. The number of secondary school educators substantially grew substantially from less than 5000 in 1950 to over 33,000 in 1970.⁷²

The introduction of summer courses and the Ministry's vigorous recruitment plan reached black women from various geographic areas who were searching for professional careers and economic stability. Black women entered the teaching profession both under emergency summer classes as well as through university institutions. Of the women interviewed for this project, eight entered the profession through summer training programs, five took full year courses directly out of high school, three were trained in the Caribbean, one was trained in London, England, and nine entered the profession through university institutions. While black women entered the profession through a variety of means, it seems clear that when the option of free training and certification over a shorter time period was available, black women, like their white colleagues, entered training colleges through this avenue.

While black Canadian educators in Ontario had been teaching within their own communities as early as the nineteenth century, the postwar baby boom and subsequent teacher shortage led to the training and certification of hundreds of teachers, some of

⁷¹ Triadafilos Triadafilopoulos, "Dismantling White Canada: Race, Rights and the Origins of the Points System," in Triadafilos Triadafilopoulos, ed., *Wanted and Welcome? Policies for Highly Skilled Immigrants in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Springer, 2013), 15-17; Freda Hawkins, *Canada and Immigration: Public Policy and Public Concern* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988), 280-281; Vilna Bashi, "Globalized Anti-blackness: Transnationalizing Western Immigration Law, Policy and Practice," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* Vol. 27, No. 4 (July 2004): 589; Dionne Brand, *No Burden to Carry*, 28; Agnes Calliste, "Race, Gender and Canadian Immigration Policy: Blacks from the Caribbean, 1900-1932," 133.

⁷² R. D. Gidney, *From Hope to Harris*, 56.

whom were black women.⁷³ As previously discussed in this chapter, there was an increasing demand for female educators; however, other variables also influenced black women's entry into teaching. Within my research, interview participants cited a variety of reasons for entering the teaching profession: eight of the 26 participants recalled previous education training as motivation for entering training colleges in Canada; eight women described the growing teacher shortage in the 1940s and 50s and changing admission requirements as their impetus for entering teacher training; six identified family and friends who aided their decisions to become teachers; while seven of the 26 participants described limited employment opportunities and economic need as primary reasons for entering the teaching profession.⁷⁴ It is important to note that the interview participants did not just cite a single reason for entering the profession, but rather recounted a series of overlapping and intersecting reasons for becoming educators. They highlighted the complex and interweaving ways in which money, kinship and community networks, familial and marital status, within broader racial and gendered expectations simultaneously operated to encourage them to view teaching as a viable profession. Their motivations for becoming teachers tell a story not only about choice, but the *quality* of choices available to black women when operating within an education system where race, particularly anti-blackness, and gender indicated difference and limited choices for racialized female persons.

Camille Mead, one of the respondents in my study, joined the increasing number of women who entered teachers' colleges as result of the opportunities afforded by summer courses and redefined entrance requirements. Born on March 26, 1924 in

⁷³ "Teachers' College Yearbook Database, 1940s-1980s."

⁷⁴ Oral Interviews conducted by the author between 2011 to 2013.

Raleigh Township, Ontario, Mead would later teach in the Chatham/Buxton area for fourteen years. The opportunities presented by reconstituted standards and the promise of a consistent income gave Mead the incentive she needed to enter the field. She explained,

...my parents had no money to send us on. And it just so happened that in the *Chatham Daily News* there was a notice that the Department of Education was requesting teachers because there was a shortage and they were also requesting and also paid us...those that were interested, if their applications were received, they would pay us to take the course. And if we took the course, in education, we could be sent anywhere in Ontario to teach. Because of the shortage. So I thought: 'gee sounds interesting'. I never thought, ...I hadn't planned to be a teacher. I wanted to be a secretary like my aunt. But since there was poverty in the family, I thought well this might be a way to help my parents.⁷⁵

Before her training was complete, Mead was able to obtain a job at Greenville School in Chatham township. In rural areas, the need for trained teachers was so dire that some schools were forced to close down because they did not have educators to teach their pupils.⁷⁶ As a result of lower pay, inconsistent pupil attendance and poor physical conditions, rural schools did not attract trained educators in significant numbers. Smaller towns struggled to maintain consistent education standards in county schools and competed with larger urban areas that had resources to open newer buildings and provide better equipment.⁷⁷

There also tended to be differences between the remuneration of rural and urban teachers. This difference could be attributed to a variety of factors such as the varying levels of qualifications, years of experience, and school board budgets based on local

⁷⁵ Camille Mead. Interview by author. Audio recording, Buxton, On., June 3, 2011.

⁷⁶ "Enrolment Reaches All-Time High in Chatham's Schools," *Chatham Daily News*, Thursday September 4, 1952.

⁷⁷ R.D. Gidney, *From Hope to Harris*, 29.

property taxes.⁷⁸ For example, in 1955, the Department of Education reported that female public school educators in rural areas earned an average salary of \$2700 a year in comparison to the \$3961 earned by women in urban centers in Ontario.⁷⁹ This meant that urban schools tended to attract more educators as a result of their attractive pay and facilities. As a consequence, especially if they were willing to teach in rural areas, women like Mead could be approached to teach before they even finished their formal training.

Mead's ability to gain employment was also influenced by her race. In smaller communities in Southwestern Ontario, the majority of the teachers came from Anglo-Saxon Protestant, farming or lower middle-class families.⁸⁰ However, in Chatham, where as early as 1850 the black Canadian population comprised twenty percent of the total population,⁸¹ Mead gained a teaching position in the area relatively quickly because white teachers did not want to teach there. Between 1861 and 1941, nearly half of Ontario's black population lived in Essex and Kent County, which included Chatham, Amherstburg and Colchester.⁸² Within this geographical space, blacks created communities that were almost entirely self-sufficient and self-reliant. Such was the case of the Buxton community, founded in 1849 by William King, which had institutional

⁷⁸ Dianne M. Hallman, "'A Thing of the Past': Teaching in One-Room Schools in Rural Nova Scotia, 1936-1941," *Historical Studies in Education* Vol. 4, No.1 (1992): 121-128.

⁷⁹ Ontario Department of Education. *Mr. H.R. Beattie - Minister's Diary 1961*, 107. Archives of Ontario. RG 2-152, barcode B289565.

⁸⁰ Pat Stanton and Beth Light, *Speak with their Own Voices: A Documentary History of the Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario and the Women Elementary Public School Teachers of Ontario* (Toronto: Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario, 1987), 130.

⁸¹ Kristin McLaren, "British-Canadian Myths of Purity and Segregated Schools in Mid-Nineteenth Century Canada West," *Canadian Society of Church History, Historical Papers* (2003): 76; Michael Wayne, "The Black Population of Canada West on the Eve of the American Civil War: A Reassessment Based on the Manuscript Census of 1861," *Social History/Histoire Sociale* Vol. XXVIII, No. 56 (November 1995): 477.

⁸² Barrington Walker, *Race on Trial: Black Defendants in Ontario's Criminal Courts, 1858-1958* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 33; Also see: Benjamin Drew, *A North Side View of Slavery: The Refugee: or the Narratives of Fugitive Slaves in Canada. Related by Themselves, With an Account of the History and Condition of the Colored Population of Upper Canada* (Boston and New York, 1856).

structures and supports such as a bank, post office and school; institutions that many other black communities lacked at the time. Buxton's early school system became a testament of black success and progress as "several graduates from Buxton's school system had entered or would enter various colleges to study law, medicine, or theology."⁸³ Schooling in the Buxton area was integrated and known for its high quality classical curriculum.

By the time Mead completed her teacher training, she and other similarly trained black teachers were specifically recruited to teach in these communities.⁸⁴ This was also the case of Loretta Lewis who recollected being recruited to teach in schools for black students. Before entering teachers' college, Lewis remembered that four trustees from S.S. #11 in Colchester visited her father and told him, "if your daughter were to go to teachers' college and were she to do well, we would consider her to teach at our school." After completing teachers' college in 1954 she was "placed in S.S. #11, which was the last all black school in Ontario."⁸⁵ Janine Hall also went to work at a predominantly black school in North Buxton because the previous teacher at the school was getting married and "in those days if someone married you would not be able to teach."⁸⁶

A variety of factors can account for the recruitment of black educators to teach in these school districts where blacks constituted a significant number of the student population. Firstly, school trustees may have wanted to hire local community members

⁸³ Sharon A. Roger Hepburn, "Crossing the Border from Slavery to Freedom: The Building of a Community at Buxton, Upper Canada," *American Nineteenth Century History* Vol. 3, No. 2 (Summer 2002): 53-56. For more on Buxton, see: Donald Simpson, *Under the North Star: Black Communities in Upper Canada*, Paul E. Lovejoy, ed. (Trenton, NJ: African World Press, 2005); Robin Winks, *The Blacks In Canada*; Claudine Bonner, "This Tract of Land: North Buxton, Ontario, 1873-1914," (PhD dissertation, University of Western Ontario, 2010).

⁸⁴ Camille Mead. Interview by author.

⁸⁵ Loretta Lewis. Interview by author. Audio recording. Windsor, On., July 15, 2011.

⁸⁶ Janine Hall. Interview by author. Audio recording, Chatham, On., June 3, 2011

who understood the circumstances of their pupils. Secondly, teachers who were residents in these areas may have been attracted to teach in schools close to their communities; and thirdly, the school, teachers and pupils may have been segregated based on previously discussed notions of racial separation in public school institutions in the nineteenth century. Perhaps due to these prevailing circumstances, the recruitment of white educators to teach in schools with predominantly black pupils was not discussed. In my conversations with interviewees who taught at predominantly black schools, none of the participants discussed whether there were white educators teaching at the schools nor did they mention the recruitment of white educators in these areas. It is possible that notions of racial superiority among whites and their opposition towards racial integration continued in these towns as it had in the nineteenth century, encouraging the preference for black women educators.⁸⁷

Whereas they were recruited to teach in black schools, interview participants also remember being restricted from having access to teaching positions in other schools, making employment in black communities the only available option. Canadian-born educator Camille Mead recollected that in addition to the school at which she taught in Buxton, black women could only teach in two schools in the area, Green Valley and Shrewsbury.⁸⁸ This was corroborated in Dionne Brand's interview with Fern Shadd Shreve who also had difficulty finding a job in mainstream (white) Chatham schools because they would not hire black educators. In her oral testimony, Shreve explained,

⁸⁷ In her discussion of separate schooling in Canada West, Kristen McLaren reveals that white society, including trustees in Canada West towns, were opposed to integration. If allowed into schools, blacks were forced to sit on separate benches, or white students would be withdrawn from school entirely. In most cases, McLaren contends that black students were forced to attend separate black schools. Kristen McLaren, "We Had No Desire to Be Set Apart," 34-35.

⁸⁸ Camille Mead. Interview by author.

“For seven years I was without a job because there was no Black school. That was really my first experience that sticks out in my mind of discrimination: Black teachers were not allowed to teach in the white schools.”⁸⁹ Several years later, educator Jackie Morris, another of the respondents in my study, also remembered being unable to gain employment in certain schools because of her race. After completing teachers’ college in 1962, Morris was offered a job in northern Ontario and decided to accept the position. Before signing her contract, Morris’ mother advised her to inform her employers that she was black. After doing so, she remembered, “they said they needed to call me back and when they called back, the job was no longer available.”⁹⁰ Morris’ account highlights an informal practice of discrimination that limited black women’s access to teach in *all* public schools. In Morris’ case, despite her qualifications, discriminatory hiring practices channeled her to teach in predominantly black schools.

Documentary filmmaker and writer Sylvia Hamilton supports claims made by Mead, Lewis, Shreve and Morris in her analysis of one-room schoolhouses serving black communities in Nova Scotia and Ontario. Hamilton argues that despite receiving training in provincially mandated teachers’ colleges, black educators were rarely hired in schools that were not segregated.⁹¹ After interviewing black educators for her documentary film, *Little Black School House*, Hamilton reveals that the collective memory of many black educators was largely informed by their experiences of segregation, which was *de jure* in Ontario and Nova Scotia but *de facto* across the provinces.

⁸⁹ Fern Shadd Shreve in Dionne Brand, *No Burden to Carry: Narrates of Black Working Women in Ontario, 1920s to 1950s*, 272.

⁹⁰ Jackie Morris, Interview by author. Audio recording. Buxton, On., July 18, 2011

⁹¹ Sylvia Hamilton, “Stories from *The Little Black School House*” in Ashok Mathur, Jonathan Dewar, Mike DeGagne, eds., *Cultivating Canada: Reconciliation Through the Lens of Cultural Diversity* (Ottawa: Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2011), 101-102.

The recollections by Mead, Lewis, Shreve and Morris then reflected an awareness of racial exclusion as part of Canadian educational and workplace practices. While it is difficult to know whether black educators were able to easily move from rural to urban centers as frequently as their white counterparts, since some black populations were rurally based, black teachers tended to stay in these communities for extended periods of time. This was also complicated by the fact that birth place impacted where women taught. The majority of the Canadian born participants interviewed for this study often taught in or close to communities where they were born while Caribbean born women stayed in urban centers like Toronto where they gained their training and had familial/community networks.⁹² J. Donald Wilson and Paul J. Stortz explain that rural schools served as training grounds for young and inexperienced white educators who left these schools once better opportunities arose.⁹³ For black educators, racial and gender discrimination imbedded in institutional hiring encouraged women to stay in schools that offered them positions. While interview participants did not express negative sentiments about teaching within their communities, their long terms of employment (Camille Mead stayed at her school for 14 years, while Janine Hall taught in her school for 18 years) may have also been a reflection of limited opportunities elsewhere.⁹⁴

⁹² Of the 26 participants interviewed for this project, eleven of the fourteen Canadian-born educators taught in school districts close to their birthplace. These women predominantly taught in the Chatham and Windsor areas. Only three Canadian born educators spent the majority of their careers in Toronto while all of the nine Caribbean born educators recalled spending a majority of their teaching careers in urban centers like Toronto.

⁹³ J. Donald Wilson and Paul J. Stortz, ““May the Lord Have Mercy on You: The Rural School Problem in British Columbia in the 1920s,” *BC Studies*, No. 79 (Autumn 1988): 40.

⁹⁴ Camille Mead. Interview by author; Janine Hall. Interview by author. Audio recording, Chatham, Ont. June 3, 2011

‘They would accept, not that they opened the door fully’: Changing Entrance Requirements and Challenges to Professional Status

While changing entrance requirements expanded opportunities for a wider cross-section of the population to attend teacher training colleges, these more flexible requirements received heavy criticism from various professional teaching organizations in the mid-twentieth century. Many educational authorities believed that the changing academic requirements lowered the prestige of the field and questioned the quality of candidates trained under these circumstances. Strong critiques about changing teacher requirements came from the Canadian Education Association (C.E.A.), which argued that shorter training programs attracted students of low ability into the teaching profession. The C.E.A. reported that half of the rural school teachers in Canada were not fully qualified. Furthermore, the organization became increasingly concerned with the ongoing feminization of the profession, which they attributed to men leaving and as a result, devaluing the profession. According to Kristina R. Llewellyn, because male teachers were viewed as rational thinkers and embodiments of Canadian democratic ideals, the replacement of male educators with ‘less’ qualified women was perceived as a threat to the profession.⁹⁵

Drawing on the example of the United States, scholar Natalie Sokoloff argues that although women entered the profession, and soon dominated the rank and file, they were scarce in the administrative positions like superintendents and principals within school systems. Sokoloff reveals that as American women entered the profession in more dramatic numbers, the occupation itself was in the process of becoming less prestigious

⁹⁵ Kristina R. Llewellyn, *Democracy’s Angels: The Work of Women Teachers*, 52.

and female educators routinely received lower salaries than their male counterparts.⁹⁶ Sentiments expressed by the C.E.A. indicate that a similar process was happening in Ontario schools, where women were entering the field in larger numbers but still remained in lower positions as men reserved positions and titles as supervisors, principals, and administrators.⁹⁷ The idea that the profession was undergoing a process of degradation and losing ‘prestige’ may well have had less to do with teaching qualifications and more to do with gendered restrictions that limited the mobility of women in male-dominated professions.

Arguments about the perceived lower qualifications of Ontario educators made by various teacher associations were, perhaps, not completely unfounded when taking into account that many Ontario schools had educators who were teaching based on a Letter of Permission, often granted to those who did not have or did not complete their teaching qualifications. School board trustees would issue these letters in the event that they could not find certified teachers to teach in their schools. Amidst the teacher shortage, the Ontario Department of Education reported that in the 1960 – 61 school year, it had granted Letters of Permission to 1090 uncertified persons teaching in elementary schools. Of these, 462 were given to people having no professional training. In the 1961 – 62 school year, the board granted 148 Letters of Permission to those who failed in Ontario teachers’ colleges and 79 of them were granted to those who had certificates from other countries or provinces.⁹⁸ And while there was an increasing number of uncertified

⁹⁶ Natalie J. Sokoloff, *Black Women and White Women in the Professions: Occupational Segregation by Race and Gender, 1960-1980* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 12.

⁹⁷ Rebecca Priegert Coulter, “Organizing in Contradiction: Women Teachers, Unionization, and the Politics of Feminized Professionalism,” in *History is Hers: Women Educators in Twentieth Century Ontario*, 173.

⁹⁸ Ontario Department of Education. *Mr. H.R. Beattie - Minister’s Diary 1961*, 89. Archives of Ontario. RG 2-152, barcode B289565.

educators in Canadian classrooms, only one of the interview participants in this project started her teaching career in Ontario based on a letter of permission.⁹⁹

The sentiments expressed by C.E.A. revealed tensions in the field as gatekeepers worked to maintain the status of the profession from those they believed to be unqualified and substandard. As the Ministry of Education responded to the teacher shortage by changing requirements to include emergency summer courses and granting letters of permission, professional teaching organizations responded to these changes by criticizing the means of obtaining accreditation.

As the qualifications of these newly admitted educators, including black women, were clouded by more flexible policies, some experienced greater scrutiny as they entered the school system. While Canadian-born educator Tamara Migrant remembered an increasing number of black educators in teachers' college in the 1960s, she inferred that their qualifications were constantly challenged once they sought full-time employment in Ontario schools. She explained,

...in the public school board, it [teacher shortage] made [it] more flexible that they would accept [foreign trained educators], not that they opened the door fully, but it [foreign training] made them scrutinize people's qualifications and whatever. So you would have thought that it [the teacher shortage] would allow them to accept the credentials of many people from the [Caribbean] islands without as much scrutiny as they did, but what it [teacher shortage] did do was as soon as they had the qualifications, they had a job. Assuming they made up for or took whatever courses, they had a job.¹⁰⁰

Joseph Mensah supports Migrant's claim of greater hurdles facing Caribbean trained educators in his study of black Canadians. Mensah concludes that systemic racism within the Canadian labour market created contradictory work environments

⁹⁹ Despite having a teaching certification from the United States, Melinda Richards was granted a Letter of Permission to teach while she underwent the process of recertification in Canada. Melinda Richards. Interview by author. Audio recording. Toronto, On., September 12, 2011.

¹⁰⁰ Tamara Migrant. Interview by author. Audio recording. Toronto, On., July 26, 2011.

where well-educated black immigrants were recruited to Canada, but then found their qualifications ‘inadequate’ for employment upon arrival. While Mensah contends that the claims that applicants lacked “Canadian work experience” may have been a legitimate concern in some occupations, some employers used this as an excuse to discriminate against blacks and other visible minorities.¹⁰¹

Black women’s entry into education amidst this contradictory process influenced their claim to professional status and, therefore, their access and mobility. This reflected broader gender restrictions that limited women’s occupational choices to areas such as teaching while simultaneously devaluing their contributions to those occupations.¹⁰² Migrant’s account describes multiple processes that worked to limit black women’s choices for employment. While race and gender were dominant factors in their oral testimonies, the access to emergency training programs, and limited recognition of Caribbean certification also contributed to black women’s decisions to obtain training in Ontario teachers’ colleges. Equally important was that these factors characterized black women’s experiences differently from their white counterparts and directly impacted their access to the professional workforce.

‘I had never seen that much money before in my life’: Economic Stability and Household Income

As argued above, black women have long been working as a result of racial and gender discrimination within the Canadian labour market that offered little job security and economic opportunities for black Canadian men and women in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In particular, the male breadwinner ideology, where men fulfilled

¹⁰¹ Joseph Mensah, *Black Canadians*, 166.

¹⁰² Kristina R. Llewellyn, *Democracy’s Angels*, 51

their masculine duties by financially providing for their families, proved difficult to obtain for black families when considering Canada's gendered, racialized and stratified labour market.¹⁰³ While I discussed black women's work as domestics in twentieth century Canada, black male labour in the 1900s could be found in segregated jobs in the coal mining, steel and transportation industries, particularly as railroad sleeping car porters. Black men were hired during labour shortages, paid less than their white counterparts, restricted from union participation and faced difficult and unsanitary working conditions.¹⁰⁴ Black men were typically engaged in intermittent work that included positions such as bellhops in local hotels, general labourers on the railroads, and working in foundries in auto plants reinforcing popular notions of black men as labouring bodies who could withstand high temperatures and physically intensive work.¹⁰⁵ Black men's working experiences, as noted by Judith Fingard, were characterized by inadequate "seasonal jobs, artisanal obsolescence and entrepreneurial failure."¹⁰⁶ Finding employment in the lowest paid categories of the labour market meant that black men rarely earned sufficient wages to support their families, pushing some black women's

¹⁰³ Nancy Christie, *Engendering the State: Family, Work and Welfare in Canada*, 313 – 315; Christopher J. Greig and Susan Holloway, "Canadian Manhood(s)" in Christopher J. Greig and Wayne J. Martino, eds., *Canadian Men and Masculinities: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press Inc., 2012), 127-130; Meg Luxton and Ester Reiter, "Double, Double, Toil and Trouble Women's Experience of Work and Family in Canada, 1980-1995," in Patricia Marie Evans, Gerda R. Wekerle, eds., *Women and the Canadian Welfare State: Challenges and Change* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 199-200.

¹⁰⁴ Sarah Saje-Matheiu, *North of the Color Line: Migration and Black Resistance in Canada, 1870-1955* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 74-75.

¹⁰⁵ Dionne Brand, "Working Paper on Black Women in Toronto," in Himani Bannerji, ed., *Returning the Gaze: Essays on Racism, Feminism and Politics* (Toronto: Sister Vision Press, 1993), 232; Pamela Sugiman, "Privilege and Oppression: The Configuration of Race, Gender and Class in Southern Ontario Auto Plants, 1939 to 1949" in James Opp, ed., *Home, Work, and Play: Situating Canadian Social History, 1840-1980* (Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press, 2005), 220; Judith Fingard, "From Sea to Rail: Black Transportation Workers and Their Families in Halifax, 1870-1916," *Acadiensis* Vol. 24, No. 2 (Spring 1995): 49-64; Elizabeth Beaton, "An African-American Community in Cape Breton, 1901-1904," *Acadiensis* Vol. 24, No. 2 (Spring 1995): 67-97; Agnes Calliste, "Sleeping Car Porters in Canada: An Ethnically Submerged Split Labour Market," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* Vol. 19, No. 1 (1987): 1-20.

¹⁰⁶ Judith Fingard, "From Sea to Rail: Black Transportation Workers and Their Families in Halifax, 1870-1916," 54.

labour force participation out of economic necessity.¹⁰⁷ However, while black women were aware of the predominant gender ideologies that encouraged them to be dependent on the male wage, not all black women could or wanted to ascribe to these ideals. For some black women, who made long-standing historical contributions to the workforce, employment offered a level of independence and autonomy that was situated outside of the parameters of breadwinning ideologies.

Women found diverse ways to support and provide the family wage which included opening up boarding and retail establishments, selling wares, and working in factories and homes. Canadian born educator, Tamara Migrant remembered the difficulty her family faced when searching for employment in Canada. Both her parents were trained educators from Barbados and could not obtain teaching jobs once they migrated to Canada in 1920. Instead, Migrant remembered that her mother began sewing in factories to supplement her family income. She explained that her mother later began “making clothes for people from her home and later in her life, after I entered teaching, she was able to teach. She was able to supply teach.”¹⁰⁸ According to Migrant, her mother was only able to gain employment as a teacher in the 1960s once the post-war teaching shortage and growing classrooms allowed for the recruitment of educators from more diverse training backgrounds. Migrant’s parents were not the only ones experiencing difficulty finding employment in the province. Canadian born educator Akua Uku remembered marrying her husband in 1943 before he was dispatched overseas for the war. Upon his return in 1945, he could not find work despite taking veterans training courses. Describing the experience as discouraging, Uku helped to supplement

¹⁰⁷ Dionne Brand, “‘We Weren’t Allowed to Go into Factory Work Until Hitler Started the War’: The 1920s to the 1940s,” 74.

¹⁰⁸ Tamara Migrant. Interview by author.

their income by finding part-time work as a mother's helper "doing some ironing for a lady."¹⁰⁹ Migrant and Uku's experiences reflected the reality of limited opportunities for black women that often motivated their search for work with the hopes of providing economic stability and mobility for their families and communities.

Despite the fact that post-war changes allowed for greater access to the professional workforce for both black men and women, systemic barriers to employment continued into the latter part of the twentieth century. Notwithstanding the fact that black Canadians were gaining greater access to training and accreditation, this education did not always transfer to increasing job security and opportunities for them. In his discussion of blacks in post war Canada, James St. G. Walker highlights a 1969 survey of Hamilton, Ontario, where despite having educational levels comparable to whites, blacks earned considerably less than their white counterparts. Walker reveals that in the 1960s and 1970s, educational qualifications did not translate into high economic rewards for black Canadians.¹¹⁰ Therefore, it is possible that this discrepancy was also present in the field of teaching, where international qualifications did increase economic status of some black Canadians.

It is not surprising then that sociologist Joseph Mensah supports Walker's claim of systemic and institutional racism that limited black employment in the Canadian labour market. Extending Walker's earlier analysis through the use of the 1996 census, Mensah explores the historical legacies of black exploitation within the Canadian labour force to explain that despite having similar educational backgrounds to average Canadians, blacks had higher unemployment rates and lower incomes. What is

¹⁰⁹ Akua Uku. Interview by author. Audio recording. Toronto, On., July 20, 2011.

¹¹⁰ James W.St.G. Walker, "African Canadians" in Paul R. Magocsi, ed., *Encyclopedia of Canada's Peoples* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 152.

particularly interesting about Mensah's argument is the weight he gives to black women's labour force participation. Here, he cites James Geschwender's 1994 study of married women's labour force participation in Canada to show that black wives made greater contributions to their family income than married women of any other ethnic group. Mensah explains that, "a large percentage of women of colour are married to low-income men and, therefore, cannot afford the luxury of being full-time housewives."¹¹¹ Given this understanding of the limitations in pay and access to stable careers, interview participants entered the teaching profession with an understanding that their wages, whether supplementing the male wage or serving as primary income earners, were fundamental in supporting their families and communities.

This was clear in the story of American born educator, Melinda Richards. After completing her training at the University of Michigan in 1962, Richards began her career as a biology teacher in Mt. Clemens, Michigan. In 1965, Richards married and moved to Canada to live with her husband in the Windsor-Essex area. Although not explicitly conveying this, it is reasonable to assume that Richards and her husband discussed the continuation of her professional career after they became married. Richards recalled that six days after getting married, she began the process of recertification in Ontario, despite holding a degree from the University of Michigan and three years teaching experience in the United States. Richards explained,

Now in Canada at that time, just because I had a teaching certificate from the [United] States, didn't mean anything. They still wanted me to go to teachers' college. But, because they really needed teachers, they allowed me to teach, along with lots of other people with a letter of permission.¹¹²

¹¹¹ Joseph Mensah, *Black Canadians*, 154

¹¹² Melinda Richards. Interview by author.

Educational historian Sheila Cavanagh reveals that in the 1960s, the Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario largely supported an increasing number of married women entering the teaching profession. She argues that married (white) women teachers reinforced appropriate gender roles because they were thought to be motivated by "a will to self-sacrifice" and supposedly entered the profession solely because of their love of children and desire to help.¹¹³ As a consequence, in conjunction with the ongoing shortage of teachers in the province, married teachers gained acceptance within the profession because they ascribed to gendered notions of nurture and service.

On the other hand, Richards' recollection alludes to a different motivation for married black women teachers when factoring race and limits on black employability in post war Ontario. Her quick entry into teachers' college despite having a husband whose employment, following dominant male breadwinner ideologies, should have provided for her, reflected not only the importance of her contribution to the family economy but her account also revealed broader economic constraints, such as her husband's low pay, that did not allow her growing family to survive solely on his income. It is also possible that her husband was indeed able to provide the male breadwinner wage but they both thought it was important that she continue to work as an educator. In either case, Richards' ability to gain certification quickly, as well as the flexibility of working while gaining this certification encouraged her entrance into the field. In fact, Richards remained employed at her school in Michigan while obtaining her Canadian certification through a summer course at Windsor teachers' college.¹¹⁴

¹¹³ Sheila Cavanagh, "Female Teacher Gender and Sexuality in Twentieth Century Ontario Canada," in *History is Hers: Women Educators in Twentieth Century Ontario*, 124.

¹¹⁴ Melinda Richards. Interview by author.

Richards' contribution was so important to the household economy that even after her Canadian training, her husband screened schools in the Chatham area to ensure that they would hire a black woman. Knowing that interviewing for jobs would mean that she would have to take leave from work, Richards' husband called schools to make sure they were open to hiring a black woman. Melinda recollected,

In any case, he called Lambton-Kent [school in] Dresden, [Ontario] and said: 'I have a young woman in mind that might be applying but there's no reason in her taking a day off if there's no chance. She does happen to be black, of colour.' The person he talked to said: 'that won't matter. Have her come on in.' I came up for the interview, and as I mentioned, my teaching [expertise] was science. I did get the job. So I taught at Lambton-Kent in Dresden for three years, [19]65-[19]68.¹¹⁵

Richards' story tells us of the intricate ways in which gender and race were negotiated within some black households. It is possible that Melinda's husband, who was born and raised in Ontario, had a clear understanding of Canadian schooling systems and larger social patterns that restricted black employment. His screening calls demonstrated the unwritten, yet widely known, discriminatory practices that did not encourage the hiring of blacks in various Ontario schools. It is also possible that his university degree, employment at Union Gas, Canadian education experience, and status as the male authority gave him a level of confidence and the knowledge necessary to ask school administrators bluntly about their hiring practices. In calling schools, Richards' husband may also have been maintaining his authority as man of the household by permitting his wife to work, thereby giving her legitimacy to school administrators, while confirming their relative places in the family. He also may have wanted to shield his wife from common discriminatory practices she would face as a new immigrant in Ontario. Despite its diverse possibilities, what Richards' story does demonstrate are the ways in which

¹¹⁵ Melinda Richards. Interview by author.

gendered relationships were negotiated by black men and women to include connected practices of domination and protection.

In other instances, household incomes indirectly influenced black women's entrance into the teaching profession. Such was the experience of Camille Mead who enrolled in teachers' college because her parents could not afford to send her to university.¹¹⁶ In other cases, household incomes delayed women's decisions to enter the profession. Canadian born educator Sheryl Harre experienced this when she postponed her enrolment into teachers' college in order to help her father with his dry cleaning business. She eventually entered teachers' college in Toronto three years after finishing high school, when summer training programs became available in the 1950s and she could "go to school for six weeks."¹¹⁷

Alongside this knowledge of the challenges black household incomes, black women were also attracted to the profession because teaching provided them with consistent and better wages. In Ontario, the median salary for a female elementary school teacher in 1951 was about \$2,565; this wage rose to approximately \$4,084 in 1960.¹¹⁸ This was less than the median salaries for male teachers whose wages rose from \$2,845 in 1951 to \$4,748 in 1960.¹¹⁹ The median wage existed for all female educators, regardless of race but could vary based on level of education and years of experience. In fact, one black Canadian educator interviewed for this research project was offered \$4,600 per year for teaching for the Windsor Board of Education in 1958.¹²⁰ In

¹¹⁶ Camille Mead. Interview by author.

¹¹⁷ Sheryl Harre. Interview by author. Audio recording. Toronto, On., November 23, 2011.

¹¹⁸ W.G. Fleming, *Ontario's Educative Society Series*, 281.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 265.

¹²⁰ Letter from C.R. MacLeod, Superintendent of Public Schools and Assistant Director of Education, to Miss Janine. March 18, 1958. [Private Collection]

comparison to the wages of female graduate nurses who earned an average of \$2,752 in 1961 and who worked more than thirty-five hours over a seven-day work week, teaching offered a substantial amount of money and more importantly, a steady income for their approximately thirty-five hour and five day work week.¹²¹

As a young woman, Clara Topkin entered the profession because of the economic stability it provided. Her father was a stock keeper at the time and struggled to find work in more lucrative automotive industries such as Ford Motor Company. Topkin remembered having to work summer jobs as a nurse's aide because her father could only afford to pay for her luggage while she went to school. Her father later became employed at Ford and she saved enough money to enter her first year at university.

Topkin explained her economic impetus for entering the profession,

Well my motivation was how I could get a job. That was the first thing you could get. What really surprised me my first day at Waterdown, [was that] they gave me a cheque and I hadn't even taught yet. This was amazing! I had never seen that much money before in my life. Back then it was like \$300 a year. Can you believe [it]?¹²²

Topkin began her teaching career in the 1960s and likely would have earned close to \$300 a month. Her recollection, however, highlighted the increased awareness that the teaching profession offered monetary gain as well as professional status. For Topkin, teaching was a quick and easy solution to her search for work.

Topkin's decision to enter teaching for financial stability and the prestige of a professional identity were not necessarily different from her white counterparts who also entered the profession for a variety of reasons, some of which included opportunities for an independent income. Rebecca Coulter argues that despite the challenges found in the

¹²¹ Kathryn McPherson, *Bedside Matters: The Transformation of Canadian Nursing, 1900-1990* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1996), 235.

¹²² Clara Topkin. Interview by author. Audio recording. Etobicoke, On., May 12, 2011.

profession, (white) women teachers were agents of their own lives and engaged in a variety of activities that brought them personal satisfaction and joy. She contends that while teachers were not paid well, they were still paid more than all other groups of working women. Coulter explains, “And even when young teachers sent money home to support a family economy, this, in and of itself, further established them as independent women with disposable income.”¹²³ Building on this idea of economic independence, it is reasonable to argue that the black women interviewed for this research project were attracted to the profession not only for access to a disposable income but also to escape the traditional avenues of employment available to them, particularly in factory and domestic work. For Topkin, the profession provided relief from the odd jobs she was doing as a caregiver, a nurse’s aide, and a library assistant.¹²⁴ Given that available work for black women was “hidden, devalued and marked by gender,” Topkin’s focus on the financial stability teaching offered was situated within the broader context that held members of African Canadian communities in economically unstable jobs.¹²⁵

In addition, teaching also reinforced notions of occupational decency for its ability to allow black women training in culturally prestigious positions within their communities. In her discussion of the experiences of young black Caribbean women in London, England, Heidi Safia Mirza contends that black girls chose high-status gendered careers such as welfare officers, probation workers, social workers, nurses and teachers. She argues that they gravitated to these positions in part because they were traditional occupations available to black women, but also because of a recognition of the

¹²³ Rebecca Priegert Coulter, “‘Girls Just Want to Have Fun’: Women Teachers and the Pleasures of the Profession,” in *History is Hers*, 217.

¹²⁴ Clara Topkin. Interview by author.

¹²⁵ Dionne Brand, “Black Women and Work: The Impact of Racially Constructed Gender Roles on the Sexual Division of Labour,” 90.

constraints of racially and sexually segregated labour markets. Ultimately, Mirza explains that black girls viewed these jobs as a way to maximize their occupational mobility within restrictive labour markets. Mirza reveals, “Given the limitations afforded by 1) a racially and sexually structured labour market and 2) their educational attainment (of which they were under no illusions), the young black women chose ‘realistic’ careers, those that they knew to be accessible and (historically) available to them.”¹²⁶ In similar ways, Topkin’s move towards teaching because it was the “first thing you could get” was reflective of pragmatic ways to access occupational mobility and social advancement within a gendered and racially restrictive labour market. It is also possible that part of Topkin’s motivation to enter teacher training programs was an act of everyday survival and as a result, she tolerated unfair conditions in order to do so.

Topkin’s push towards practical economic motives were not unique. Jackie Morris also spoke of the restrictive labour market and limited economic choices available for black women which in turn made teaching more appealing. Unsure of what she wanted to do after high school, Morris entered the teaching profession because it was one of the few positions available to her. Morris originally wanted to be nurse but “just settled on being a teacher...probably if I had that choice at this time, it would’ve been something different.”¹²⁷ Before enrolling in Toronto teachers’ college in 1962, she recognized traditional avenues of black female employment, which included nursing, teaching and domestic work.

It was not just that teaching gave these women a significant increase in wages that was important but that it gave them *consistent* incomes. As a result of the limited careers

¹²⁶ Heidi Safia Mirza, *Young, Female, and Black* (London: Routledge, 1992), 116-120.

¹²⁷ Jackie Morris. Interview by author.

options available to black women, the teaching field was often the last stop in a line of many jobs. This meant that interview participants had an awareness of labour market restrictions and many strategically entered the profession because it offered them ways out of low-paying jobs that preceded their careers as teachers. The profession was welcomed change for Cecily Tremaine who was unhappy with her previous work positions. Tremaine entered teaching not only because of her passion for working in the community but also because of her need for a stable income. Entering teaching later in life, Tremaine explained,

Why I went in there [teaching] was that I was looking realistically. I was looking at my financial situation, having a son to take care of, having the instruments to make myself more financially independent...¹²⁸

Weighing in her practical economic needs as a single mother, Tremaine thought that teaching was a middle ground between financial security and her desire to participate in community development. Even though she was already working, teaching afforded her the economic stability that she did not receive in her current position. As the experiences of Tremaine and other respondents indicate, black women's decision to become teachers then must be understood within the context of Canada's segregated labour market. While post-war labour shortages, particularly in the service sector, expanded opportunities for black women, the appeal of teaching spoke to the persistent economic instability and employment facing black communities.

'It was just like being with family': Black Women's Professional, Family and Community Networks

Understanding the limited employment options available to them, interview participants reported that their personal, familial and community networks motivated

¹²⁸ Cecily Tremaine. Interview by author.

their entrance into the field. Their decision to enter the teaching profession then was partly due to their desire to join the (relatively small) circle of professional black women. These groups of women, some of whom were already teachers, recent graduates, and working women searching for different careers, sometimes encouraged other women to enter the field. These female career networks provided information detailing hiring and recruitment practices, persuaded others to become teachers, provided financial recourses and accommodations in order to ensure their success as educators.

Joan Sangster's analysis of working-class women in twentieth century Ontario provides a useful comparison for understanding female career networks. In *Earning Respect: The Lives of Working Women in Small-town Ontario, 1920 – 1960*, Sangster suggests that feminine identity was imported into and constructed in Ontario workplaces. Arguing for the interconnectedness of work, family and community in Ontario's women's work culture, Sangster discusses same-sex circles of friends and networks that not only provided avenues for social activity but also created autonomous spaces where women could "create a sense of gender solidarity and 'humanize' the workplace."¹²⁹ Particularly valuable in Sangster's analysis is her recognition that female support systems were shaped by the sex-segregated workplaces. She explains that women's ability to modify rules and conditions of work were circumscribed by their lower status in the work place and the sexual division of labour. Extending this analysis to include racial discrimination that channeled black women into specific types of work, female networks were vitally important to black women by providing knowledge of changing entrance

¹²⁹ Joan Sangster, *Earning Respect: The Lives of Working Women in Small-town Ontario 1920 – 1960* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 99.

requirements for teachers' colleges, supporting other women in the field, and encouraging prevailing gendered notions of teaching as well-paid, 'respectable' work.

When Nicolette Archer, a resident of the Windsor-Essex area, was encouraged by one of her friends to enroll in teachers' college, she tapped into a career network that stemmed from her community relationships. Born in 1943, Archer's family moved from North Buxton to Windsor, Ontario in 1948. Growing up in predominantly black neighbourhood, Archer's community comprised of wartime housing developments where most men in the area worked for Chrysler, General Motors, or Ford Motor Company.

According to Archer, the employment of several black men in the Windsor area, translated to community stability and encouraged the development of support systems that fostered community cohesion. Archer reported that members of the community knew each other and the children were supervised by women in the community who were nicknamed, the 'McDougall Street Mothers'.¹³⁰ Archer's assessment of the community seemed to align with predominant gender ideologies that equated male employability with stability. As a result, her personal experiences may not have allowed her to see the complicated nature in which families were structured, particularly the areas where black female employment made vital contributions to family and community stability. Instead, Archer's memory reveals the gendered correlation of femininity and motherhood within the black community where nurturing children in the community served as a source of activism and power. Black mothers used home, church and community spaces to model

¹³⁰ Nicolette Archer. Interview by author. Audio recording, Windsor, On., August 19, 2011.

value systems, impart knowledge, and shield community children from mainstream forms of discrimination.¹³¹

As part of what Archer perceived to be community cohesiveness and perhaps part of a broader desire for racial uplift, she had friends in the neighbourhood and role models who encouraged her educational pursuits. While she initially applied to the nursing program at St. Joseph's Hospital in London, Ontario, changing academic requirements in the education sector shifted her career choice. Refusing to go back to school for grade 13 biology, which was a requirement for nursing training, Archer was still able to get into teachers' college corroborating the idea that flexible entrance requirements in teacher training institutions encouraged black women's entry into the profession. Archer recalled the conversation that motivated her to apply to teachers' college,

So C__, we were good friends. She lived over on Windsor Ave. She said, where you going next year?' I said: 'don't know'. She said she had already been to London normal school for a year because when you came out of grade 12 you went to teachers' college for 2 years. [When] you went out of grade 13, you went for one year to be a teacher. I said: 'well I don't know what I'm doing.' She said: 'Well, girl you better apply to teachers' college because they're opening a new one in Windsor'. That was 1962. I applied three days before the deadline and got in. That's how I started.¹³²

Closely connected with other black women in her neighbourhood, Archer's community relationships helped her to learn more about educational programs available to black women. Her discussion with her friend connected her with another black woman who had similar goals and aspirations for social and economic independence. Archer also describes a combination of push and pull factors that motivated her career path: the

¹³¹ Sylvia Hamilton, "Our Mothers Grand and Great: Black Women of Nova Scotia," *Canadian Woman Studies* Vol. 11, No. 3 (1991): 46; Andrea O'Reilly, "I Come from a Long Line of Uppity Irate Black Women': African American Feminists Thought on Motherhood, the Motherline, and the Mother-Daughter Relationship," in Andrea O'Reilly and Sharon Abbey, eds., *Mothers and Daughters: Connection, Empowerment & Transformation* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2000), 148.

¹³² Nicolette Archer. Interview by author.

requirement that she complete biology in nursing sector pushed her away from nursing, while more flexible entrance requirements in teacher training as well as the support from her friend pulled her into the profession.

The availability of female support became particularly important for interview participants who were considering relocating and migrating to pursue their careers as educators. Jackie Morris connected to female networks when enrolled in teachers' college in Toronto in 1961 because she had an aunt who lived in the city. She explains, "Well, I lived with my aunt and I was very close with my cousins, so it was like just being with family."¹³³ Being with family meant that Jackie did not have to navigate the city alone and she had material support through food and supplies while training in Toronto. In addition to family support, while in teachers' college she was also able to connect to with two other black women, one from Chatham and another from Nova Scotia.

In some instances, female career networks were not exclusive to only black women. Developing a level of camaraderie and professional relationship building, some women entered the profession because it gave them an opportunity to build connections and also provided them with the chance to do something different, such as moving away from home or travelling, and securing the individual incomes to participate in these activities. Such an example was illustrated through Morris' story: upon graduating from high school at the age of eighteen, she saw teaching as something new and exciting. After renting an apartment with a girl she had never met before, Morris met four other new teachers and enjoyed new-found independence as an educator. Jackie explained, "we would go out and party together and visit each other and have fun at the school. ...It

¹³³ Jackie Morris. Interview by author.

was like we had our own little school within a school.”¹³⁴ For Jackie, teaching offered a community of sisterhood, largely based on social bonds created by and between educators that allowed some women to feel connected to one another. Morris’ story of female friendships then was one that factored intra-gender relationships as an important part of her life story.

While prevailing gender restrictions (that limited women teachers largely to elementary fields and under the authority of male supervisors and administrators) threw women together and allowed black women educators to negotiate and reconcile some differences with their white counterparts, this category of sisterhood was not without its problems. Rather, the female bonds created within these professional work environments created an unstable sisterhood that was always threatened by class and race. Therefore, as an eighteen-year old educator new to the profession, Morris negotiated ideas of belonging by collaborating with other young white female educators. However, this did not mean that the relationship building process came easy, but rather that her experiences stood alongside complex societal experiences and individual relationships that often crossed and re-crossed race and class lines.

Despite the development of inter-racial friendships, there were specific moments where black women also felt it necessary to create race-specific networks to deal with issues of marginalization and discrimination. When Harriet Williams was sixteen, she was already teaching a class of 55 six-year old pupils in rural Trinidad. She received no formal training but had a teaching mentor who guided her with classroom management and lesson planning. She taught in this school for five years before entering teachers’ college at a Catholic training school in Trinidad. She completed two years at the training

¹³⁴ Jackie Morris, Interview by author.

college and was later posted at a school close to her home in 1954. However, after receiving a scholarship and completing her degree from the University of Hull in London, Williams was encouraged to teach in Canada by a good friend of hers. Born in St. Kitts, Williams' friend was thinking about teaching in North America and thought they should emigrate together and Williams was ready for a change. Despite the difficulties facing black immigration before the 1960s, she decided to try her luck; after all, migrating as a black Briton was different from direct migration from the Caribbean.¹³⁵ Williams explained,

Then when I decided to come to Canada in 1956, that was the first time I got the idea of coming to Canada. Because a friend of mine had some information they had written up here. And at night I went over to her place and went through this [information] and it told you all the requirements, everything and it gave you a good description and I wanted to come up.¹³⁶

Meeting basic requirements outlined by information acquired by her friend, Harriet Williams was hired for a teaching position and decided to stay in Canada permanently.

Sociologist Louise Ryan explores a similar trend in her analysis of Irish nurses in postwar England. Interviewing twenty-six Irish women who migrated to Britain after the Second World War, Ryan found that women blended economic factors and social networks, almost exclusively comprised of other women, to migrate and pursue careers as nurses. Ryan explains that, "friends, sisters, aunts and cousins were key sources of advice, information and encouragement in many migration decision making."¹³⁷ It seems that Williams also employed a similar practice in her decision to migrate to Canada.

¹³⁵ Joseph Mensah argues that postwar immigration regulations up until the 1960s were vague and not as overtly discriminatory as in previous years, despite its criticism of non-white immigrants. However, it was not until 1962 that Canada formally revoked preferential treatment given to white immigrants. Joseph Mensah, *Black Canadians*, 70-71.

¹³⁶ Harriet Williams. Interview by author. Audio recording. Toronto, ON., July 11, 2011.

¹³⁷ Louise Ryan, "I Had a Sister in England": Family-led Migration, Social Networks and Irish Nurses," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* Vol. 34, No. 3 (April 2008): 464.

Utilizing female career networks encouraged by her friend, Williams came to Canada not only as part of her need for new experiences and adventures, but also because teaching was an accessible profession available to her upon settlement.

In these ways, black women educators stood as ideal representations of intersectionality where their reasons for entering the profession were not only different from but also similar to the ways in which employment and professional identity was constructed by other groups of women. Morris and Williams' interviews describe the experiences of black women who occupied intersectional spaces where their national and community identities were constantly in flux. Cultural theorist, Stuart Hall describes this as part of identity formation for diasporic communities. In his essay, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," Hall argues that identities must be understood as a relationship between similarity and difference. Claiming that identities are not fixed but gain meaning in redefinition, Hall states that the complexity of identity formation exceeds binary structures of representation. Hall explains that, "Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference."¹³⁸ In thinking of women educators, Hall's theory on cultural identity is particularly useful for understanding black women's identity formation as a process, which followed a similar trajectory as their white counterparts, but also presented unique characteristics such as class, race, birthplace, that was particular to black women's positions within the margins of Canadian society.

As part of this identity in flux, it is not surprising that processes of career migration were not uncommon for black women, particularly for those from the

¹³⁸ Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," in Jonathan Rutherford, ed., *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), 228.

Caribbean, whose networks encouraged transnational migration for better employment opportunities. Several Caribbean women who entered Canada via the 1955 West Indian Domestic Scheme also employed a similar practice. With the Second West Indian Domestic Scheme black women from the Caribbean were recruited to work with Canadian families for a minimum of one year: they underwent medical examinations, were expected to be young (between the ages of eighteen to thirty-five), and without children. These women were paid less than their European counterparts and often faced discrimination and harassment from their various employers.¹³⁹ Grenadian born educator, Colette Bruckner entered Canada through the West Indian Domestic Scheme and remembered it as one of the only ways available for black women to immigrate to Canada. Bruckner explained, “I started teaching [in Grenada], and was writing to universities in places asking for admission. Then the domestic program was brought to my attention. It said that if you came to Canada for one year and worked for a Canadian family you could get landed immigrant status.”¹⁴⁰ While Bruckner entered Canada via the domestic scheme, she left that work to seek teacher training once her contract was over. For Bruckner, who was attracted to domestic work out of economic necessity, her quick departure from this type of wage work revealed her desire to escape its limitations and stigma. While her formal training was within the education sector, it was also one of the few professions where she could gain employment a black woman in Canada. Just as

¹³⁹ Frances Henry, “The West Indian Domestic Scheme in Canada,” *Social and Economic Studies* Vol. 17, No. 1 (March 1968), 83-84; Dionne Brand, *No Burden to Carry*, 22; Makeda Silvera *Silenced: Talks with Working Class Caribbean Women About Their Lives and Struggles as Domestic Workers in Canada* (Toronto: Sister Vision Press, 1989); Agnes Calliste, “Canada’s Immigration Policy and Domestics from the Caribbean: The Second Domestic Scheme,” in Jesse Vorst et al, ed., *Race, Class, Gender: Bonds and Barriers* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1989), 133-165; Abigail B. Bakan and Daiva Stasiulis, “Foreign Domestic Worker Policy and the Social Boundaries of Modern Citizenship,” *Science and Society* Vol. 58, No. 1 (Spring 1994): 7-33.

¹⁴⁰ Colette Bruckner. Interview by author. Audio recording. Toronto, On., July 6, 2011.

Williams was encouraged by her friend's advice, Bruckner and other women who migrated through the second domestic scheme, used kinship and friendship networks to migrate to Canada, to inform each other of job requirements and employment guidelines, changing employment standards and possibilities, where to report grievances, among other important sorts of information.¹⁴¹ Similarly, it was not uncommon for black educators to inform each other about opportunities for employment and training through these transnational female kin and friendship networks.

Some research participants continued to utilize these friendship networks long after obtaining their teaching qualifications and used these connections to remain informed about employment opportunities in various school districts. After graduating from teachers' college 1962, Nicolette Archer married and moved to Detroit to live with her husband, an American citizen. She was working at an office in Detroit when she said a friend "called me and said they were really short of supply teachers [in Windsor]...I went up [to the Windsor Board of Education] and said: 'I understand that you're short of supply teachers. I live in Detroit and was told I couldn't teach here but if you call me I can be here.'"¹⁴² Equipped with information provided by her friend, Archer was able to approach board hiring officials with confidence and authority. She was later hired and went on to supply teach with the board for several years.

Archer's female network did not end after she gained employment but rather expanded to include white working women. Because of her cross-border employment,

¹⁴¹ In her study of Caribbean domestic workers, Frances Henry reveals that one-third of the participants in her study had friends or relatives who migrated on the scheme. Frances Henry, "The West Indian Domestic Scheme in Canada," *Social and Economic Studies* Vol. 17, No. 1 (March 1968): 86. Makeda Silvera also highlights oral interviews from several female domestic workers who wrote letters and spoke with family and friends about employment opportunities, changing immigration requirements, who to work for, and other important employment details. Makeda Silvera, *Silenced: Caribbean Domestic Workers Talk With Makeda Silvera* (Toronto: Sister Vision, 1989), 38-73.

¹⁴² Nicolette Archer. Interview by author.

Archer forged new female networks while travelling to and from work. When called for supply positions in Windsor, Ontario, she would take the 8:00am express bus into Canada and “to my amazement, there were always the same three or four white women waiting at the tunnel bus. So one day, I finally said: ‘I see you everyday, what do you do?’ They said: ‘oh we all married Americans and are teaching in Windsor.’”¹⁴³ The women continued to take the bus together for two years and forged bonds not simply on the basis of gender, but also profession, transnational marriage and geographic location. As was the case earlier, women from different race, class and gendered backgrounds built intergender and interracial connections through migrations across national boundaries.

Historians Afua Cooper and Nora Faires describe the peculiarity of the Great Lakes region as the “fluid frontier” where blacks moved back and forth between the Canada-US border creating flexible and complex allegiances and identities.¹⁴⁴ For Archer, the border allowed for a shifting of identities, where the possibilities of employment and better income, created friendships between women. Having similar family and work patterns, Archer’s career network was not only grounded in her immediate community relationships, but also incorporated her new experiences with other women, thereby creating a sense of gender solidarity and professional female space. Not only did these female networks give Archer an awareness of available teaching opportunities but it also incorporated her diverse experiences that expanded beyond parameters of gender and race to include relationship status, travel and mobility, and the

¹⁴³ Nicolette Archer. Interview by author.

¹⁴⁴ Cooper and Faires describe black migration in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century around the Great Lakes region as flexible and permeable. They reveal that black migrants used the boarder in strategic ways to speak to the shifting and multiple nature of their identities. For more on the “fluid frontier”, see: Afua Cooper, “The Fluid Frontier: Blacks and the Detroit River Region: A Focus on Henry Bibb,” *Canadian Review of American Studies* Vol. 30, No. 2 (2000): 129-149; Nora Faires. “Going Across the Border: Black Canadians and Detroit Before the Great Migration,” *Citizenship Studies* Vol. 10, No.1 (2006): 117-34.

constant shifting back and forth among these categories. It is through this lens that black women teachers' experiences complicate our understandings of gender solidarity and female spaces of influence; the black women teachers interviewed for this project built relationships in response not only to racial difference and exclusion, but also to economic access and social mobility. Their movements back and forth across lines of race, gender, community and nation then were part of their professional and individual identities.

'If I'm way out here, I want to do some exploring': Adventure and New Experiences

For some interviewees, becoming a teacher was desirable because it allowed them to experience new avenues for exploration and self-fulfillment. As mentioned earlier, the stories of Nicolette Archer and Harriet Williams highlighted the transnational boundaries that they crossed and re-crossed throughout their educational and professional careers. Of the nine Caribbean born women interviewed for this study, three travelled to other countries such as England before settling in Canada, and two entered Canada through student visas. The other four educators received their teacher training before they migrated to Canada.¹⁴⁵ Through her international scholarship, Williams was able to travel to various countries and cities before starting a permanent teaching job in Toronto. After getting a scholarship at the University of Hull for math training, Williams took advantage of her teacher training to travel and sightsee. After completing her training, Williams described informing school administrators to, "please don't give me a direct ticket [back home], if I'm way out here, I want to do some exploring...And I just used to

¹⁴⁵ Blaire Gittens. Interview by author. Audio recording. Toronto, On., July 5, 2011; Harriet Williams, Interview by author; Cecily Tremaine. Interview by author. 2011; Afiya Oyo. Interview by author. Audio recording. Etobicoke, ON., June 9, 2011; Enid Rubin. Interview by author. Audio recording. Toronto, ON. August 5, 2011.

save some of that [school stipend] and I went on a tour of Europe.”¹⁴⁶ In her discussion of Ontario women teachers in the twentieth century, educational historian Rebecca Coulter also describes the ways in which women teachers took pleasure in their ability to travel and explore. Coulter explains that, “Young teachers also sought the adventure that teaching in different countries offered.”¹⁴⁷ Travelling alone, in pairs or large groups, Coulter reveals that teacher travel provided real pleasure for educators allowing them the time and income to teach in various geographical regions.

Williams’ scholarship allowance afforded her the chance to explore a world she was not typically exposed to and she fondly remembered the independence and freedom she felt visiting places like Glasgow and Edinburgh. She continued to challenge traditional gendered expectations, like many professional educators of her time, and never married or had children. Considering that only two of the twenty-six women I interviewed were never married or had children, Williams’ story of her travels as a single black woman in the mid-twentieth century reveal that this was an uncommon practice for many black female teachers.

Williams would not be the only interview participant to include travel with her educational experiences. In 1960, Blaire Gittens travelled and explored under the auspices of young love. Before travelling to Manitoba for schooling, Gittens wrote to a

¹⁴⁶ Harriet Williams. Interview by author. Harriet’s life long career as single woman contradicted changing notions that viewed the married female teacher as well adjusted wives and mothers. According to historian Sheila Cavanagh, in the early part of the twentieth century, the image of the single woman teacher was celebrated by organizations like the Federation of Women Teachers’ Association of Ontario. However, by the middle of the century, as marriage bans lost favour in Ontario schools, single unwed women were perceived to be ill adjusted. Cavanagh explains, “In this period all working women were, in different ways, shunned but in education the long term single female teacher was regarded with contempt because she seemed to defy conventional gender roles.” Sheila Cavanagh, “Female Teacher Gender and Sexuality in Twentieth Century Ontario Canada,” in *History is Hers*, 116-119.

¹⁴⁷ Rebecca Priegert Coulter, “‘Girls Just Want to Have Fun’: Women Teachers and the Pleasures of the Profession,” in *History is Hers*, 219.

friend in New York City to stop over for a visit en route to Manitoba. Leaving Trinidad with her boyfriend, Gittens was convinced to stay longer until her visitor's visa was set to expire. Not wanting to dodge immigration officials, she wrote to a friend in London and made her way to England leaving her boyfriend, who had family in New York City, behind. Gittens remembered with fondness, "It is fifty years since and I haven't seen Manitoba University yet. (Laughter)"¹⁴⁸ She eventually went to school and completed her education in London, England before coming to Canada as a supply teacher in 1967. Like Williams, Gittens remembered the importance of her education and training in England in supporting her career as an educator. She recalled, "I worked in Manchester and I did some courses, a diploma in math, and I did all kinds of extracurricular things. I taught there, I learned to teach there very well. And after about four years, Manchester was in that time was very dull, and I decided to go to London."¹⁴⁹

The freedom that teacher training abroad gave Williams and Gittens an alternative to their lives simply as working women. Instead, both women explored travel, participated in educational training, built relationships and experienced other forms of leisure and pleasure amidst work life. While Williams' and Gittens' experiences suggest that travelling before the completion of training was not the typical route for black women teachers in Canada, given the few training facilities in their birth homes, underdeveloped economies, and prevailing expectations that women would work, some Caribbean women opted for overseas training for the migratory opportunities it offered. Williams and Gittens adopted their own strategies to take advantage of student visas and

¹⁴⁸ Blaire Gittens. Interview by author. Audio recording. Toronto, On., July 5, 2011.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

overseas training programs, used these avenues for personal pleasure and entertainment, and challenged immigration patterns that characterized black women solely as workers.

‘I know it was what I was supposed to do in life’: Calling and the Limits of Choice

For black women who were aware of the economic realities of employment and access for racial minorities in Canada, entering the profession reflected a broader pattern of black female activism. While limited in the types of work they could do, some female educators viewed their careers as teachers as something they were meant to do. Many women described a ‘calling’ that ushered their entrance into the teaching profession. Often beginning at a young age, some interview participants revealed that teaching was something they *always* wanted to do. When asked about what she did after high school, Gittens responded that “I never cared about anything else but teaching... Since I was 7 years old, all I could do was play school teacher and all I taught was mathematics.”¹⁵⁰ While it is difficult to know whether Gittens’ recollection was partly influenced by her knowledge of the research project’s focus on education, her emphasis on having experienced a calling may have been a way of justifying her lifelong career as a teacher. Viewing teaching as an important aspect in her life, Gittens used her childhood stories to justify the work she spent her whole life doing.

Similarly, Candice Gillam started her teaching career in 1963 and believed that teaching was something she was always meant to do. After completing high school, her parents paid for her admission into teachers’ college and she realized it was her calling. Gillam explained,

¹⁵⁰ Blaire Gittens. Interview by author.

I know it was what I was supposed to do in life. When I first started teaching, I knew for some [reason]. I don't know. I just fell into it. That I knew that was what I was supposed to do and I loved it, enjoyed it.¹⁵¹

In Gillam's case, she came to this realization only after teaching in a classroom for the first time. That she expressed no discontent about being enrolled in teachers' college by her parents also revealed the parental guidance and control that directed her move into the profession. As a young woman still residing in the home of her parents, the choices of where to work were compounded by familial expectations of what profession she should enter. Among interview participants, and larger black communities, parents tended to stress education as imperative for improving social and cultural status, and as such an important tool for challenging discrimination. According to Keren Brathwaite and Carl James, the hope among black families and communities was that education would increase prospects of a good job and enhance opportunities for acquiring social and cultural capital.¹⁵² Since entrance into professional careers required additional training, and certification beyond high school credentials, it is not surprising then that black parents viewed teaching as a positive career choice for their young daughters.

This was also true for Loretta Lewis who was born into an African American family and migrated to Canada at the age of seven. Lewis came from an economic background where her parents could afford to send her to university. Her father in particular, wanted her to be a doctor and Lewis soon found herself enrolled in school without any consultation or choice. She explained, "So they assumed I was going to go to school. I graduated from high school and one day we went on a ride and we ended up in Ann Arbor and my parents were there to register me at the University of Michigan.

¹⁵¹ Candice Gillam. Interview by author. Audio recording. Windsor, On., July 16, 2011.

¹⁵² Karen Brathwaite and Carl James, eds., *Educating African Canadians*, 19-20.

Did I know anything before that? Not a thing. And that's how I went."¹⁵³ Lewis soon dropped out of the medical program at the university and until her father's passing, questioned whether he was proud of her decision to enter teaching instead. While she eventually entered the teaching profession, higher education was the first and only option laid out by her middle-class parents. Many of the women who were interviewed came from lower middle class families who could afford to send their children on to higher institutions of learning. Therefore, for those who could afford to pay for the additional training, black parents and community leaders encouraged their children to pursue higher education whenever possible.

Sociologist Elizabeth Higginbotham argues that because higher education was the only significant route of mobility for black Americans in the twentieth century, racism directly and indirectly spurred the growth of a small group of black professional women. According to Higginbotham, black women were sponsored and encouraged by their family members to complete educational training because their male counterparts had more employment options without college education.¹⁵⁴ As an African American family in Canada, it is possible that these same sensibilities held true for the Lewis family who supported Loretta's educational training with the hopes of encouraging her aspirations for a professional career by providing the wherewithal for her movement up the social ladder.

Even though mainstream schooling systems rejected and limited black academic achievement, from within black communities, they embraced academic success and wanted acceptance as equal participants in Ontario's education system. Encouraging

¹⁵³ Loretta Lewis. Interview by author.

¹⁵⁴ Elizabeth Higginbotham, *Employment for Professional Black Women in the Twentieth Century* (Memphis: Department of Sociology and Social Work and the Center for Research on Women, 1985), 9.

formal education and thus increasing opportunities for economic and social mobility, black families advocated ideas that black children were just as respectable and academically capable as their white counterparts. Seeking to mitigate racial and gender stereotypes of blacks, teaching children the value of education to achieve professional status and uplift their communities characterized black middle class families in Canada.¹⁵⁵ These connections to family, social mobility and mainstream oppression remained at the heart of women's choices to enter teaching, whether made by themselves, their families, or close community relationships.

Conclusion

The teacher shortage and growing student population of the 1950s forced the Ontario to widen admission requirements into teachers' colleges and allowed black women, who had limited options in the labour force, to enter the field. Black women entered the teaching profession for a variety of personal and collective reasons. Some decided to be teachers because of the independence and freedom it offered, others decided to attend because they believed it was their calling; some entered the field because of the restrictive options available for black women in the work force. While some women saw teaching as an opportunity to gain professional status and mobility, their entrance into the profession was largely a result of broader economic and social restrictions, which limited black women's access to specific types of vocations.

The black female educators whose experiences frame this study came from a variety of backgrounds and geographic locations and thus approached mainstream educational institutions from multiple fronts and vantage points. And although they came

¹⁵⁵ Agnes Calliste, "Black Families in Canada," in Valerie Zawilski and Cynthia Levine-Rasky, eds., *Inequality in Canada: A Reader on the Intersections of Gender, Race and Class* (Ontario: Oxford University Press, 2005), 99.

from different origins, the intersectionality of race, class, gender in their experiences, as well as the homogenizing force of Canadian racism caused some them to see their challenges through similar eyes, and to seek solutions to further their professional lives.

This chapter has endeavoured to understand the economic and social circumstances of these professional women within the context of low education and employment as experienced by black Canadian communities. Conscious of their positions within mainstream educational institutions, participants in this research project strategically negotiated ideals of access and identity, obtaining certification and gainful employment, and building professional networks, to serve both individual and collective needs. They used the opportunities available to them, responded to changing mainstream requirements to plant themselves as active participants within the Canadian landscape. Yet, despite critiques of their credentials, limited access to schooling and varied experiences of discrimination, some black female educators enjoyed their jobs and the responsibilities that came with these positions. Their presence and role within these Canadian institutions directly challenged conceptions of blackness in Canada in their ability to overcome forms of discrimination within the schooling system, obtain certification, and find personal fulfillment as professional educators. Their reasons for entering the profession would become further reframed as they negotiated ideas of belonging once they continued their careers as educators.

Chapter Two:

“To bridge the gap and be a mentor for the black students”: Changing Ontario Classrooms and Black Women Teachers as Cultural Mediators, 1965-1980s

The board was starting to focus on black students, period. Because now, there was a large number of black students in the schools that just weren't doing well.¹

When black Canadian women completed their qualifications at various teachers' colleges across Ontario, many of them either already had jobs as educators or gained positions within school boards relatively quickly. While at least eight black women teachers, whose experiences were discussed in chapter one, highlighted Ontario's growing teacher shortage and changing entrance requirements as strong motivations for entering the profession in the 1950s and early 1960s, by the late 1960s and early 1970s, educators documented different reasons for seeking teaching positions within Ontario school boards. Out of the twenty-six female educators interviewed for this project, ten highlighted increasing immigrant student populations in schools. More specifically, educators identified growing immigration from the Caribbean, which resulted in changing school demographics and greater pupil diversity, as assisting in their recruitment into positions within school boards, particularly in the North York and Toronto school districts.

Increasing immigration to Ontario in the late 1960s not only meant that school enrolment dramatically increased but also that special programs, such as English as a Second Language (ESL), were needed in order to ensure that immigrant children, particularly those who did not speak one of the two national languages, adjusted to

¹ Marcia Lambert. Interview by author. Audio recording, Toronto, ON, April 5, 2011.

Canadian life.² As a result, heritage and language programs gained popularity throughout Ontario schools and ushered in multicultural policies and mandates in the years that followed.³ Stemming from Canada's model of biculturalism and bilingualism, which declared the English and French languages and cultures as the foundation of the nation, the growing immigrant black populations, largely coming from English and French speaking countries, should have easily adjusted to Canadian life. However, Ontario's growing black Caribbean and African student populations faced unacknowledged racial hurdles in a nation that imagined French and English identities, the foundations of Canadianness, as white. Further, because these Caribbean and African student populations often utilized Creolized versions of English and French languages, state schooling programs perceived and situated these black populations as bearers of substandard versions of British and French imperial culture.⁴ For the significant

² For more on language and educational programming and Canada's immigrant populations post-1945, see: Franca Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People: Italian Immigrants in Postwar Toronto* (Montreal, Toronto: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992); Carl E. James and Barbara Burnaby, "Immigrant Students and Schooling in Toronto, 1960s to 1990s," in Paul Anisef and Michael Lanphier, eds., *The World in a City* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003); Barbara Burnaby, "Reflections on Language Policies in Canada: Three Examples," in James W. Tollefson, ed., *Language Policies in Education: Critical Issues* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., 2002); Jim Cummins, "Linguistic Minorities and Multicultural Policy in Canada," in John Edwards ed., *Linguistic Minorities, Policies and Pluralism*, (London: Academic Press Inc., 1984).

³ For more on Multicultural language policies in Canada, see: Neil Bissoondath, *Selling Illusions: The Cult of Multiculturalism in Canada* (Toronto: Penguin 1994); Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Stan Shapson and Vincent D'Oyley, eds., *Multicultural Education: Canadian Perspectives* (Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters, Ltd., 1984); Reva Joshee and Lauri Johnson, eds., *Multicultural Education Policies in Canada and the United States* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007).

⁴ While the question of language in the Caribbean is still a contested and debated topic, most linguists agree that the vast majority of Caribbean populations communicate in Creoles and are therefore bilingual. For more discussions on Caribbean languages, see: Pauline Christie, Barbara Lalla, Velma Pollard and Lawrence Carrington, eds., *Studies in Caribbean Language II: Papers from the Ninth Biennial Conference of the Society for Caribbean Linguist* (Trinidad: School of Education, University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, 1998); Pauline Christie, ed., *Due Respect: Papers on English and English-Related Creoles on the Caribbean in Honour of Professor Robert Le Page* (Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2001); Hubert Devonish, *Language and Liberation: Creole Language Politics in the Caribbean* (London: Karia, 1986); Hazel Simmons-McDonald and Ian Robertson, eds., *Exploring the Boundaries of Caribbean Creole Languages* (Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago: University of the West Indies Press, 2006); Mervyn Morris, *"Is English We Speaking" and Other Essays* (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 1999);

populations of African descended peoples entering Canada in greater numbers, the reimagining of ‘belonging’ to the nation through language policies transformed blackness in Canada into Caribbean, foreign, and unassimilable. On these grounds, the forms of racism that faced black populations beginning in the seventeenth century were simply transformed into twentieth century state programs that continued to treat African descended peoples as occupying spaces outside of the Canadian nation.

Despite this, as will be discussed below, school administrators did recognize growing racial tensions within their schools and discrepancies in programming, largely surrounding the streaming and high dropout rates among black students. As a result, administrators specifically sought out black educators to address issues of disengagement, cultural transitions, and academic performance in Ontario schools. In addition to the reasons for entering the profession highlighted in chapter one, black women were particularly approached by administrators who believed that because they were also non-white, they could better understand racially diverse student populations, some of whom were black. Assigned as, and sometimes opting to operate as, cultural mediators, black women teachers held paradoxical positions of both hyper-visibility and invisibility within Canadian school settings. In some instances, they were visible as racialized women, perceived to be able to ‘handle’ Ontario’s changing and multiracial classroom dynamics. In other cases, they were made invisible as a result of Ontario curriculum and programming that largely ignored the presence and contributions of blacks in Canada. The hiring of black women teachers revealed a complex series of factors: 1) while black women were hired as part of broader provincial discourses

Gordon Collier and Ulrich Fleischmann, eds., *A Pepper-Pot of Cultures: Aspects of Creolization in the Caribbean* (Amsterdam: Matatu, 2003).

concerning educational equality, the foundations and motivations for this hiring were inherently racist. 2) The creation of heritage language programs, which served to assimilate Ontario's growing ethnic white and working-class populations, simultaneously ignored black Canadian populations while mainstream schooling practices 'othered' black students and the black women teachers that local administrators hired.

While in the 1950s and early 1960s, segregation and regional settlement patterns led to the hiring of black women teachers to educate black pupils, by the late 1960s and 1970s, massive immigration, particularly from the Caribbean, served to expand and continue the practice of hiring black educators to teach black students. At the same time, the larger and more politically active black populations of the late 1960s and 1970s continued to question the concentration of black students in lower-level educational programming. This chapter then will explore the hyper-(in)visibility of black women teachers in two distinctive sections; the first will highlight how mainstream administrators, programming and schools coped with increasingly diverse student populations. Since schools were designed with the goal of producing and preparing national citizens, it is possible to argue that they failed black students since Canadian schools, and broader society, constructed a narrow definition of the ideal citizen as white, male, heterosexual, and preferably of British or French heritage.⁵ While many black Canadians may have shared the ideal traits of masculinity, heterosexuality and believed

⁵ I define citizenship as a form of multi-layered belonging which located one's membership and participation in the nation state through various processes such as legal status, access to political, economic and public institutions, and educational equality. Ken Osborne, "Public Schooling and Citizenship Education in Canada," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* Vol. 32, No. 1 (2000): 8-37; Anh Hua, "Homing Desire, Cultural Citizenship and Diasporic Imagining," *Journal of International Women's Studies* Vol. 13, No. 4 (July 2011): 45-56; Kristina R. Llewellyn, *Democracy's Angels: The Work of Women Teachers*; Irene Bloemraad, Anna Korteweg and Gokce Yurdakul, "Citizenship and Immigration: Multiculturalism, Assimilation and Challenges to the Nation State," *Annual Review of Sociology* Vol. 34 (2008): 153-179; John C. Harles, "Integration Before Assimilation: Immigration, Multiculturalism and the Canadian Polity," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* Vol. 30, No. 4 (Dec., 1997): 711-736.

themselves to be bearers of British and French heritage, they were not white and this constructed one important basis on which they were excluded from the nation. As such, both Canadian born and immigrant black populations, who experienced different levels of engagement with Canadian citizenship, felt displacement and exclusion in the nation-state. Here, I argue that mainstream schooling practices, reinscribed broader ideals of citizenship and belonging, which accommodated European (ethnic) immigrant populations but rendered various black populations as occupying spaces outside of the nation.

The second section of this chapter will explore the ways in which school administrators searched for black women educators believing that they were especially suited to teach minority students. Presuming these recent migrants, many of whom were black, could better relate to black educators, administrators surmised that black women teachers could bridge the gap between increasing community discontent and Ministry mandates as they related to new immigrant populations. In response to growing agitation from black parents, community members and societal fears of rising black student populations, schools recruited black female educators in order to accommodate and contain growing disillusionment among black students in Ontario schools.⁶ Some black women accepted these roles and saw their positions within classrooms as an extension of their work for community improvement. Other educators felt burdened by unrealistic expectations placed upon them as a result of their positions as cultural specialists and

⁶ Scholars such as Marcel Martel, James W. St. G. Walker and David Austin all document a growing fear amongst white Canadians as black populations increased in numbers and militancy. This fear was further compounded by younger student populations at all education levels. See: David Austin, *Fear of a Black Nation* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2013); Marcel Martel, "Riot' at Sir George Williams: Giving Meaning to Student Dissent' in Lara Campbell, Dominique Clement & Gregory S. Kealey, eds., *Debating Dissent: Canada and the Sixties* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012); James W. St. G. Walker, "Black Confrontation in Sixties Halifax" in *Debating Dissent*; Marq de Villiers, "Face of Fear: Racism in Canada" *Globe and Mail*, June 28, 1975.

mediators. Ultimately, their experiences served to reveal the ways in which black Canadian students and educators were given limited points of access to school programming when it served mainstream purposes, but never achieved full systemic inclusion.

‘No, no, this kid isn’t Special Ed’: Changing Student Populations and the Increasing Presence of Black Students in Basic-level Programming

By the time Minister of Education John Robarts implemented his plan for inclusive education in 1962 to widen career options for high school students, there were already distinctive Italian, Jewish, Chinese, Slavic, Caribbean and Canadian-born black neighbourhoods in large Canadian cities as well as concentrations of Ukrainian, Russian, and German communities across the Western provinces.⁷ In an effort to respond to these demographic changes and liberal ideals promoting universal education for all, the Ministry of Education increased studies and research programs about immigrant groups in Ontario classrooms. In addition, discourse about education in Canada focused on the individual needs of school children and increasing educational equality amongst its pupils. Public education was viewed as an investment in skilled labour and the federal government financed and supported technical and university education more than ever before. Students stayed in school longer and obtaining higher education was believed to increase social mobility and access. Equal educational opportunities for all became directly connected to economic growth and the government increased its role supporting

⁷ Howard H. Palmer, “Reluctant Hosts: Anglo-Canadian Views of Multiculturalism in the Twentieth Century” in John R. Mallea and Jonathan C. Young, eds., *Cultural Diversity and Canadian Education: Issues and Innovations* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1984), 36.

cultural activities and higher education.⁸ As part of educational progressivism, education ministers, administrators, magazines and teaching journals expressed the belief that education should be accessible to all students and should appeal to the developmental level of the child in order to foster better pupil learning.

As part of this focus on educational equality, John Robarts received federal funding that allowed the province to build and expand technical and vocational schools, as well as implement a series of programs that would address the educational gap between pupils. The Robarts' plan encouraged equal educational opportunities, better-trained teachers and more guidance personnel in schools but largely focused on economic differences among Ontario pupils.⁹ As part of its push to include working class student populations, the Robarts' plan introduced 'streaming' as a way to reinvigorate commitments to vocational training and reduce the stigmatism towards vocational education.¹⁰ The program resulted in the biggest increase in streaming in Ontario's

⁸ Brian Titley and Kas Mazurek, "Back to the Basics? Forward to the Fundamentals?" in Brian Titley, ed., *Canadian Education: Historical Themes and Contemporary Issues* (Calgary, Alberta, Detselig Enterprises Ltd., 1990), 114-117. For more on liberal education in 1960s Ontario, review: Brian O'Sullivan, "Global Change and Education Reform in Ontario and Canada," *Canadian Journal of Education* Vol. 24, No. 3 (Summer 1999): 311-325; Paul Axelrod, *Values in Conflict: The University, the Marketplace, and the Trials of Liberal Education* (Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002); Michael B. Katz and Paul H. Mattingly, eds., *Education and Social Change: Themes from Ontario's Past* (New York: New York University Press, 1975); R.D. Gidney, *From Hope to Harris*.

⁹ Hugh A. Stevenson, "Crisis and Continuum: Public Education in the Sixties" in J. Donald Wilson, Robert M. Stamp and Louis-Philippe Audet, eds., *Canadian Education: A History* (Ontario: Prentice Hall Ltd., 1970), 480; R.D. Gidney, *From Hope to Harris*, 44-48.

¹⁰ Streaming is defined as "placement of pupils in groupings according to a criterion such as ability, achievement, interest, need or a combination of these factors for the purposes of providing instruction so that pupils can proceed towards appropriate educational goals at an appropriate rate." In elementary schools, students were grouped based on physical, intellectual, communicative, social or emotional development. In addition, students were also grouped according to English proficiency and could be placed in ESL or booster programs. Within secondary schools, streaming was implemented in three major categories: 1) Basic 2) General 3) Advanced. Students were assessed based on tests, examinations, assignments, teacher observations and sometimes standardized tests. Student who needed additional instruction in English were also given access to ESL, booster and vocational programs. Maisy Cheng, Edgar Wright and Sylvia Larer, *Streaming in Toronto and Other Ontario Schools*, (Toronto: The Board of Education for the City of Toronto. Research Department, 1980), 2-7.

secondary school history with student enrolment in technical schools more than doubling from 24% to 46% of the total school population between 1961 and 1967.¹¹

The introduction of streaming in Ontario high schools had drastic implications for working class immigrant populations, some of whom were black students. While the Robarts' plan was meant to produce a more adaptable and educated labour force, what it did was reinforce social difference where students from lower income, immigrant and racialized communities found themselves funneled into four-year or two-year vocational and technical programs.¹² Although the program was expected to include students, particularly from low-income communities, who would have normally left school to enter the job market, it was still unable to curb the high dropout rates among these students in Ontario schools. In some instances, students who graduated from these vocational education programs found that they were unable to get jobs in the areas for which they trained.¹³ This programming discrepancy may have included a variety of factors: 1) perhaps training within these programs left students inadequately prepared for the job market and therefore they could not obtain jobs; 2) by the time students completed their programs, few jobs were available in these fields; or 3) despite their training, racism and discriminatory labour practices limited access to employment for these students.

When considering Ontario's history of legally segregated schooling and racial discrimination mentioned in chapter one, streaming for black students meant that they

¹¹ Harry Smaller, "Vocational Education in Ontario's Secondary Schools: Past, Present – and Future?" Labour Education and Training Research Network, York University, Accessed on March 16, 2015 at <http://www.yorku.ca/crws/network/english/Smaller.pdf>; Bruce Brydges, "A Method to Ensure Heterogeneous Mixing of Grade 9 Classes," (Ed.D Practicum Report, Nova Southeastern University, 1993), 11. For more on The Robarts Plan See: Jennifer Wallner, *Learning to School: Federalism and Public Schooling in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014); George Martell, ed., *The Politics of the Canadian Public Schools* (Toronto: James, Lewis & Samuel, 1974).

¹² Harry Smaller, "Vocational Education in Ontario's Secondary Schools: Past, Present – and Future?" 12.

¹³ Alan Sears, *Retooling the Mind Factory: Education in a Lean State* (Aurora, Ont: Garamond Press, 2003), 49.

tended to be pushed into special education programs that labeled their difficulties in schools as part of their supposedly poor psychological development rather than as a result of the challenges of immigration or inadequacies in the system itself.¹⁴ Though the Robarts plan was supposed to appeal to the interests and needs of the ‘average’ student, it continued larger Ministry practices that shifted the responsibility of equal education away from the government and onto immigrant and racialized communities, namely parents, community members and individual black educators.

The result, according to Harry Smaller, was an overrepresentation of “minority, ethnic and socio-economically disadvantaged students in lower streamed programs,” especially in Toronto schools.¹⁵ The disproportionate number of racial minorities in basic level programming was so prevalent that by 1983, the Toronto Board of Education reported that 30% of black students who entered their schools in grade nine were funneled into basic level courses while only 17% of white students were placed in basic stream programs.¹⁶ The overrepresentation of black students within basic-level programs was further compounded by the fact that these students often did not continue on to post-secondary studies and had limited opportunities and access to employment. In fact only about 20% of those enrolled in basic level programming stayed long enough to receive

¹⁴ Keren Brathwaite and Carl James, eds., *Educating African Canadians*, 15.

¹⁵ Harry Smaller, “Vocational Education in Ontario’s Secondary Schools: Past, Present – and Future?” 18.

¹⁶ Toronto Board researcher, A.J.C. King’s report studied the in-school and out school experiences of 44,744 students between the ages of 13 to 19 years of age found that students in basic level programs had limited career horizons and employment opportunities. Educational historians Jason Ellis and Paul Axelrod also support these findings in their analysis of special education programs in Toronto. Ellis and Axelrod contend that the Toronto Board of Education’s special education policies were heavily criticized by low-income and/or immigrant families who believed that special education and streaming directly discriminated against their communities. A.J.C. King, *The Adolescent Experience* (Toronto: The Research Committee of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers’ Federation, 1986), 39-40; Jason Ellis and Paul Axelrod “Continuity and Change: Special Education Policy Development in Toronto Public Schools, 1945 to the Present,” *Teachers’ College Record* Vol. 118, No. 010206 (February 2016): 2, 12, 14.

their high school diplomas.¹⁷ Creating a cycle that subordinated black student access to education and employment, streaming continued eighteenth century national traditions of racial segregation and separation which remained in the nineteenth century, and negatively affected black students' opportunities for success both inside and outside of school settings. However, despite growing concerns about limited educational and employment opportunities for the disproportionate number of working class and/or racial minority students in basic-level programming, Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation commissioned a report that reached the startling conclusion that basic level students "have learned to live with these limitations."¹⁸ For the 34.6% of black students and 18.9% of Caribbean students in Toronto schools who found themselves enrolled in special education courses and basic level programming, streaming reinforced broader notions of social and economic difference along race, class, and ethnic lines.¹⁹

The over-representation of blacks in basic-level and vocational programs continued into the 1990s where, as Jim Cummins notes, systemic racism under the guise

¹⁷ Bruce Curtis, D.W. Livingstone, Harry Smaller, *Stacking the Deck: The Streaming of Working-Class Kids in Ontario Schools* (Toronto: Our Schools/Our Selves Education Foundation, 1992), 13.

¹⁸ In a report sponsored by the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, A.J.C. King collected data from 46,000 Ontario students (ages 13 to 19) between 1983-1985 to identify the characteristic attitudes of secondary school students across the province. King found that there was an overrepresentation of children whose parents were born in Portugal or the Caribbean islands in basic-level courses. He explained these students were remarkably well adjusted despite their limited career options. He also noted that these students remained critical of their teachers and of a system that regarded them as different from other students. A.J.C. King, *The Adolescent Experience* (Toronto: The Research Committee of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, 1986), 39-51.

¹⁹ According to Harry Smaller, in terms of social equity, the Robarts Plan was unsuccessful. He cites several Toronto Board of Education studies which revealed that the children of the city's working and unemployed poor were placed in the lowest streams of the school system in comparison to families from professional and managerial occupations. Smaller further explains that students within these programs experienced high drop-out rates in comparison to the graduation rates of students in academic programs throughout Ontario. Harry Smaller, "Vocational Education in Ontario's Secondary Schools: Past, Present – and Future?" 15; Bruce Curtis, D.W. Livingstone and Harry Smaller, *Stacking the Deck: The Streaming of Working-Class Kids in Ontario Schools*, 60.

of multiculturalism continued to plague black educational experiences.²⁰ According to Cummins,

An interesting difference between Canadian and U.S. situations is that in Canada, for educational activists, the term *multicultural education* has become hopelessly compromised because of its ‘song-and-dance’ connotations. Serious calls for educational change generally identify themselves as ‘anti-racist’ in orientation. In the United States, the term *multicultural education* remains viable partly because it has been reconceptualized by prominent scholars to include both anti-racist education and critical pedagogy.²¹

By the 1990s, Multiculturalism was well established as the quintessential marker of cultural acceptance that distinguished Canada from the United States. However, critiques from scholars including Rinaldo Walcott, Neil Bissoondath and Himani Bannerji reveal that Multiculturalism entrenched paradoxical processes of ‘including’ diverse racialized communities, largely through ‘traditional’ cultural practices of song, food and dance, while simultaneously organizing racial minorities into hierarchies of difference and tolerance.²² Under the veneer of racial diversity, multicultural policies incorporated those who were not of French or British origin into its definitions of citizenship in limited and prescribed ways, leaving institutionalized forms and practices of domination, such as streaming, intact. As will be discussed later in this chapter, it is not surprising then that the coexistence of systemic racism and multiculturalism served to not only engage black communities in the education system, through the hiring of black women teachers and

²⁰ According to Canadian data, as reviewed in Brathwaite and James, Cummins reveals that African Canadian students and parents connected systemic racism in Canadian schools to the inadequacies of multicultural policies. Jim Cummins, “Minority Status and Schooling in Canada,” *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* Vol. 28, No. 3 (1997): 421.

²¹Ibid. 423

²² Rinaldo Walcott, *Black Like Who?* (Toronto: Insomniac Press, 2003), 117. For critiques on Multiculturalism and racial exclusion, see: Rinaldo Walcott, *Critiquing Canadian Multiculturalism: Towards an Anti-racist Agenda* (Unpublished MA thesis, Department of Education, University of Toronto, 1993); Rinaldo Walcott, *Black Like Who? Writing Black Canada* (Toronto: Insomniac Press, 2003); Neil Bissoondath, *Selling Illusions: The Cult of Multiculturalism in Canada*, (Toronto: Penguin Books, 1994); Himani Bannerji. *The Dark Side of the Nation: Essays on Multiculturalism, Nationalism and Gender* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, 2000).

some programming, but also used this very system to label and contain blacks as ‘not-quite citizens’ and outsiders.²³

In his discussion of minority students in Canada, Jim Cummins examines how broader coercive relations of power enter schooling structures. Cummins explains that in 1985, while Caribbean students accounted for about 12% of the student population in the North York Board of Education, they comprised more than 30% of the students in basic and vocational level programs. In contrast, Caribbean students only comprised five percent of the student population in advanced-level programs.²⁴ Cummins argues that a “historical and current pattern of coercive relations of power in which African Canadian student identities have been constructed as deficient and actively devalued in classroom interactions” could be observed in Ontario classrooms.²⁵

Documenting the long standing effects of the Robarts’ Plan and the streaming of students, many of whom were black, into these programs, Cummins’ argument reveals that the continued practice of creating school programs that ignored systemic inequalities left black students socially and economically disadvantaged. Whereas the language in the nineteenth century led to the segregation of some black students on the basis of racial inferiority, by the twentieth century, the separation of black students based on individual ability and economic status was particularly present in areas with increased black student populations.

Although the Robarts Plan introduced the formal practice of streaming in Ontario high schools, some interview participants in this research project recollected a more informal process occurring before this policy was implemented. When Lisa Oteng

²³ Jim Cummins, “Minority Status and Schooling in Canada,” 421.

²⁵ Jim Cummins, “Minority Status and Schooling in Canada,” 426.

entered ninth grade in 1955, she remembered a covert process of streaming happening in her high school. Oteng recalled,

They made assumptions that young black women were not going to college. And they had streaming at that time. And so they told me to take this class and that, and put me in this whole stream that was not college prep[ration]. So they gave me business math instead of giving me algebra. I had to go back and get those things because they streamed me in to take business class because [school administrators believed] all you're gonna do is hopefully work in someone's office. You know they just made assumptions that I was not going to go to college.²⁶

Oteng outlines both race and gender restrictions that were part of Canada's segregated educational and labour market as discussed in chapter one. Her clear understanding that a process of streaming deliberately prevented her from furthering her education reinforced notions of black bodies being meant, almost exclusively, for labour. Believing that as a black woman, Oteng was better suited for employment in the service industry, and thereby in the lower economic strata, as Dionne Brand argues, Oteng's recollection also pointed to a subtle process in the education system whereby black students were viewed as psychologically (and of course intellectually) deficient. In Oteng's case, streaming was directly connected to perceptions of limited occupational and therefore educational choices available to her.²⁷

While the systemic implications of streaming indicate a subtle process of entrenched discrimination and racism in schools, it is also possible that school administrators and white teachers believed that they were assisting students who were under-performing and experiencing difficulties in their classrooms. It is conceivable that some administrators and educators believed they were objectively measuring student capabilities, lack of concentration and projected possibilities of school challenges with

²⁶ Lisa Oteng, interview by author. Audio recording, Windsor, On., November 23, 2011.

²⁷ Dionne Brand, "We Weren't Allowed to Go into Factory Work Until Hitler Started the War": The 1920s to the 1940s," 181.

the hopes that students would learn better in different school environments. As a consequence, some administrators and educators may not have considered streaming's broader racist implications, but simply believed that they were objectively assessing student performance. This correlates to what scholar and researcher, Frances Henry, describes as the "hidden curriculum." In her analysis of the effects of racism on Caribbean youth in Toronto schools, Henry argues that the hidden curriculum accounts for the different beliefs, assumptions, attitudes and expectations that teachers bring into schools.²⁸ Henry argues that the hidden curriculum also refers to different social relations that receive little attention and research because it addresses the intangible 'ethos' of schooling. According to Henry, the hidden curriculum is not a deliberate agenda by educators to create difference but rather accounts for the unconscious and culturally based values and attitudes of educators and, I add, administrators. Henry reveals that, "Fixed ideas about intelligence and racial difference, however, can influence and inform a hidden curriculum and shape patterns of interaction as well as teachers' expectations of students."²⁹ Subsequently, while Oteng described broader gender and racial biases that led to her streaming, her recollection can also be attributed to a hidden curriculum, which accounted for how some educators and administrators were unable to 'see' their own biases and perceive the effects of their directives.

A few years later, Canadian born black educator Camille Mead recollected a similar but more overt practice of streaming when she transferred from a rural school in Chatham to teach in a larger school in Windsor, Ontario in 1963. Mead explained that her school faced increased scrutiny from board officials after black community members

²⁸ Frances Henry, *The Caribbean Diaspora in Toronto: Learning to Live with Racism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 139

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 140.

and organizers forced administrators to take a diversity survey because “they knew that most of the children in special education were black kids.”³⁰ On the day the diversity survey was to be implemented, Mead remembered that her school principal was adamant about ensuring she filled out the form for her classroom. Although not detailing the specific parameters and scope of the survey’s assessment, Mead recalled that her principal deliberately marked black students for special education programming. She recollected,

So he took a pen and wrote down beside each coloured kid, in that one section for the principals only, there was a checkmark. He [then] took it and he went to the meeting. I went to him [the] day after and said: ‘Doug, what was the purpose of just checking off the names of just the coloured students.’ He said: ‘Oh well this group... will go to special ed[ucation]. I said: ‘What? No, no, this kid isn’t special ed.’ And this thing here of the principal, only the principal could check off, was somewhat putting a damper on our kids. Very subtle, it was. They were labeled.³¹

Mead’s recollection of this (in)formal streaming process was something that continued to bother her even during the time of her interview, 48 years later. She insisted on emphasizing that there were some brilliant students, including her niece, who did not deserve to be labeled and placed in special education classes. Mead was well aware of the negative impact that streaming students into special education classes would have and remained concerned about their academic success under current schooling practices.

In their study of the impact of streaming of working-class students in Ontario schools, educational historians Bruce Curtis, D.W. Livingstone and Harry Smaller reported that special educational classes had negative effects on Ontario’s student population. Examining Toronto schools in the 1980s, they reported that special education classes contributed to a cycle of humiliation and lack of motivation from pupils enrolled

³⁰ Camille Mead. Interview by author.

³¹ Camille Mead. Interview by author.

in its programs. For this reason, many students felt that they were labeled and treated differently, dramatically diminishing their chances of school success. Curtis, Livingstone and Smaller argue, “Clearly, when students realize that less is expected of them by their teachers, they often see no point in trying to challenge this expectation.”³² With this in mind, it is possible that Mead also recognized that the labeling of black students as having ‘special needs’ lowered their self-esteem and exposed them to a curriculum that inadequately prepared them for the workforce and post-secondary education. Her resistance to the process of labeling was limited by educational hierarchies, which served to silence her concerns, specifically under the principal’s authority.

Mead’s example highlights the contradictory ways in which inclusion and exclusion of black Canadians manifested itself in Ontario school systems. While Mead’s school board could claim they responded to growing concerns about racial diversity through the recruitment and ‘consultation’ of a black teacher, Mead could not stop the racist authority figure in her school from implementing harmful practices that directly influenced black students. Furthermore, the fact that despite increasing agitation and surveillance from black community members about school accountability concerning racial equality, some administrators still found ways to stream black Canadian students, demonstrated the power individual administrators had over the educational access and success of black students. Ultimately, Mead exerted her power the best way she knew how and warned individual black parents in her community about the negative effects of having their children placed in special education classes.³³

³² Bruce Curtis, D.W. Livingstone, and Harry Smaller, *Stacking the Deck: The Streaming of Working-Class Kids in Ontario Schools*, 61.

³³ Camille Mead. Interview by author.

While Oteng and Mead document school streaming practices that occurred before the official policy was implemented through the Robarts plan, and other programs that largely targeted Canadian-born black populations, when immigrant black populations are considered, this process of streaming became even more pronounced. It is also important to note that these programs did not exclusively target black Canadian students, for working-class and ethnic immigrant youth were also included in this streaming process.³⁴

Roslyn Meyers, who candidly discussed how the process of streaming happened for her husband, whom she met in high school in 1961 in Windsor, Ontario revealed the impact of this informal practice. Meyers recalled,

He came from Bermuda at 18...Graduated from high school in Bermuda. They [school administrators] didn't know what to do with them [Roslyn's husband and two other Bermudian students who migrated to Canada on soccer scholarships]. The ESL people, they had no program yet so they didn't know what to do with foreign students...But do you know what they did? They put them in grade nine! Three guys, when they should have been going to university. (Husband interjects and says: 'But we took an IQ test'). So he took the test and I don't think it was so much the IQ, they [school administrators] said because they [Roslyn's husband and peers] didn't have any French. So they made [th]em, all three, go back. So they went to high school down here...and he went back from grade nine up to grade twelve and we got married when he was in grade twelve. But I was so furious that they made him go right back to grade nine and made him go all the way through.³⁵

While IQ testing could also have served to discriminate against students based on race, gender and ethnicity, Meyers emphasized language (in this case French) as a key marker in the streaming process of Caribbean born students.³⁶ This process of streaming

³⁴ Harry Smaller, "Vocational Education in Ontario's Secondary Schools: Past, Present – and Future?" 16; Ian Milligan, *Rebel Youth: 1960s Labour Unrest, Young Workers and New Leftists in English Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004), 16.

³⁵ Roslyn Meyers, interview by author, Windsor, Ontario. August 19, 2011.

³⁶ Jim Cummins, *Psychological Assessment of Minority Language Students* (Toronto: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1980), 3-5. Also see: R.J. Samuda and D.H. Crawford, *Testing, Assessment, Counselling and Placement of Ethnic Minority Students* (Toronto: Ontario Ministry of Education, 1980); Cecil R. Reynolds, "Why is Psychometric Research on Bias in Mental Testing So Often Ignored?" *Psychology, Public Policy and Law* Vol. 6, No. 1 (2000): 144-150; Suzuki, Lisa A. and Richard Valencia, "Race–Ethnicity and Measured Intelligence: Educational Implications," *American Psychologist* Vol. 52, No. 10 (Oct. 1997): 1103-1114.

supposedly based on English or French proficiency ignored the diverse adjustment factors such as alienation and cultural dislocation, which had an impact on Caribbean students' learning, in addition to the stresses of immigration, institutionalized racism, limited economic opportunities and isolation.³⁷

Scholar Jim Cummins supports claims made by Meyers in his examination of the ways in which school-screening processes limited minority students in school systems. In his study of IQ testing among minority students, Jim Cummins reveals that students with similar backgrounds and experiences performed extremely well in IQ tests in Canadian schools. However, he explained, "when used with linguistic and/or cultural minority groups whose background experiences are significantly different from those of the majority group, the construct validity of IQ tests automatically disappears" [his emphasis].³⁸ Cummins argued that IQ tests could not accurately account for the academic performance of minority groups because their experiences had not been adequately assessed. As a result, school systems reinforced the background experiences and values of the majority group causing disproportionate number of immigrant and linguistic minority children to be placed in vocational streams and special education classes.

Cummins' analysis buttressed claims made by Oteng, Mead, and Meyers who emphasized the negative affects that varying processes of streaming, which later became reinforced through the Robarts Plan, had on minority students. Rather than addressing

³⁷ Elizabeth Coelho, *Caribbean Students in Canadian Schools, Book 1* (Toronto: Carib-Can Publishers, 1988), 71.

³⁸ Jim Cummins *Psychological Assessment of Minority Language Students*, 3-5. Also see: Jason Ellis, "'Inequalities of Children in Original Endowment': How Intelligence Testing Transformed Early Special Education in a North American City School System," *History of Education Quarterly* Vol. 53, No. 4 (November 2013): 401-429.

the broader systemic problems in education, particularly those that affected black Canadian students, the Robarts Plan became one of many programs implemented by the Ministry of Education that focused on increased access and universal education for all students in theory, but did little to challenge the barriers faced by black Canadian students.

‘We are a nation of immigrants’: Multiculturalism within a Bilingual Framework

At about the same time that there were increasing discussions about universal education, a growing number of Quebecers believed that Anglo Canadian dominance of the economy and politics threatened Quebecois culture and language and pushed for greater recognition of Quebecois identity and sovereignty. Between the 1930s and 1960s, dramatic urbanization was taking place in Quebec and as a result, nearly 40% of Quebec’s francophone population moved from rural areas to Montréal’s city centre.³⁹ This rising francophone citizenry reinvigorated cultural activities, campaigned for francophone identity and criticized the authority of the Roman Catholic Church and its control of education, health and social services. Ushering in the Quiet Revolution, social, political and economic reforms created increasing pressure for the federal government to preserve the linguistic and cultural heritage of French Canada.⁴⁰ Responding to Quebec’s

³⁹ Eve Haque, *Multiculturalism within a Bilingual Framework, Language, Race and Belonging in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 45. Also see: Matthew Hayday, “Reconciling the Two Solitudes? Language Rights and the Constitutional Question from the Quiet Revolution to the Victoria Charter,” in Lara Campbell, Dominique Clement, Gregory S. Kealey, eds., *Debating Dissent: Canada and the Sixties* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012); Jean Burnet, “The Policy of Multiculturalism within a Bilingual Framework,” in Aaron Wolfgang, eds., *Education of Immigrant Students* (Toronto: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1975); Jose E. Igartua, “The Sixties in Quebec,” in *Debating Dissent: Canada and the Sixties*; Michael D. Behiels, *Prelude to Quebec’s Quiet Revolution: Liberalism vs Neo-Nationalism, 1945-60* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1985); Robert Bothwell, *Canada and Quebec: One Country, Two Histories* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1995).

⁴⁰ Michael Gauvreau, *The Catholic Origins of Quebec’s Quiet Revolution, 1931-1970* (Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2005); Ramsay Cook, *Canada, Quebec and the Uses of Nationalism* (Toronto: McLelland & Stewart Inc., 1986); John Dickinson and Brian Young, *A Short History of Quebec* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2003).

increasing ‘nationalism’, the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism was created in 1961 and served as the foundation for the development of Canada’s Multiculturalism policy years later. While the Commission’s most crucial recommendation allowed Canadian parents the right to have their children instructed in the official language of their choice and extended French language schooling across Canada, it also expanded discussions about educational inequalities to include language and culture.⁴¹

In her analysis of the Bilingual and Bicultural Commission, Eve Haque argues that the Commission helped the Government of Canada create a national policy based on ‘multiculturalism within a bilingual framework.’ Linking bilingualism and multiculturalism together, Haque contends that the strategy of the Bilingual and Bicultural Commission was to create racial exclusion in Canadian society by constructing platforms of language and culture that reinforced white-settler hegemony, particularly that of Canada’s two ‘founding nations’. According to Haque, language became a fundamental element in the nation building process, creating narrow definitions of ‘multiculturalism’ and ‘integration’ to allow for limited inclusion of ethnic groups. Citing Manoly Lupul’s discussion of multiculturalism’s effect on Ukrainian-Canadians in the late 1960s and 1970s, Haque adopts Lupul’s two-tiered category of immigrant

⁴¹ Report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, “Education”, Ch. VI, Book 1, *The Official Languages*, reproduced in John R. Mallea and Jonathan C. Young, eds., *Cultural Diversity and Canadian Education: Issues and Innovations* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1984), 87. Between 1963 and 1969, The Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism conducted a series of interviews as a response to growing discontent from French Canadians in Quebec, who advocated for the protection of their cultural and religious rights. The Commission’s findings resulted in the creation of the Official Languages Act and the Federal Department of Multiculturalism. For more on the Royal Commission, see: *Report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism: Book IV, The Cultural Contribution of Other Ethnic Groups* (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, 1969); Jean Burnet, “The Policy of Multiculturalism Within a Bilingual Framework: A Stock-taking,” *Canadian Ethnic Studies* Vol. 10, No. 2 (1978): 107-113; Milton J. Esman, “The Politics of Official Bilingualism in Canada,” in William R. Beer, James E. Jacob, eds., *Language Policy and National Unity* (New Jersey: Rowman & Allenheld, 1985), 45-66; Eve Haque, *Multiculturalism Within a Bilingual Framework: Language, Race, and Belonging in Canada*.

identities: *white ethnics*, who were undistinguished in appearance but concerned with language and cultural retention, and *real minorities*, whose visible features prevented them from true assimilation, regardless of language ability.⁴²

Using these definitions, Haque explains that the Bilingual and Bicultural Commission signaled a shift in the category of the ‘Other’ which removed white ethnics from the category of ‘foreigners’ and situated them alongside ‘founding’ groups. The result was that inclusion came to be defined by a number of factors that included race and excluded ‘real minorities’ from definitions of nationhood. Scholars Vijay Agnew, Brian Titley, Himani Bannerji, Rinaldo Walcott and Bryan Palmer also support the argument that multiculturalism within a bilingual framework served to accommodate the growing political strengths of some ethnic groups, while preserving the privileged position of the Canada’s French and British ‘origins’.⁴³ Creating a hierarchy of belonging, policies that stemmed from the Bicultural and Bilingual Commission became evident in the education sector as ethnic and racialized communities forced, albeit with different levels of power and access, the Commission to consider and include its diverse pupil populations.

In a section titled, *The Cultural Contributions of the Other Ethnic Groups*, the Commission argued that, “Since those of British and French ethnic origin are the main groups in Canada, it is appropriate that the British and French cultures dominate in public

⁴² Eve Haque, *Multiculturalism within a Bilingual Framework, Language, Race and Belonging in Canada*, 39-40.

⁴³ These scholars all claim that while concepts of whiteness were expanding by the end of the 1960s, specifically through the bilingualism and multicultural frameworks, Indigenous, black Canadian and other racialized groups received limited access to citizenship and belonging in the nation state. Vijay Agnew, *Resisting Discrimination: Women from Asia, Africa and the Caribbean and the Women’s Movement in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 97; E. Brian Titley, ed., *Canadian Education: Historical Themes and Contemporary Issues* (Calgary, Alberta, Detselig Enterprises Ltd., 1990), 135-136. Himani Bannerji, *The Dark Side of the Nation: Essays on Multiculturalism, Nationalism and Gender*, 45-48; Rinaldo Walcott, *Critiquing Canadian Multiculturalism; Towards an Anti-racist Agenda* (M.A. Thesis, University of Toronto, 1993), 26-30; Bryan D. Palmer, *Canada’s 1960s: The Ironies of Identity in a Rebellious Era* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 134.

schools. But public schools can also provide an instrument for safeguarding the contribution of other cultures.”⁴⁴ The recognition of non-British and non-French cultural groups remained contingent on whether or not there was sufficient interest in maintaining specific languages and cultures within the school system and on their ability to *remain* within the boundaries of bilingualism and biculturalism, leaving support for two official languages entrenched in Canadian society. According to Haque, this effectively created a “racialized hierarchy of belonging and citizenship rights” that left racialized groups “out of place within the national boundaries of the Canadian white-settler nation, and its modality of inclusion must be regulated through the policy of multiculturalism.”⁴⁵

On a federal level, this gesture towards ‘other cultures’ in schools led to the creation of language programs and the funding of some cultural organizations that would promote the linguistic and cultural heritage of some ethnic groups. Provincially, schools implemented programs such as the Heritage Language Programs, ESL instruction, increased resources for teachers, and created specialist groups and liaisons between cultural groups and educational communities.⁴⁶ The 1977 Heritage Languages Program in Ontario, for example, encouraged teachers and administrators to recognize the cultural and linguistic heritage of ethnic groups in the province. The Ontario Ministry of Education identified ‘heritage language’ as all languages other than the Indigenous languages of Native peoples and the ‘official’ languages of English and French. Under

⁴⁴ Report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, “Education”, Ch. VI, Book IV, *The Cultural Contributions of the other Ethnic Groups* reproduced in John R. Mallea and Jonathan C. Young, eds., *Cultural Diversity and Canadian Education: Issues and Innovations* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1984), 96.

⁴⁵ Eve Haque, *Multiculturalism within a Bilingual Framework, Language, Race and Belonging in Canada*, 24.

⁴⁶ Kas Mazurek and Nick Kach, “Multiculturalism, Society and Education,” in E. Brian Titley, ed., *Canadian Education: Historical Themes and Contemporary Issues* (Calgary, Alberta: Detselig Enterprises Ltd., 1990), 142.

Ontario's Heritage Languages Program, "language classes were offered after school, on a non school day, or where enrolments justify, the five hour-school day is extended by 30 minutes."⁴⁷ These cultural heritage programs varied across boards and were typically held after school or on weekends, not as part of the formal curriculum.⁴⁸ By the 1990s, Ontario boasted heritage language instruction in over sixty-two languages; approximately 50% of its programming was in Italian, Portuguese and Cantonese.⁴⁹ It was believed that through heritage language programs, students would build their confidence and sense of belonging in Ontario schools.⁵⁰

Heritage language programs included a mixture of both language and cultural (defined as heritage) programming. These programs tended to be generated out of local advocacy and parental concerns over student engagement in Ontario schools. Under Ontario's Education Act (1974), which made provisions for bilingual/bicultural competence, language programs had structural and financial supports allowing for board-wide implementation and curriculum models. Such was the case of Main Street school which opened its doors in 1965, and had a language and cultural emersion program to facilitate the reading, writing and speaking of English through "an immersion in the Anglo-Canadian Culture."⁵¹ While Main Street school served students of predominantly, Portuguese, Greek and Italian descent, for Canadian and Caribbean born black students, whose first language was English, heritage programs were said to speak to the

⁴⁷ Canadian Education Association, *Heritage Language Programs in Canadian School Boards* (Toronto: Canadian Education Association, 1991), 9.

⁴⁸ Jim Cummins, "Heritage Language Teaching in Canadian Schools," *Journal of Curriculum Studies* Vol. 24, No. 3 (1992): 282.

⁴⁹ Canadian Education Association, *Heritage Language Programs in Canadian School Boards*, 10.

⁵⁰ Keren Brathwaite and Carl James, eds., *Educating African Canadians* 23.

⁵¹ Vandra L. Masemann, "Multicultural Programs in Toronto Schools," *Interchange* Vol. 9, No. 1 (1978-9): 32. Also see: George Martell, *The Politics of the Canadian Public School* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company Publishers, 1974), 104-112; Loren Jay Lind, *The Learning Machine: A Hard Look at Toronto Schools* (Toronto: Anasi, 1974).

‘educational opportunity deficiencies’ these students faced within the school system.⁵² In contrast to language programs, black heritage programs, according to Carl James, were short-lived, fragmented and lacked institutional support and commitment.⁵³ Furthermore, there seems to be some indication that because there were so few qualified black educators within school boards to teach these heritage programs, unqualified teachers or community members may have been approached to assist with these programs.

On the recommendation of the Ontario Human Rights Commission, researchers Wilson A. Head and Jerri Lee wrote that the hiring of black teachers, guidance counselors, social workers and psychologists was necessary to reflect the ethnic and racial composition of Toronto schools. Of particular note was their identification of the limited number of minority educators available within Ontario schools. As a result, Head and Lee wrote, “This may mean hiring teachers with special qualifications suited to meeting the needs of black and other minority children. These individuals may not necessarily possess the academic degrees now required for certification as professional teachers.” Given the importance of the Ontario Human Rights Commission’s presence in

⁵² In their 1975 report on multicultural programs in Toronto, the Toronto Board of Education reported that Educational Opportunity Deficiencies (E.O.D.) was a phrase that developed out deliberations with the Black Liaison Committee which referenced the uneven educational backgrounds of immigrant students. According to the board, discussions about E.O.D. increased with the influx of West Indian and East Indian immigrants in Toronto schools. The report claimed that while the issue was not limited to these two groups, E.O.D. particularly focused on three types of students: “One involves immigrant students from countries where English is the national language (West Indies, Guyana, Trinidad, India, etc.), another involves those students who have emigrated from countries where a language other than English is the national language. A third involves Canadian born students who speak English with some competence but whose parents and, in some cases, grand-parents were immigrants from countries where the national language is other than English.” To assist these students, the board working group recommended booster (upgrading) programs for these students and a study centre related to the teaching of English as a *Second Dialect* [my emphasis]. Toronto Board of Education, *Draft Report of the Work Group on Multiculturalism Programs* (Toronto: Toronto Board of Education for the City of Toronto, May 20, 1975), 49 – 53.

⁵³ Carl James, “Innovations, Initiatives, Strategies: The West Humber Experience,” in Vincent D’Oyley, ed., *Innovations in Black Education in Canada, National Council of Black Educators* (Toronto: Umbrella Press, 1994), 91.

the advocacy of community and institutional equality in Ontario, it is possible that these recommendations were implemented as part of heritage programs in Toronto schools.⁵⁴

Despite clear differences between linguistic and cultural programming, the importance of creating programs to accommodate white ethnic populations was believed to be a valid and pressing concern for Ontario school administrators where schools in Toronto saw an increase in its non-British/non-French white populations into the 1970s. In that period, the city reported that more than 40% of its students came from homes where English was not the first language. In Toronto schools, over 10,000 students spoke Italian, approximately 4,000 spoke Portuguese, and 3,000 spoke Greek.⁵⁵ Projects designed to ‘Canadianize’ newcomers reflected Anglo-Canadian middle class ideals not only about food, marriage, child-rearing, physical and moral health but ultimately worked to integrate non-British/non-French newcomers into the Canadian mainstream. Therefore, Ontario’s ‘immigrant student problem’ was constructed as an issue of language that could be solved by teaching English to these new Canadians.⁵⁶

Strengthened by larger population numbers and cultural organizations, the various language programs in Ontario schools, such as the Italian kindergarten transition program in Toronto, or Italian and Portuguese transition programs offered in grades 4-6 in the city,

⁵⁴ In their analysis of black experiences in Canadian schooling systems in the 20th Century, Wilson A. Head and Jeri Lee of the Ontario Human Rights Commission surveyed the perception of discrimination among black adults and community groups in Metro Toronto in 1974. Finding that some respondents believed that school counselors and social workers were afraid to deal with ‘blackness’ in schools, black students faced academic difficulties while school administrators denied this reality. Instead, Head and Lee’s reported a series of recommendations for action which included the hiring of teachers, guidance counselors, social workers and psychologists who reflected the ethnic and racial composition of its school students and neighboring environment. Wilson A. Head and Jeri Lee, “The Black Presence in the Canadian Mosaic: Discrimination in Education,” *Interchange* Vol. 9, No. 1 (1978-9): 92.

⁵⁵ Garnet McDiarmid, “Trends in Society, Trends in Curriculum” in Garnet McDiarmid, ed., *From Quantitative to Qualitative Change in Ontario Education* (Toronto: O.I.S.E., 1976), 180.

⁵⁶ Vandra L. Masemann, “Multicultural Programs in Toronto Schools,” in John R. Mallea and Jonathan C. Young, eds., *Cultural Diversity and Canadian Education: Issues and Innovations* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1984), 353.

created an unequal distribution of programs and resources that often prioritized the needs of one linguistic minority group over another.⁵⁷ While the treatment of Italian, Portuguese, Greek, Ukrainian, and other central and eastern European immigrants in Canadian schools was also riddled with discrimination and racial stereotypes, historian Franca Iacovetta reveals that this form of cultural pluralism within a bilingual, two-founding nations context, was narrowly defined and often restricted ethnics to a celebration of cultural forms such as food, dance and music. However, the fundamental idea remained that these immigrants could *become* Canadian, where over time immigrants could shed their ‘foreign-ness’ while adding to the cultural landscape of the nation.⁵⁸

As a result, administrators accommodated ethnic immigrant students through the creation of heritage language programs while reemphasizing a Eurocentric curriculum that privileged British and French history and cultural presence in Canada. Through this strategy, school administrators could claim to be responsive of its immigrant pupil populations, largely through the recognition of linguistic rather than racial difference, while leaving structural curricular content relatively unchanged. It is here that Haque’s critique of the Bilingualism and Bicultural Commission extends into Ontario schools, where the *linguistic* focus of programming heavily prioritized European migrants, who

⁵⁷ Patricia A Duff reveals that in the early 1970s, heritage bilingual programs in Canada led to the creation of Italian and Portuguese transition programs in Ontario, English-Ukrainian kindergarten elementary programs in Edmonton and Manitoba, and Hebrew-French English programs in Montreal. Patricia A. Duff, “Heritage Language Education in Canada,” in Donna M. Brinton, Olga Kagan, and Susan Bauckus, eds., *Heritage Language Education: A New Field Emerging* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 75-76.

⁵⁸ Franca Iacovetta, *Gatekeepers: Reshaping Immigrant Lives in Cold War Canada*, (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2006), 55. Also see: Peter Li, “The Social Construction of Immigrants” in Elpseth Cameron, ed., *Multiculturalism and Immigration in Canada: An Introductory Reader* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press, 2004), 189-192; Luis L.M. Aguiar, “The New ‘In-Between’ Peoples: Southern-European Transnationalism,” in Vic Satzewich and Lloyd Wong, eds., *Transnational Identities and Practices in Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006), 202-215.

were larger in number, effectively marginalizing blacks in Canada whose disengagement in schools could not be remedied through such language programs.

While language was part of black pupils' challenges in school, the absence of black representation in school curricula, differential treatment based on race, and feelings of isolation within schools were among some of the issues that contributed to black student disengagement in schools.⁵⁹ Adopting Haque's critique, this process of using language as measure of inclusion served as a way of regulating racialized populations; and as we will learn later in this chapter, the regulation of cultural diversity in schools was managed through various heritage programs and the hiring of black female educators by Ontario school administrators.⁶⁰

Since not all groups were united or powerful enough to lobby for educational programs in the same ways, language programs did not reach all minority groups equally.⁶¹ Instead, for black Canadians, Caribbean and African born students who spoke

⁵⁹ George J. Sefa Dei, "The Role of Afrocentricity in the Inclusive Curriculum in Canada Schools," *Canadian Journal of Education* Vol. 30, No. 2: 176-177. Also see: Alice Bhyat, "Bias in the Curriculum: A Comparative Look at Two Boards of Education," (Major Research Paper, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1993); George J. Sefa Dei et. al, *Reconstructing 'dropout': A Critical Ethnography of the Dynamics of Black Students' Disengagement from School* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997); Keren Brathwaite and Carl James, *Educating African-Canadians*; Henry M. Codjoe, "Fighting the 'Public Enemy' of Black Academic Achievement: The Persistence of Racism and the Schooling Experiences of Black Students in Canada," *Race, Ethnicity and Education* Vol. 4, No. 4 (2001): 343-375.

⁶⁰ Eve Haque, *Multiculturalism within a Bilingual Framework, Language, Race and Belonging in Canada*, 22.

⁶¹ Kas Mazurek and Nick Kach, "Multiculturalism, Society and Education" in *Cultural Diversity and Canadian Education*, 149. K. Mazurek and N. Kach argue that the heritage language program was created as a result of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism in 1963. Serving as the precursor to Canada's official multiculturalism policy of 1988, heritage language programs, ESL instruction and multicultural resources for students represented 'multiculturalism within a bilingual framework'. K. Mazurek and N. Kach, "Multiculturalism, Society and Education," in E. Brian Titley, ed., *Canadian Education: Historical Themes and Contemporary Issues* (Calgary, Alberta: Detselig Enterprises Ltd., 1990), 135-42. In addition, scholar Will Kymlica argues that multiculturalism was a political afterthought, tacked onto the goals of the Bilingualism and Biculturalism report. Charting three stages in the development of multicultural policy, Kymlica contends that multiculturalism within a bilingual framework was a political bargain to address the national unity crisis, not fully equipped with dealing effectively with issues of racism in Canada. Will Kymlica, "The Three Lives of Multiculturalism," in Shibao Guo and

English and remained racially different from predominately white population, language programs served as reminders of the ‘problematic’ spaces in which they occupied and of their minority status. For instance, as Ontario’s black immigrant population from the English speaking Caribbean increased, the discrepancies between federal education policies based on language and local implementation which tried to include cultural difference within the contexts of language, became incredibly pronounced. While little information exists documenting the experiences of Caribbean born black students in various school districts across Ontario, as a result of their larger numbers in Toronto, studies assessing their experiences in Toronto school districts can inform our understanding of what likely happened to students in other school districts.

In 1972, the Board of Education for the borough of York exemplified the contradiction that Caribbean students presented to streaming programs that assessed student academic performance and, I argue, Canadian belonging, allegedly based on language. In an attempt to describe the experience of Caribbean students in Toronto schools as a teacher resource, the board reported that,

The West Indian immigrant occupies a special place because, on the surface, Canadians have more in common with West Indians in terms of a common heritage and language than with many European immigrants. In the West Indies, as in Canada, the British influence is everywhere apparent and English is the predominant language. It is a curious fact that, despite this, cultural and linguistic differences are often cited when difficulties faced by West Indians adjusting to Canadian ways are discussed.⁶²

The report continued to state that while having close linguistic and cultural influences, Caribbean students still faced systematic challenges in Ontario school systems, largely because of the denigration of cultural elements that children learned in

Lloyd Wong, eds., *Revisiting Multiculturalism in Canada: Theories, Policies and Debates* (The Netherlands: Sense Publishers, 2015), 19.

⁶² John Roth, *The West Indians in Toronto: The Students and the Schools* (Toronto: The Board of Education for the Borough of York, 1972), 2.

their birth homes. Stopping short of labeling this practice as discriminatory, the report recommended that educators respect cultural differences, particularly about ‘Caribbean dialects’, in order to encourage comfortable environments conducive for student learning.⁶³ Board of Education researchers John Roth, Elizabeth Coelho, and others argued that the problem facing Caribbean students in Toronto, most of whom were black, was not that they did not know at least one of the founding languages, but that their ‘dialects’ incorporated a continuum of languages ranging from Creole to standard English.⁶⁴ Roth and Coelho explained that Caribbean students that spoke ‘dialects’ faced different problems than the Francophone or European student learning English, because of the prevalent attitudes that ‘dialects’ were incorrect and inferior.

Researcher and program leader for ESL/D⁶⁵ programs at the North York Board of Education, Elizabeth Coelho revealed that this was because Creoles and various Caribbean dialects were completely ignored as means of communication in Canadian schools; they simply did not “have the status that other languages, such as Spanish or Japanese, have in most teachers’ eyes.”⁶⁶ In fact, Coelho extended this discussion to explain that the issue of language learning within Ontario schools was distinctly different for Caribbean learners because, “Divergence from Standard English usage by Caribbean students is usually not regarded with the same tolerance as errors made by students who

⁶³ While Roth did not highlight his definition of dialect, it is presumed that dialect is defined as language of a specific social and geographic origin which incorporates a combination of English words, pronunciations, and grammatical forms. In the Anglo Caribbean context, Creole English developed as a distinct dialect but and was publically labeled as English due to the stigmatization of creolized languages. As a result, Creole English, despite its varied structure, pronunciation and usage from standard varieties of English, has not been widely considered as a separate language. Peter Trudgill, *Dialects, Second Edition* (New York: Routledge, 1994, 2004), 2; Shondel J. Nero, *Dialects, Englishes, Creoles and Education* (New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Inc., 2006), 6-7.

⁶⁴ John Roth, *The West Indians in Toronto: The Students and The Schools*, 39-43; Elizabeth Coelho, *Caribbean Students in Canadian Schools, Book 1* (Toronto: Carib-Can Publishers, 1988), 137.

⁶⁵ ESL/D serves as an acronym for English as a Second Language/Dialect. Elizabeth Coelho, *Caribbean Students in Canadian Schools, Book 1*, iii.

⁶⁶ Elizabeth Coelho, *Caribbean Students in Canadian Schools, Book 1*, 144.

are learning English as a second language, because Caribbean students are generally not regarded as language learners. They are regarded as English speakers who are careless with the language.”⁶⁷ According to Coelho, educators made value judgments about intelligence and chances of academic success were based on unexamined societal attitudes towards language.

Ultimately, Coelho assessed that the discrimination against Caribbean students, which was pursued under the guise of language and cultural difference, contributed to the increasing presence of blacks in basic level and special education programs. While Coelho’s report predominantly accounted for the presence of Caribbean students in basic level programs, she also argued that there was strong evidence to suggest that Canadian born black students were also under- and poorly educated within Ontario schools.⁶⁸ Alluding to the fact that all black students, despite linguistic differences, were experiencing disengagement within Ontario schools, Coelho hinted at broader systemic issues, such as teacher prejudice, isolation and cultural adjustment as affecting black pupils in Canadian schools. As a result, the assessment and placement of black students in special programming, solely on the basis of language, spoke to larger processes of anti-blackness within Ontario schools.

Black students faced a variety of issues that extended beyond language-orientated programs. In his study examining the high dropout rates of black students in Ontario, sociologist George Dei reveals that little work has been produced examining the high dropout rates and underachievement among visible minority youth. He reveals that while

⁶⁷ Elizabeth Coelho, *Caribbean Students in Canadian Schools, Book 1*, 144.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 69; Carl James and Keren Braithwaite also report that similar patterns of school experiences were happening to Canadian-born black youth who were not doing well in school and had parents who supported their educational endeavours and aspirations. Keren Braithwaite and Carl James, eds., *Educating African Canadians*, 16.

studies produced in the 1970s began important statistical work and identified a problem in Ontario's education system, they failed to adequately explore questions of class, gender, race, ethnicity, power and history in their discussion of high minority dropout rates. Dei builds on this earlier research to explore how differential treatment by race, inadequate curricular content, communicative and pedagogic practices that did not reflect the diversity of black Canadian experiences and the absence of black and minority teachers in the school system influenced black student engagement in schools.⁶⁹

Focusing on the oral interviews of over 150 African Canadian students in 1992, Dei's research revealed that black students remembered being targeted for misconduct by school personnel, low teacher expectations, and economic backgrounds as affecting their success in schools. The systemic barriers, as outlined by Dei, were based on the racial and cultural differences of black Canadian students, irrespective of their place of birth, often went unnoticed in heritage language and multicultural school programming. Instead, racial and cultural difference in Ontario schools, as Gloria Roberts-Fiati argues, was treated as a deficiency rather than a true reflection of diversity.⁷⁰ While black student disengagement in schools could be partly attributed to language, its broader implication served to exemplify the ways in which the nation constructed itself as white.

In his discussion of the development of Canadian national identity in the 1960s, Bryan Palmer uses the 1966 boxing match between George Chuvalo and Muhammad Ali as a lens for understanding changing notions of whiteness in twentieth century Canada. Using sporting events to examine constructions of national identity, the Chuvalo-Ali

⁶⁹ George J. Sefa Dei, "Listening to Voices: Developing a Pedagogy of Change from the Narratives of African-Canadian Students and Parents," in *Educating African Canadians*, 43-54.

⁷⁰ Gloria Roberts-Fiati, "Assessing the Effects of Early Marginalization on the Education of African Canadian Children," in *Educating African Canadians*, 75-76.

boxing match then symbolized Canadian and American regional, class, gender and racial differences.⁷¹ Most notable is Palmer argument that 1960s Canada was an era where the rigidly fixed contours of whiteness, rooted almost exclusively in Britishness, were becoming blurred. Instead, the 1960s, saw a broadening of whiteness, and therefore Canadianness, to allow those “who were not quite yet white, but were on the verge of being recognized as such” access to citizenship.⁷² Therefore, despite his working-class immigrant background, Chualo was constructed in the 1966 match as ‘Canada’s Great White Hope’. However, at the same time that conceptions of whiteness were broadening, racialized groups, which included Indigenous and black Canadian populations, were not “welcome into the fullness of citizenship” and remained permanent outsiders.⁷³

While Palmer examines masculine constructions of white nationhood in Canada, when considering gendered labour schemes in post-WWII Canada, historian Noula Mina describes the process of whitening ethnic immigrants as happening much earlier. In her discussion female Greek domestic workers in the 1950s, Mina contends that in the two decades following the Second World War, Greek immigrants who were previously unwelcome “were reconsidered a malleable and even preferred white immigrant labour source, especially in comparison to the non-white workers Canada was starting to recruit by the late 1950s.”⁷⁴ While not initially accepted as ideal for Canadian society, Mina confirms Palmer’s later argument about broadening definitions of whiteness to explain

⁷¹ Bryan D. Palmer, *Canada’s 1960s: The Ironies of Identity in a Rebellious Era*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 111-12.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 115, 132. See also: Andrew Baldwin, Laura Cameron, Audrey Kobayashi, eds., *Rethinking the Great White North: Race, Nature and the Historical Geographies of Whiteness in Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011).

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 134.

⁷⁴ Noula Mina, “Taming and Training Greek ‘Peasant Girls’ and the Gendered Politics of Whiteness in Postwar Canada: Canadian Bureaucrats and Immigrant Domestic Workers, 1950s-1960s,” *Canadian Historical Review* Vol. 94, No. 4 (December 2013): 516.

that Greek immigrants occupied an in-between racial status, which made them more desirable than black women, and effectively turned them into desirable white women.⁷⁵

As an extension of this argument, by the early 1970s as multicultural policies became entrenched in Ontario schooling practices, the restructuring of belonging in Canada through language programs, further entrenched the whiteness of ethnic immigrants who could continue to claim their belonging to Canada on the basis of linguistic knowledge. That sense of belonging was drastically limited for black Canadians who remained completely invisible from schooling practices until they became 'problems' that needed to be addressed. Consequently, Ontario classrooms demonstrated multilayered forms of inclusion and exclusion surrounding citizenship in Canada, which classified, ranked, prescribed, and limited its racialized student populations.⁷⁶

Scholars Cecille DePass and Shazia Qureshi support the claim of limited belonging in their examination of the contradictions and paradoxes of citizenship in Canadian society. They contend that while citizenship is often associated with ideals of democracy, participation, representation, freedom, autonomy and respect, it did not necessarily bring about social, political and economic equality for all people. Instead, DePass and Qureshi contend that while the state uses citizenship to symbolically connect people to a broader national community, the contours of citizenship were heavily based on the ability of people to assimilate into existing social and economic structures. For

⁷⁵ Noula Mina, "Taming and Training Greek 'Peasant Girls,'" 523.

⁷⁶ Cecille DePass and Shazia Qureshi, "Paradoxes Contradictions and Ironies of Democratic Citizenship in Education" in Yvonne M. Hébert, ed., *Citizenship in Transformation in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 183. For more information on constructions of citizenship and the racialized 'other', see: Sunera Thobani, *Exalted Subjects: Studies in the Making of Race and Nation in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007); Dorothy E. Chunn, Robert J. Menzies, Robert L. Adamoski, eds., *Contesting Canadian Citizenship: Historical Readings* (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2002); Karen Stanworth, *Visibly Canadian: Imagining Collective Identities in the Canadas, 1820-1910* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014).

people of colour, as DePass and Quareshi contend, “the implication of this and other forms of exclusion is that people of colour are not regarded as legitimate members of Canada. We are entitled neither to participate fully in the social and economic benefits associated with eating at the table nor to achieve the transcendental status of being part of the national community.”⁷⁷ Since state institutions like schools helped craft parameters of citizenship and belonging, the recognition of ethnic immigrant populations through language programs and simultaneous neglect of schooling challenges facing black Canadians in its program models, demonstrated the ways in which they were excluded as full participants of Canadian citizenship. Rather, the relegation of black student populations into basic level programs and their high dropout rates in Ontario schools reflected their inability to assimilate into Canada’s pre-existing economic and social structures, which were never framed to give racialized populations full access to Canadian citizenship.⁷⁸

When considering the importance of schools in helping to structure citizenship belonging and identity, the placement of black students in special education or basic level programs while silencing their specific needs, such as adjusting to new schooling environments, through heritage language programs, resulted in black marginalization and

⁷⁷ Cecille DePass and Shazia Qureshi, “Paradoxes Contradictions and Ironies of Democratic Citizenship in Education,” 185.

⁷⁸ According to historian Sherene H. Razack, the Canadian landscape was constructed as a European story of origin. In her analysis of the Canadian wilderness, Razack argues that constructions of whiteness can help us to understand the Canadian wilderness, particularly through the eviction of Indigenous peoples. Razack claims that a steady process of Europeanization of the Canadian landscape that began with the colonization of North American lands continues into present-day. As a result, the Canadian wilderness was cleansed (violently) of anything that would threaten the white settler story of nationhood. The result was that, non-white subjects could not participate in the nation and systems of representation, which included academic, scientific, aesthetic and national institutions reinforced these constructions of Canadian whiteness. According to Razack, “The script simply doesn’t work when the bodies are not white.” Using Razack’s analysis, I argue that Canadian citizenship was never meant for non-white populations. Sherene H. Razack, “Colonization: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly,” in Andrew Baldwin, Laura Cameron and Audrey Kobayashi, eds., *Rethinking the Great White North: Race, Nature, and the Historical Geographies of Whiteness in Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), 265-268.

the maintenance rather than a minimizing of racial inequality in Ontario schools. Therefore, despite the increasing focus on multiculturalism and cultural heritage in Ontario schools, educational programming's limited boundaries of inclusion and diversity posed particular challenges for black Canadian populations, whose sense of belonging was not solely constructed on the basis of language rights. The results were that black Canadian students experienced lower self-esteem, marginalization and higher dropout rates in Ontario schools. These effects did not go unnoticed among black Canadian communities and board officials.

'He wanted me there to bridge the gap and be a mentor for the black students':

Seeking Black Women to Teach Diverse Student Populations

Despite the emphasis on linguistic and narrowly defined cultural diversity throughout Ontario schools, some administrators recognized the need to quickly address growing racial tensions developing in their schools. Several schools reported increased violence and discontent among their urban student populations throughout the late 1960s and 1970s. In Toronto, at least three gang fights and increasing reports of violence erupting between black and Portuguese youth were causing concern among community officials. In other instances, youth programs like those held at St. Christopher House reported that the Italian, Portuguese and Anglo-Saxon youth withdrew from programs as a result of increasing immigration and militancy from black youth in the area.⁷⁹

⁷⁹ "Blacks Accuse Portuguese: Segregation is Charged," *Globe and Mail*, June 23, 1970; Loren Lind, "Militant Black Driving Whites from Youth Centres, Report Says," *The Globe and Mail*, April 1, 1969.

By 1971, Toronto's black population was over 28,000, over 15,000 of whom were migrants from the Caribbean.⁸⁰ Schools in Toronto held particular importance because of their large Caribbean student population, the vast majority of whom were black. In their study of Caribbean migrants in Toronto, W.W. Anderson and R.W. Grant reported that the bulk of Caribbean migrants settled in either Quebec, which comprised 22% of Caribbean migration in Canada, or Ontario, which had a staggering 68% of Caribbean migrants in Canada. Of these migrants in Ontario, 70% (7,997) of Caribbean students of school age (5-19) would enter schools in the Metro Toronto area.

Schools throughout the North York Board of Education recorded marked increases in the enrolment of non-white students, which included black and other racialized groups in their schools. By 1976, Joyce Public School reported that enrolment was 60% non-white and 75% of their new enrolments were from non-white students. At Flemington Public school, Caribbean born students represented 25% percent of student population; Yorkdale Secondary school recorded that 20% of its students were Caribbean born, while Bathurst Heights Secondary school recorded that ten percent of enrolment was from Caribbean students.⁸¹ The growing number of black Caribbean students in Ontario schools increased concerns from black community leaders and educators who believed that students from Caribbean islands came with varying needs, which included adjustment to Canadian life, comprehension difficulties, and varying levels of education from their birth countries.⁸²

⁸⁰ W.W. Anderson and R. W. Grant, *The New New-comers* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, 1987), 15-16; Wilson A. Head and Jeri Lee, "The Black Presence in the Canadian Mosaic: Discrimination in Education," *Interchange* Vol. 9, No. 1 (1978-9): 86.

⁸¹ "North York School Board to Hire Cultural Worker for West Indian students," *Toronto Star*, January 20, 1976.

⁸² Irene Stanionis, "Zanana Akande, Educational Crusader," *Spear Magazine*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (September 1974).

Increasing racial unrest in Toronto schools led board administrators to sanction and fund various reports and create committees to try to understand issues concerning young students. The creation of the North York Committee of Violence in Schools in 1979 was one such committee designed to study race relations, drugs, violence and vandalism in city schools. In their 26-page report noting special concerns about the high concentrations of black students in some schools, the North York Committee on Violence in Schools reported that more black teachers were needed in schools with large black student populations to avoid racial discontent. The committee also claimed that black teachers were needed to serve as role models and to provide blacks with a sense of fair representation. While the report revealed that qualified black teachers were having trouble getting jobs in schools because of seniority problems and hiring freezes, it highlighted the need to act fast in order to ease tensions in schools among large numbers of black students.⁸³ Despite the fact that the committee also noted that, “violence, drug abuse, and other problems among young people aren’t confined to any one area, or racial or socio-economic group,” it recognized that black students were more likely to run into trouble with the law than white students.⁸⁴ In addition, the Ontario Human Rights Commission’s Race Relations division reported several complaints filed to their offices concerning racial tensions in schools. As late as 1979, a group of 30 students walked out of their Toronto secondary school in protest to growing racial incidents at their school.⁸⁵ Although not explicitly saying so, it seems that the North York Committee on Violence in Schools, and the Race Relations division were alluding to broader social and

⁸³ Warren Porter, “Black Teachers Needed to Curb Unrest: Study,” *Toronto Star*, November 12, 1980.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ Ontario Human Rights Commission, *Report of the Race Relations Division-April/May 1981*. Archives of Ontario.

institutional stereotypes, which attributed violence and unrest to Ontario's young black populations.

In his discussion the trial of Clinton Junior Gayle, who was charged and deported to Jamaica for the 1994 shooting of Constable Todd Baylis, sociologist and novelist Cecil Foster documents a long history of institutional surveillance and the portrayal of black populations, particularly black male immigrants, in the media and public discourses as suspicious and trouble-makers. Citing examples such as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police's (RCMP) spying on Caribbean and black Canadian leaders and politicians in the 1960s and 1970s, Foster argues that blacks were often depicted as gangsters and irresponsible thugs.⁸⁶ R. Patrick Solomon and David A. Brown further support this notion of Canadian social discourses that portrayed blacks as problems in need of containment and control. In their study of black youth adjustment problems in the Greater Toronto area between 1981-82 and in 1993, Solomon and Brown found that black Canadian youth, particularly those from the Caribbean, were understood by white teachers and clinicians (eg. social workers and school psychologists) as having inadequate socialization and as being culturally deprived.⁸⁷

Solomon and Brown found that black students were highly visible and were labeled by educators and authority figures as being aggressive and gang-like. Solomon and Brown contend that, "Historically, blacks of all cultural heritages have been negatively portrayed as lazy and carefree, unintelligent and uneducated, culturally

⁸⁶ Cecil Foster, *A Place Called Home: The Meaning of Being Black in Canada* (Toronto: HarperCollins Publishers Ltd., 1996), 216.

⁸⁷ R. Patrick Solomon and David A. Brown, "From Badness to Sickness: Pathological Conceptions of Black Student Culture and Behaviour," in Vincent R. D'Oyley and Carl E. James, eds., *Re/visioning: Canadian Perspectives on the Education of Africans in the Late 20th Century* (Toronto: Captus Press, 1998), 108-111.

deprived and unassimilable in Canadian society. More contemporarily, those from the Caribbean are burdened with the additional labels of being unsocialized, language deficient, and ‘unCanadians.’⁸⁸ They reveal that these uncritical perspectives of black Canadian cultures led white teachers to be fearful of young black populations. According to Foster, Solomon and Brown broader racial stereotypes and prejudice often depicted black Canadian (youth) populations as deviant and dangerous. As such, their increased presence within schools may have been perceived by administrators as something that needed to be monitored and contained, for fear that patterns of racial and social unrest would mirror those of the United States.

Growing racial conflict in Ontario schools not only reflected problems inherent in school systems, but also revealed growing anxiety within broader Canadian society. In fact, wherever black populations resided, they were met with growing hostility and exclusion; this tension became ever more present in the mid-twentieth century as racial unrest and black activism in the United States gained publicity and momentum in Canada and influenced developments of the period. For example, in Windsor, the 1967 and 1968 Emancipation Day celebrations were cancelled for fear of civil insurrection amongst its black population. Meanwhile, the Ku Klux Klan increased its activities in Amherstburg and racial confrontations occurred with increasing frequency in small town Dresden.⁸⁹

Various media outlets also publicized this growing hostility towards Ontario’s increasing black population, particularly its immigrant Caribbean populations. For example, on CHFI-FM radio station (98.1), commentator Larry Henderson reported that

⁸⁸ R. Patrick Solomon and David A. Brown, “From Badness to Sickness: Pathological Conceptions of Black Student Culture and Behaviour,” 113.

⁸⁹ Herb Colling, *Turning Points: The Detroit Riot of 1967, A Canadian Perspective* (Toronto: Natural Heritage/Natural History Inc., 2003), 173; Robin W. Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: A History* (New Haven London: Yale University Press, 1971), 445-450.

immigration was tolerable so long as it was not excessive. Henderson felt that even though his ideas were controversial, they had to be expressed. Instead, Henderson encouraged re-imposing controls for immigration into Canada and claimed that Toronto already had too many black immigrants and that “It is unnatural to expect Canada to accept large numbers of immigrants of a different stock from the basic Canadian stock.” Fearing that Canada would wind up with a racial problem like the United States, he encouraged the end to ‘uncontrolled’ immigration into Canada.⁹⁰ Henderson’s statement was one among other public sentiments expressed in newspaper editorials and letters reflecting a growing fear among white Canadians about the increasing black presence in Canada. In fact, Frances Henry’s 1978 report examining racism in Toronto measured the extent of racist attitudes in the city. When white Torontonians were asked whether they thought there were too many Black and Indian/Pakistani people in Toronto, 33% of respondents said yes for blacks and 44% said yes for Indian/Pakistani migrants. These numbers stood in contrast to responses about Italian immigrants, who only 16% of white Torontonians thought were too many.⁹¹

Believing that there was a ‘flood’ of immigrants in the city, the concerns expressed by Henderson and some Torontonians exemplified the hyper-visibility of black Canadians when discussing negative ideas about immigration and hyper-invisibility of black populations when discussing their inclusive access to state policies, particularly surrounding education. As a result of these growing concerns about racial tensions within schools, specifically in larger urban centers such as Toronto, Montreal and

⁹⁰ Larry Henderson’s Comments, May 9, 1975. Immigration. 98.1 CHFI-FM Stereo transcription. R12294 16 - Stanley Grizzle Fonds, National Archives of Canada.

⁹¹ Frances Henry, *The Dynamics of Racism in Toronto, Research Report* (Ottawa: Secretary of State of Canada, February 1978), 38

Windsor, school boards and administrators actively sought out black women teachers, and their assumed expertise in dealing with the changing classroom dynamics in Ontario schools. Given that racial and gendered constructions of labour viewed black women as natural caregivers and nurturers, and therefore ‘natural’ teachers, compounded by the fact that black males experienced difficulty finding consistent employment, as emphasized in chapter one, black women teachers became more accessible and available to school administrators.

It is important to note that changing school demographics, partially due to student residency patterns, also ensured that while some schools had no visible minority students enrolled, others had as many as 40% of its students from racial minority groups.⁹² The *Toronto Star* reported that the Toronto Board of Education was faced with a new problem as thousands of black English-speaking children began entering their schools. The article reported that the board was collaborating with a black liaison committee to work with teachers, guidance counselors and school officers about ways to deal with the special needs of black children in their schools.⁹³

Subsequently, as Ontario school administrators and black Canadian communities searched for ways to minimize black student disengagement in its various school districts, they looked to trained black educators, who were believed to have both the experience and cultural understanding to deal with this population, as the best solution to the growing black student problem. In his 1972 board report assessing Caribbean

⁹² Melody Adekin. Interview by author. Audio recording, Toronto, ON, April 1, 2012.; Community school liaison officer for the Toronto Board of Education reported that in 1975 thousands of black students were in Toronto schools, with some schools having as many as 70 percent of its enrolment from black students. Elaine Carey, “Trying to adjust to our schools a problem for some black pupils,” *Toronto Daily Star*, Saturday January 25, 1975.

⁹³ Elaine Carey, “Trying to adjust to our schools a problem for some black pupils,” *Toronto Daily Star*, Saturday January 25, 1975.

students in Toronto school, Toronto Board of Education researcher John Roth explained the importance of black teachers in aiding black student adjustment in Canadian schools.

Roth reported,

There is a crying need for cultural brokers to act as go-betweens, liaising between the West Indian parent and the white school system. The ideal go-between is a West Indian teacher but, unfortunately, there are few of these in local schools. Black staff members of American or Canadian descent often are more successful than whites in explaining the local school system and West Indian parents feel freer to question them. West Indian children, too often show a marked preference for confiding in black staff members.⁹⁴

Roth addressed a growing awareness that school programming was not meeting the needs of its black students, with a specific emphasis on Caribbean born populations. In several school boards throughout Ontario, black female educators, who obtained Ontario teaching qualifications, were hired to solve growing racial disparities, particularly in lower academic programs, within the schooling system.

While it seemed that some school board administrators pursued black educators from both genders to help educate minority children, their greater numbers in Ontario schools and training institutions made black women teachers ideal cultural mediators. For instance, within my study of Ontario teachers' colleges between the 1940s and the 1980s, only 60 black male educators were enrolled in teacher training programs. Within this group, a significant number of these men were from Bermuda and likely came as part of an international educators training program at the Toronto and Hamilton Normal school locations.⁹⁵ Annette Henry and Afua Cooper also reveal that as early as 1871,

⁹⁴ John Roth, *The West Indians in Toronto: The Students and The Schools*, 50.

⁹⁵ "Teachers' College Yearbook Database, 1940s-1980s.;" Jennifer Kelly and Dan Cui also chart a similar pattern of male teachers in their analysis of Jamaican male internationally trained educators. Interviewing 7 male Jamaican teachers who came to Alberta between 1963 and 1969, Kelly found that these teachers were trained in a men's only premier educational institution in Jamaica before migrating to Canada. More flexible immigration requirements and teacher shortages facilitated their entry into the province. Jennifer Kelly and Dan Cui "A Historical Exploration of Internationally Educated Teachers; Jamaica Teachers in

most black teachers in Ontario were women. In conjunction with greater access to education and gendered segregation in the labour market, black women's concentrated numbers in the teaching sector in the 1950s and 1960s was particularly important.⁹⁶

However, there is some indication that despite their limited numbers, some black male teachers who entered the teaching profession were also believed to be better suited to teach minority student populations on the basis of their race. On the grounds that so few sources exist that document the number of visible minority educators on the basis of gender during this study period, I rely on later reports to highlight the possible racialized and gendered experiences of black male teachers in the late twentieth century. In his account of Craig Francis (pseudonym), a 30-year old Caribbean born elementary educator who taught in Toronto schools in the early 1990s, scholar Carl James documents similar discussions of educational discrimination, the questioning of qualifications and legitimacy as the black female educators of this study described. However, in his discussion of administrative supports, James illuminates Craig's experiences with his white male principal who was "very supportive of me as a young black man; very supportive of me initiating Afro-Caribbean programs, black history, etc."⁹⁷ In contrast, Craig's explanation that that his white female principal was not as supportive of his initiatives may indicate a broader racial and gendered experience that James does not emphasize. Craig's ability to initiate black cultural programming with relative ease and confidence as a "highly successful" teacher contradicts some of the stories recounted by black women teachers in the following chapter of this dissertation. While Craig's

1960s Alberta," *Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy*, Issue 100 (Feb. 16, 2010): 3-9.

⁹⁶ Annette Henry, *Taking Back Control*, 82.

⁹⁷ Carl James, "Achieving Desire: Narrative of a Black Male Teacher," *Qualitative Studies in Education* Vol. 15 No. 2 (2002): 182.

discussion can be situated under anti-racist programming taking place in Toronto schools in the 1990s, Craig's position as a black man may have meant that he was favoured by his male administrator on account of his gender. As such, it is possible that some school administrators sought out black educators regardless of their gender to help speak to issues of cultural difference within their schools. However, given their larger numbers in Ontario schools, greater access to training and education, and work within local communities, that some administrators sought out black women teachers within their boards exemplified how black women's race and gendered positionality became a significant indicator of their professional lives.⁹⁸

After completing her Bachelor's degree in Business Administration, Melody Adekin began her Canadian teaching career in 1975. During her teaching placement, Adekin's impressed her practicum teacher who referred her to several schools in Toronto. She recalled being approached by principals who wanted her to teach in their schools. Remembering the motivations of one school administrator who hired her to teach business in his school, Adekin revealed, "...one of them was very persistent. He called me every night until he got me to come to his school [laugh]. He had an issue, the school was about 30-40% black students and he didn't know how to handle it. So he wanted me there to bridge the gap and be a mentor for the black students."⁹⁹ Prior to her arrival, Adekin remembered that there was only one black educator, who was leaving the school, and the principal wanted to ensure that he had at least one black educator to teach the students. Included in this discussion is the implication that Adekin's principal wanted a

⁹⁸ Cecil Foster, *Blackness & Modernity: The Colour of Humanity and the Quest for Freedom* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007), 445.

⁹⁹ Melody Adekin. Interview by author. Audio recording, Toronto, On., April 1, 2012.

staff member who physically represented mainstream definitions of ‘diversity’ and ‘multiculturalism’ in his school.

It is possible that Adekin’s principal recognized a clear disconnect between white administrators and black pupils, indicating that his current staff members were unable, and/or unwilling, to teach or accommodate the increasing number of black students in his school. Since there were relatively few black teachers in Ontario schools, there was every likelihood that black female teachers would be unable to bridge the many gaps black students faced in academic and non-academic settings. Homogenizing diverse black populations, Adekin’s principal believed that the hiring of one black educator could and would speak to the needs of all black children in his school. It is also possible that Adekin’s principal envisioned he was moving his school towards more progressive practices by hiring a role model who could provide some cultural affinity to the experiences of racialized students.

While Toronto boasted high immigrant populations, which included significant numbers of African descended persons, other areas in Southwestern Ontario needed black educators to deal with their minority student populations as well. Donna Lockette remembered that the separate school board in the Windsor-Essex area was looking into developing a program to deal with the visible minority students, which included Middle Eastern, most notably Lebanese, South Asian, Chinese and black students.¹⁰⁰ Lockette revealed that she was hired to teach minority students and that this was not exclusive to only black Canadian pupils. She remembered,

¹⁰⁰ Dr. Glynis George, Dr. Jane Ku and Erwin Selimos, *Enhancing the Welcoming Capacity of Windsor-Essex*, Ontario Trillium Foundation: May 12, 2014, 7. Also see: “The Visible Minority Report for Windsor Essex, Greater Essex County District School Board,” March 2010. Assessed April 3, 2015 < <https://publicboard.ca/Community/diversity/Pages/Windsor-Essex-County-Demographics.aspx>>

It was a west end high school [with a] large number of visible minority youth in the school. [The] teaching population was all white. So, you know, the kids couldn't relate to the people in the school. So, they were importing visible minorities to work with the kids in the school. So I applied for the program and I got the job.¹⁰¹

Assuming that *only* visibly minority educators could relate to racially diverse (non-white) students, relieved mainstream administrators from the responsibility of creating systematic changes that would allow all educators to create inclusive classrooms. Instead, inclusivity was placed on the shoulders of individual racialized educators, particularly black women.

It is important to remember that the idea of hiring black teachers to teach black children was not only a phenomenon associated with rising Caribbean immigrant demographics but also part of a much longer, deeper history of separate education for black Canadians. For Canadian-born black populations residing in the Windsor-Essex area for generations, having shared experiences of discrimination from the dominant white population, the need for black teachers spoke to mainstream racial stereotypes that viewed black students were 'different' and outsiders in need of educators of their 'own kind' to complete school programming.

This reality was even more apparent when examining Sheryl Harre's story in Windsor schools. Canadian-born Harre remembered that she was called in by a white principal who was a good friend of hers to speak to his staff after students from Harrow, which had a high number of black students, were bussed into his secondary school.

Harre explained,

And they [black students] were being bussed into the school and the teachers were terrified. They'd [black students] stand in a group over at the side and the teachers were scared to pass and all that. So I had to go down and talk to the staff there and

¹⁰¹ Donna Lockette, Interview by author. Windsor, On., August 20, 2011.

point out that these are teenagers just like any other teenagers. ... and I eventually ended up teaching at that school that I went to talk to them [white educators]. The principal kept saying please come and teach here. And so I did go down there in about [19]73.¹⁰²

Harre was called in to address a growing fear amongst white teachers once the racial dynamics of their school began to change. While Harre was initially recruited to the school to teach white educators the ‘cultural’ language they needed to accommodate black students, the encouragement she received from the school principal to join the staff demonstrated concerns that this was not enough. Rather, Harre’s physical presence was believed to be what the school needed to accommodate its black student population and she was eventually hired as permanent staff. While Harre’s initial role was to help guide and train white teachers on how to create more inclusive spaces for black students, it is possible that by becoming permanent staff, Harre now became solely responsible for assisting black students.

The prevailing idea that only certain racialized educators could teach racial minority students reinforced notions of outsider status, for both the students and educators, and conceptions that blackness was a ‘problem’ foreign to white educators and administrators that could only be ‘solved’ by blacks. Because mainstream administrators were unable, or did not want to deal with black students, black women educators were strongly pursued to fill positions as intermediaries between black communities, the education system and its administrators. The process of importing black educators to teach black students also explained the trend of black women moving out of rural areas and their local communities where jobs were more difficult to obtain, and into more

¹⁰² Sheryl Harre. Interview by author. Windsor, On., November 23, 2011.

diverse urban spaces where their specific expertise was desired.¹⁰³ This also impacted the communities from which these women came, in that as blacks teachers moved out of their communities in pursuit of economic and social advancement, these areas were left without the sufficient numbers of educators necessary to support and sustain their communities.

Similar to the way in which Harre was recruited in Windsor, Caribbean born Blaire Gittens was hired by the York Board of Education in the late 1960s as a result of an influx of black students in the school district. She recalled,

...when we were teaching elementary school, a lot of referrals were coming to the board office especially [about] Jamaicans coming in at the age of 15 and 16... And the superintendent of Special Ed[ucation], he got these referrals and he became Superintendent of Education eventually. Well he was [of] Italian background and he saw all of these referrals coming to him from the West Indies, mainly Jamaica. And at that time, there were only about 6 of us, black [educators] teaching. You're taking about 1968, 69, 70... When he realized that there was [sic] so many referrals, he decided to write each of us, [and] came to see the six of us, in the whole board office.¹⁰⁴

After scheduling a meeting, the superintendent asked the black educators, three of whom were women, to speak to him about what was happening with Caribbean students and to ensure that there would not be discipline and delinquency problems. The group of black educators eventually continued to meet, without the superintendent, at the board office twice a month to explore ways to assist Caribbean students within the school district.

The superintendent's approach assumed that the few black educators within his school district could solve growing systemic problems that were being manifested through

¹⁰³ It is also important to note that in the 1950s and 1960s, Canada was also recruiting internationally trained educators to teach in its schools. For example, between the 1950s and 1960s, Alberta Teachers' Association and various school boards actively recruited educators from Jamaica as a result of it teacher shortage. Sociologists, Jennifer Kelly and Dan Cui estimate that approximately 50 African descended educators from Jamaica settled in Alberta through school board recruitment and advertisements. Many taught in isolated northern communities often teaching in Metis and Indigenous communities. Jennifer Kelly and Dan Cui, "Historical Exploration of Internationally Educated Teachers: Jamaican Teachers in 1960s Alberta," *Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy*, Issue 100 (February 2010): 9-11.

¹⁰⁴ Blaire Gittens. Interview by author. Audio recording. Toronto, On., July 5, 2011.

referrals. While Gittens did not discuss the basis of these referrals, the high number of black Caribbean students who were referred into special education programs drew attention to discrepancies in school programming. Furthermore, the correlation that Gittens' superintendent made among discipline, delinquency and the special education of in-coming black students, may have spoken to broader fears of young black populations who were portrayed as intellectually inferior and behaviorally deficient, and therefore *only* black educators could contain these students. It is also possible that by gathering these educators together, Gittens' superintendent thought he could safeguard any 'delinquent' problems that would place his school district in a negative light, especially amidst increasing public discourse around racial discontent in Canada.¹⁰⁵ Another possibility is that Gittens' superintendent felt he was responding to the apparent 'crisis' in his school district, and listened to black community members and organizations like the Ontario Human Rights Commission, by seeking out black educators to gain insight about black experiences in Canada.

Compounding concerns about Caribbean migrants in Canadian schools was the emerging public perception that black populations became a menacing problem once they increased in number. This reflected broader historical legacies about the ways in which government and state authorities treated and received racial minorities, particularly with

¹⁰⁵ Chapter five will detail growing discussions about racial discontent within Ontario schools. However, the *Globe and Mail*, *Toronto Star*, *Contrast* and other media outlets documented several instances of racial discrimination and racial bias within schools. For example, On March 21, 1970, the *Globe and Mail* reported that black children in Ontario schools were suffering from emotional and cultural damage because of the attitudes of their white teachers. Documenting a two-day conference on the Black Child in Ontario School System, the *Globe and Mail*, like other public media outlets, highlighted growing public attention placed on black students and their experiences of discrimination in Canadian society. "White Teachers Called Racist," *The Globe and Mail*, March 21, 1970.

its immigration policies.¹⁰⁶ The idea that with larger numbers, blacks could potentially disrupt the Canadian way of life was reminiscent of what scholar David Austin terms as the “Fear of a Black Nation” which emphasized the idea Canadians became threatened and fearful of the increased number and public presence of blacks.¹⁰⁷ The increasing presence of black students within Ontario schools caused some concern for mainstream educators and also encouraged them to seek out ways to contain and address this growing ‘problem’.

Tamara Migrant’s experiences at the York Board of Education in Toronto, Ontario confirmed this recognition of an increasing potentially problematic Caribbean presence when it approved the creation of the Black Liaison Committee, which included a small group of black educators from various schools. Migrant recognized this as the board’s acknowledgment that they needed help, but also a means of recruiting black teachers. She explained, “The boards were looking for something too. I must be fair. Because they were getting large numbers of West Indian kids. All of the sudden. They didn’t come in dribs and drabs; they were just coming. It seemed to be every week, schools were receiving new families and they weren’t successful with them.”¹⁰⁸ By September 1974, the York Board of Education started an initiative to begin new classes geared specifically to children from the Caribbean. After conducting research among the

¹⁰⁶ See: Bruce Shepard, *Deemed Unsuited: Blacks from Oklahoma Move to the Canadian Prairies in Search of Equality in the Early 20th Century, Only to Find Racism in Their New Home* (Toronto: Umbrella Press, 1997); James W. St. G. Walker, *Racial Discrimination in Canada: The Black Experience* (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 1985). Judith Fingard, “From Sea to Rail: Black Transportation Workers and their Families in Halifax, c.1870-1916,” *Acadiensis* Vol. 24, No. 2 (1995): 49-64. Mariana Valverde, “Racial Purity, Sexual Purity, and Immigration Policy,” in Barrington Walker, ed., *The History of Immigration and Racism in Canada: Essential Reading* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press, 2008), 175-188.

¹⁰⁷ David Austin, *Fear of a Black Nation: Race, Sex and Security in Sixties Montreal* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2013), 11.

¹⁰⁸ Tamara Migrant, Interview by author. Audio recording. Toronto, On., July 26, 2011.

Caribbean student population throughout the school board, black educator Zanana Akande, Dr. Sue Ziegler, head of research at the York Board of Education, and Dr. Granville Da Costa, a Jamaican-born psychiatrist with the Clarke Institute, approached York's Board of Education to conduct special courses to help orientate West Indian children into the school system.¹⁰⁹ Accepting students who needed help orientating in Canadian classrooms, the program served a maximum of twenty students at a time, between the ages of twelve and seventeen, to study math and language arts, and allowed them the upgrading necessary to enter Ontario high schools.

Supported almost entirely by the few black educators in the system, it was clear that programs such as the one encouraged by Akande and others, may have expanded mainstream discourses about cultural heritage and multiculturalism. However, the programs may have also marked the children as different and unteachable creating further marginalization. In addition, these programs may have allowed white teachers to absolve themselves of the responsibility of teaching black Canadian students by sending them to separate programs. As such, it seems then that black educators and community members bought into the multicultural idea that these separate programs would help their students face the challenges of institutional racism and discrimination. However, they were also caught in a paradoxical dilemma that allowed mainstream administrators to ignore black students rather than to work for their success through broader systemic changes. Finally, perhaps black educators and communities saw this paradox for what it was, but since their children would be left behind if they did not act, they may have felt that the implementation of separate programming was the only solution.

¹⁰⁹ "Zanana Akande, Educational Crusader." *Spear Magazine*, Vol 4 No.2 (September 1974): 9.

The school board, however, was still hesitant to accept the program, spearheaded by black educators, for fear that the special classes would ‘publicly’ appear as segregation, on account of the large number of black students in the program. The board’s uneasy response about creating the program also revealed the conflicting ways in which mainstream education dealt with black student populations, often toeing the line between exclusion, while also implementing limited change and accommodation as exemplified through the hiring of black women teachers and black research committees. Educator Akande’s perception was that the York’s Board of Education was anxious to alleviate problems of black students in its schools and that, “They are becoming aware they are no longer teaching White Anglo-Saxons and they have to address the education to the pupils that are in their schools. Special needs require special attention. If you fail to provide special education classes you are unequalizing opportunity.”¹¹⁰ Using the language of equal access and opportunity which was perhaps promoted by biculturalism and multiculturalism, Akande encouraged board administrators to be accountable for the discrepancies in black students schooling experiences.

By 1978, the Black Liaison Committee worked with the Toronto Board of Education to create a pilot project called the Black Cultural Enrichment Program that later developed into the Black Heritage Program in 1979. In a draft curriculum for the Black Heritage Program, the board reported that the program was created because, “the program [Heritage Languages Program] announced by the Minister [Thomas E. Wells] concerned the cultural and linguistic heritage groups of ethnic groups other than English and French, the teaching of the cultural heritage of black children was not envisaged

¹¹⁰ “Zanana Akande, Educational Crusader.” *Spear Magazine*, Vol 4 No.2 (September 1974): 9.

under this program.”¹¹¹ Instead, members of the black community, through the Black Liaison Committee, advocated for a new program to speak to the needs of black Canadian students. The program worked to provide children with the opportunity to learn that their cultural heritage was African-centered in nature, spanned the diaspora, and covered topics not included in the school curriculum to foster a positive self-image amongst black students.¹¹² The board launched a pilot program during the summer of 1978 with 25 elementary school children out of Dovercourt Public School. The success of the program was measured through the creation of a draft curriculum and the expansion of the program into five schools, registering over 100 elementary school students by the summer of 1979.¹¹³

The programs implemented during this period, like those spearheaded by Akande, Ziegler and Da Costa, were largely a result of the advocacy of the black community, black educators within the system and various school boards, along with the Ministry, which supported these plans to appease the demands of its growing minority population.¹¹⁴ However, the implementation of these various programs did not necessarily mean that their effects on black students were positive, for many continued to experience high dropout rates and disillusionment with Ontario schools. The Ministry’s reactionary implementation of programs meant that it offered inconsistent program

¹¹¹ *Draft Curriculum for the Black Cultural Heritage Program*, Toronto: Toronto Board of Education, 1979-1980, R12294 5 - Stanley Grizzle Fonds, National Archives of Canada.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ *Draft Curriculum for the Black Cultural Heritage Program*, Toronto: Toronto Board of Education, 1979-1980.

¹¹⁴ Scholar Lauri Johnson reports that while Toronto took the lead in the development of program such as the Black Cultural Heritage program, the Board of Education was responding to ongoing pressure from groups like the Black Liaison Committee, the African Canadian Heritage Association and parent organizations like the Organization of Parent of black children (OPBC). Lauri Johnson, “Segregation or ‘Thinking Black’?: Community Activism and the Development of Black-Focused Schools in Toronto and London, 1968-2008,” *Teachers College Record* Vol. 115, No. 11 (November 2013): 6.

planning that varied from school to school rather than offering permanent system-wide change. As such, the Ministry's response to community and teacher-led advocacy, served as a double edged sword: while the absence of these programs would have brought increased criticisms from minority communities, their inability to curb dropout rates amongst black students meant that more comprehensive and inclusive programs were necessary. Furthermore, the Ministry's inconsistent response also resulted in increased scrutiny, outright hostility and rejection from some board members. Therefore, while the Ministry was also facing social and political pressure to address issues of inclusivity within its schools, the insufficient ways it sought to manage these concerns left black teachers, parents and pupils further marginalized.

Some black educators in this research project soon found out that once they began organizing and creating programs, often at the petition of the school boards themselves, they experienced hostility from white co-workers and administrators, especially as they advocated for more permanent solutions to black student disengagement. It is possible that because the programs encouraged by some black educators would require systemic changes and a restructuring of the ways in which Ontario schools treated racialized students, administrators were wary of making permanent changes. Toronto educator, Tamara Migrant recalled how a fear of Ontario's growing black population in schools posed challenges for black educators who moved for permanent and systemic changes within the Ministry of Education. She claimed,

Well you know it's very easy to be one of the few. I guess I have to be careful how I say this because if you are one of the few, nobody [is] afraid of you. Nobody [is] afraid to discuss with you. It's when the population of blacks grows and there are many educators, then they began to say: 'well they're [black educators] starting a movement' or whatever...and then they [school administrators] get nervous [be]cause all of the sudden, it's a movement it's not just you now. And so some people love to remain one of the few and they keep kicking the ladder down when anybody tries to climb on them

because it's very easy to be the oracle there. And that's the position [oracle] where they [administrators] always tried to put me in and I always tried to find other people to work with because you can't do things alone. Same way they'll [administrators] let you run your mouth and seem as if you're doing something. They'll [administrators] ignore you. They got a little nervous.¹¹⁵

Mogrant's referred to the school administrators who initially supported her program to assist Caribbean students in their transition into Toronto schools. However, over time she realized that these alliances were tenuous once black educators began to organize and advocate for broader systemic changes to help these students. Her reference to being expected to be an 'oracle' also reflected mainstream expectations that often placed black women educators as the sole speakers of their communities. It is also possible that her criticism of some blacks who wanted to be 'oracles' within the school system challenged mainstream hiring practices that believed black teachers could only build alliances solely on the basis of race. Instead, Mogrant's critique reflected differences in professional philosophies and work ethics that were part of, but not exclusive to, her positionality as a racialized woman within a mainstream institution. Mogrant's discussion also alludes to institutional discrimination within Ontario's labour market that only allowed the promotion of a few racial minorities, thereby increasing competition and what she described as the tendency to 'kick the ladder down' amongst minority employees. Given that within Ontario's labour market, African Canadians faced significant hurdles in professional advancement and promotion, such as a lack of access to union organization and the need for 'Canadian' experience, it is possible that limited opportunities for promotion and advancement created tensions among the few minorities given these promotions.

¹¹⁵ Tamara Mogrant. Interview by author.

These ideas are also discussed in Laura S. Weintraub's study of employment equity in Canada's educational systems where she argues that despite affirmative action committees and policies in twentieth century Ontario schools, racism and sexism dramatically affected the hiring and promotion of school employees. Citing a variety of surveys and reports which included *Equity in Employment: A Royal Commission Report, vol. 1* (1984), Weintraub reveals that women, racial minorities and Indigenous populations saw little labour status change, despite the existence of affirmative action and race relations programs.¹¹⁶ Highlighting the existence of the "victim competition" syndrome within Canada's educational sector, Weintraub contends that minority employees are pitted against one another and exploited by labour organizations. Using racism and sexism as her main categories of analysis in the creation of employee divisiveness, Weintraub's conception of victim competition syndrome is similar to Mogrant's discussion of oracles in that the employment of racial minorities within Ontario schools did not eliminate racism and hierarchies of power within school systems. In addition, the act of hiring black educators solely on the basis of race, did not account for class, gender, philosophical differences among groups of black Canadians that may have contributed to antagonism between employees.

In addition to an increasing collective activism and organizing occurring among the black populations in Ontario, especially in Toronto where combined with college/university students, black activism became more direct and radical, school administrators became progressively aware of the challenges facing black Canadian

¹¹⁶ Laura S. Weintraub, "Equitable Conceptions and Resistance to Delivery: Employment Equity in the Education Sector," in Frieda Forman, eds. et al., *Feminism and Education* (Toronto: Centre for Women's Studies in Education, OISE, 1990), 69-76.

populations in schools. These ideas will be elaborated on in Chapter 4 where I further discuss educational initiatives and black activism in Toronto. However, in London, Chatham and Windsor where there were higher numbers of Canadian-born black populations and lower immigrant born black populations, the long historical legacy of unequal education meant that educators reported few programs available specifically geared towards black students. This could be as a result of smaller more dispersed black Canadian populations in schools in the area, but also due to the fact that linguistic and cultural programs were not perceived to be as relevant to the high number of Canadian born black populations. However, when individual classroom and community programs did exist, they too were often initiated by black educators and spread across various schools. In fact, no board wide initiative was reported in the London-Windsor area until 2010.¹¹⁷ It is possible that the Ministry's 2009 report titled, *Realizing the Promise of Diversity: Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy*, which described an increase in anti-black racism in Canada as well as the need for system wide approach to equity policy, may have given black female educator, Shantelle Browning-Morgan and community organizations such as the County Black Historical Research Society the support and platform they needed to advocate for board curriculum.¹¹⁸

Before this board-wide initiative, educator Loretta Lewis remembered helping to start a small black studies course within her school. She recollected,

G--S--, when I was at D-- asked me to devise a black history program, which I did in conjunction with J--T-- who was at P-- who taught Black and Asian studies. Mine was very basic, very elementary. I talked about Africa, Ghana, Mali,

¹¹⁷*African Canadian Roads to Freedom*, Greater Essex County District School Board, February 2010, African-Canadian/Ontario Curriculum Writing Team.

¹¹⁸ Ontario Ministry of Education, *Realizing the Promise of Diversity: Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy*, (Toronto: 2009). Leanne Miller, "Shedding Light on Darker Chapters," *Professional Speaking* June 2012. Accessed June 26, 2015
<http://professionallyspeaking.oct.ca/june_2012/departments/exemplary.aspx>

Shanghai, and Timbuktu. How it was a trade centre, how people were doing brain surgery and eye surgery when the British were still painting themselves blue. (Laughter) It was a good time. It was a good course. Our children started to move from hiding and not wanting to know that stuff to: ‘and then what happened Ms. Lewis? Then what happened? Do you have any books?’ Well D-- and V-- had the best black history books, (Laughter) of the system.¹¹⁹

Lewis’ discussion of the ancient British war customs which developed after the development of Ancient African civilizations served as a criticism of Ontario’s Eurocentric portrayal of world history and culture, which situated Europe as the centre of civilization. Instead, Lewis offered an Afrocentric approach to this curriculum by examining the influences of African civilizations on world development, and thereby restructured a sense of belonging for black Canadian students in her classroom.¹²⁰ Programs like the ones at Lewis mentions were few and far between and often initiated and supported by black educators in the community. By 1970, the Canadian Committee on Black Studies was formed at the University of Western Ontario to delve into Ontario’s black history, and in 1971 there were some black studies courses introduced at Brennan, Centennial and Patterson collegiates in Windsor and Essex District High School.¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Loretta Lewis. Interview by author. Audio recording. Windsor, On., July 15, 2011. In areas where identifiers could be made, the names of places, locations and people have been removed to preserve anonymity.

¹²⁰ In his discussion of Afrocentricity in the twentieth century, scholar Molefi Kete Asante describes Afrocentricity as “a philosophical perspective associated with the discovery, location and actualizing of African agency within the context of history and culture.” Asante reveals that by centering African interests, values and perspectives as dominant perspectives in cultural learning, Afrocentricity seeks to develop a consciousness and centeredness among African descended peoples. Canadian educational sociologist, George Dei, expands on Asante’s definition to acknowledge the multiple and collective origins of knowledge included in Afrocentric teaching. Molefi Kete Asante, *Afrocentricity: The Theory of Social Change* (Revised and Expanded) (Chicago: African American Images, 2003), 2-3; George J. Sefa Dei, “The Role of Afrocentricity in the Inclusive Curriculum in Canadian Schools,” *Canadian Journal of Education* Vol. 21, No.2 (1996): 177-178. For more on Afrocentricity, also see: Molefi Kete Asante, *Afrocentricity: The Theory of Social Change*, 5; Gerald D. Jaynes, ed., *Encyclopedia of African American Society, Vol. 2*. (California: Sage Publications Inc., 2005), 33; Kmt. G. Shockley, “Africentric Education Leadership: Theory and Practice,” *International Journal of Education Policy & Leadership* Vol. 3, No. 3 (March 2008): 1-12; George J. Sefa Dei, “Examining the Case for ‘African-Centred’ Schools in Ontario,” *McGill Journal of Education* Vol. 30, No. 2 (Spring 1995) 179-198.

¹²¹ Herb Colling, *The Detroit Riot of 1967, A Canadian Perspective* (Toronto: National Heritage/Natural History Inc., 2003), 257.

Despite this, the implementation of programs for black students remained inconsistent and largely urban in focus, leaving smaller and rural areas throughout the province with virtually no structure to accommodate its smaller, yet still present, black student population.

Many black community members and educators recognized that temporary and inconsistent programming did not do enough to help black children in schools. Community members acknowledged that these programs did not address *why* students were doing so badly in schools. An anonymous educator wrote in the *Community Report*, a publication of the Black Education Project, that “In order to facilitate their plan, some [administrators] even insist that the problems that blacks face are the same as for all immigrants. Not only does this attitude represent a ‘cop out’ but points to a pernicious type of resignation.”¹²² Recognizing that the needs of black children were multifaceted and changing, the author expressed displeasure at the fact that no genuine effort was being made to help the black child in Canadian schools. Rather, the educator explained that school authorities practiced a form of colonialism by deciding what was good for the black students rather than consulting the community. Citing the rejection of grant applications for community programs like the Black Education Project and the reluctance to hire and promote black educators as examples of slow progress towards equality in Ontario schools, the anonymous educator remained highly critical of board assistance in the creation of educational programming. Compounding diverse black experiences under the immigrant experience remained problematic for this educator. However, in some respects, board and community expectations that there were ‘experts’ in the community

¹²² “Black Teachers Speak: Teacher in Suburban School,” *Community Report* 1 (March 1976).

able to engage and solve broad issues created an unrealistic and challenging position for the black female educators who assumed these roles.

Occupying the middle ground between community expectations, largely surrounding black student engagement in schools, and the realities of mainstream Canadian education, which included high dropout rates and basic level programming for black students, it was believed that black female educators could remedy systemic problems in Ontario schools. In her discussion of immigrant nurses in Canada, Karen Flynn describes a similar process among black immigrant nurses. Flynn explains that black immigrant nurses were expected by government officials in Canada to act as ‘ambassadors for their race’ and to assist white Canadians in familiarizing themselves with blacks.¹²³ In a similar fashion, black women educators were employed by educational administrations to help Ontario’s growing black population become more acceptable to, which did not necessarily mean *accepted* by, the majority populations. The experiences of these women in the workplace would further highlight an education system that needed and actively recruited black educators in its schools but still regarded these teachers as ‘outsiders’ and used them as provisional solutions to the significant demographic changes occurring in education systems.

Conclusion

While the Ministry of Education and its administrators largely ignored the contributions of African Canadians to the nation-state in its curriculum and educational programming, they desperately needed educators to bridge the gap between increasingly diverse classrooms and the school curriculum that was failing black Canadian students.

¹²³ Karen Flynn, “Black Immigrant Nurses to Canada, 1950 – 1980” in Marlene Epp, Franca Iacovetta, and Frances Swyripa, eds., *Sisters or Strangers? Immigrant, Ethnic and Racialized Women in Canadian History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 384.

Experiences within schools gave some black women a chance to organize and demand changes within the school board, and board administrators gained a chance to advocate for change without drastically restructuring institutional mandates to accommodate these changes. However, the increasing black population and the inability of the board to address the disparities in streaming, basic-level programming and high drop-out rates largely on the basis of systemic discrimination in the school system persisted into the 1980s. A report presented to the Multiculturalism Directorate Department of the Secretary of the State in 1984 revealed that the North York Board of Education had 60% of its black students in basic streams and four percent of them were in advanced level programming. The ‘streaming’ of large percentages of black students continued to reflect inadequacies in the system that could not be ignored.¹²⁴ Several members in black Canadian communities believed that streaming was racially determined and also reflected broader social issues, such as limited black employability and access to housing, which left black children disadvantaged and unable to achieve basic requirements in Canadian classrooms. The constant reevaluation of schooling and numerous reports issued by community organizations and school boards in Toronto, which were encouraged by social movements in the 1960s and 1970s, highlighted the recognition that schools needed help. They expected to find this help through the numbers of black women sprinkled throughout their school systems. Largely concerned with the inability of black students to relate to school curriculum, administrators thought that hiring black educators, rather than systemic changes would be the easiest, cheapest, least disruptive and therefore, best approach. Therefore, one important strategic response by school authorities was to hire

¹²⁴ Dr. Ralph Agard, *A Report on the Feasibility of Establishing Multi-Service Centres to Serve the Black Peoples of Canada*, October 1984. Dorothy Wills Fonds, National Archives of Canada.

black women to serve in roles not only as educators but also as cultural mediators who could supposedly solve issues of student disengagement became their strategic response.

The experiences black women had in these schools reflected mainstream ideals of Canadian citizenship and belonging. While mainstream ideals of Canada as a nation of two founding peoples rendered black Canadians as the perpetual 'other', black women teachers continued to organize and challenge the system based on anti-oppressive frameworks to make permanent gains in the system and to create a space within which black students might perform. These experiences became more complex as black women forged alliances with larger social organizations with the rise of black consciousness and the women's movement in Canada. Here, black women aligned themselves within organizations that could speak to the multiplicity of black female experiences. Chapter three will expand on this discussion of black women's conscious and subtle attempts to resist forms of oppression in their daily lives, specifically through their teaching pedagogies.

Chapter Three:

“I’m not here to crack, I’m here to do the job”: Black Women’s Engagement with Workplace Practices and Educational Pedagogies

In 1967, Canadian born educator, Roslyn Meyers was the mother of three children teaching as a substitute teacher in various county schools for the Greater Essex County school board. After experiencing difficulty finding full-time work in the area, she gained employment in Detroit for seven years and later returned to teaching in Ontario’s private school sector for 17 years. Meyers’ pursuit of employment in the private school sector was partially due to her search for more flexible teaching environments but was also part of her rejection of mainstream schooling institutions in Ontario where she was educated as a young girl.

Beginning with her elementary school experiences, Meyers remembered that students of colour were never encouraged to pursue academic success; so much so was this the case that by the time she graduated from teachers’ college and struggled to find employment with the Windsor district school board, Meyers had strong reservations about the effectiveness of mainstream schooling for black students. Remembering that her distrust of Ontario school systems began at an early age, Meyers recalled that increasing diversity hiring practices within Windsor’s Board of Education in the 1970s still left systemic issues unaddressed. Having experienced both overt and subtle forms of discrimination both as a student and educator, Meyers explained,

I’ve never had a good experience with the Windsor Board. Again, my experience was: ‘oh we got our quota.’ So it was like: ‘Oh we hired you. The other two are in the class and we got our quota this year.’ And two for next year. So I never had a role model. I was never taught by a black teacher. My whole teaching career. Never. I mean my whole schooling, I was never taught by a black person.¹

¹ Roslyn Meyers. Interview by author. Audio Recording. Windsor, On., August 19, 2011.

For Meyers, while the presence of black teachers serving as role models for diverse groups of students was important, the incorporation of black educators merely to satisfy minority mandates was a limited and ineffective way of demonstrating inclusion. In much the same ways that educators whose experiences were discussed in chapter two, Meyers remained wary of the hiring of a few black educators to compensate for broader systemic problems that segregated black students, awarded them lower grades, and streamed them into vocational, technical and behavioural classes, Meyers' critique recognized the limited access to educational equality for black students.² Instead, Meyers' emphasis on quotas called for a reassessment of board practices that not only would increase access for the hiring and promotion of many black educators who could assist black students disengaged within Ontario school systems, but also facilitate systemic changes at the Ministry level to adequately support racialized students. Rather, she turned to the private school sector because it gave her some classroom flexibility and allowed her the capacity to use black-focused films and tools in her classroom practice.³

While teaching in the private sector also had its limitations, for Meyers explained that she

² Scholars such as Keren Braithwaite, Afua Copper, George Dei, Carl James, Henry Codjoe and Kristin McLaren all cite discriminatory practices at all levels of the Canadian education system that served to limit black students access to equal education into the 1990s. For more on black students and education, see: Keren Braithwaite and Carl James, eds., *Educating African Canadians* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1996); George Sefa Dei, *Anti-Racism Education: Theory and Practice* (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 1996); Kristin McLaren, "We had no desire to be set apart: Forced Segregation of Black Students in Canada West Public Schools and Myths of British Egalitarianism," *Histoire Sociale/Social History* Vol. 37, No. 73 (May 2004); Henry M. Codjoe, "Fighting a 'Public Enemy' of Black Academic Achievement – The Persistence of Racism and the Schooling Experiences of Black Students in Canada," *Race, Ethnicity and Education* Vol. 4, No. 4 (December 2001): 343-375; George Dei, "Black-Focused Schools: A Call for Re-Visioning," *Education Canada* Vol. 46, No. 3 (Summer 2006): 27-31; George J. Sefa Dei and Arlo Kemp, eds., *New Perspectives on African-Centred Education in Canada* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press Inc., 2013).

³ According to scholars Anne F. Bayefsky and Arie Waldman, private schools became increasingly popular in the mid-to-late 1950s as "radical alternatives to the inflexible, all-too-structured nature of the public school." Private schools offered diversity within curriculum offerings and classroom practices and specialized in anything from religious education to language instruction. Anne F. Bayefsky and Arie Waldman, *State Support for Religious Education: Canada Versus the United Nations* (The Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2007), 540-543.

also received criticism from her white colleagues about the infusion of racially diverse topics in her lesson planning, Meyers continued to conduct black history activities in the classroom because she believed that it was “not fair to people coming from other countries not to have known the history of black people, or the people that are still struggling.”⁴ Infusing black history into her classroom became integral to Meyers’ pedagogical approach and served to merge the experiences and lessons she learned from her community and mainstream institutions into the strategies she used to teach her students.

As indicated in chapter two, by the mid to late 1960s, some administrators focused on hiring more teachers, some of whom were black women, who could teach students from diverse racial and ethnic groups.⁵ Given that paid work was central to their lives, this chapter will expand this discussion and examine the ways in which black women’s workplace experiences in Ontario schools and, to a larger extent, Canadian society, influenced their professional behaviours and encouraged the development of

⁴ In her interview, Meyers explained that some of her white colleagues did not want her to show the film, *Eyes on the Prize*, because it highlighted footage from Civil Rights protests, particularly scenes where young students were subdued by fire hoses. Meyers insisted on showing this to promote discussion and emphasize the lived experiences of people of colour. Roslyn Meyers. Interview by author.

⁵ While there was no official Ministry policy detailing the hiring of black female teachers throughout their schools, there is evidence to suggest that an informal practice of hiring black educators to teach in schools with higher numbers of racialized students was taking place, particularly in the Toronto Board of Education. For example, in the Final Report of the Sub-committee on Race Relations, the Toronto Board of Education recommended the removal of impediments to equal employment and increase promotion opportunities to teachers from visible/ethnic minority groups. Permitting more flexible requirements would allow school administrators to hire teachers, community liaisons and cultural workers, who were black and would likely speak to the racial dynamics of specific school environments. Toronto Board of Education, *Final Report of Sub-Committee on Race Relations*, May 1979, 55. The Toronto Board of Education’s 1975 Draft report on Multicultural Programs recommended a similar approach where they suggested that board officials encourage capable and qualified teachers who demonstrated a “particular ability and interest in working with new Canadian families” and to hire capable teachers who could communicate with parents in the local school community. *Draft Report of the Work Group on Multicultural Programs*, The Toronto Board of Education for the City of Toronto, May 20, 1975, 101. In addition, the oral histories collected for this study, as well as articles in the *Toronto Star* reveal that the hiring of black women teachers and cultural liaison officers was indeed common practice in Ontario schools in the mid to late 1970s, particularly to deal with West Indian students in Toronto schools. “North York School Board to Hire Cultural Worker for West Indian students,” *Toronto Star*, January 20, 1976.

their pedagogical approaches. Divided into two main parts, this chapter will first highlight the experiences of microaggression that black women faced in Ontario schools; black women educators reported that they were often isolated (particularly in staffroom spaces), constantly had their qualifications challenged (largely through the process of recertification and equity programs), and faced overt forms of prejudice such as verbal and written threats, throughout their professional careers. These experiences were so pervasive that at least sixteen of the twenty-six research participants recalled experiencing one or more of the above challenges while working in Ontario classrooms, indicating that this was a common aspect of black women's workplace environments.

The second half of this chapter will examine the diverse ways in which black women teachers responded to these microaggressive and overtly racist experiences. While some chose to challenge discrimination on an individual basis through personal initiatives and small conquests inside their classrooms, others joined larger organizations and advocated for large-scale changes in the education system. Still others focused on their careers and personal pursuits such as raising their children and caring for their families. As such, some black female educators assessed, and in some instances were critical of, the curriculum and knowledge that they were meant to disseminate and instead worked to discern and discard those that did not positively acknowledge or encourage minority students and their personal definitions of black feminine self-hood.

When educating black children in particular, black women teachers found that their experiences as the racialized 'other' transferred into their pedagogical approaches and influenced the ways in which they prepared students for their lives as minorities in

white majority society.⁶ Experiencing their social worlds differently from white administrators and teachers, black women teachers redefined schooling practices based on their own values and understandings. Several black female educators utilized *black feminist pedagogies* that were resistive, transformative, multi-layered, Afrocentric, diasporic in nature, and offered alternative notions of black representation in mainstream schools.⁷ Although black women educators did not describe their educational philosophies as directly connected to notions of black feminism, the awareness of their gendered positions within Ontario schools and connections to community/racial uplift remained firmly rooted black feminist ideologies.

Black feminist pedagogy has been described by theorists Barbara Omolade, Annette Henry and Patricia Hill Collins as an oppositional and transformative way of teaching in the classroom. In her definition, Barbara Omolade theorizes that this approach created learning strategies “informed by black women’s historical experience

⁶ In her discussion of black immigrant women in Canada, sociologist Patience Elabor-Idemudia defines black women as the racialized other because “their experiences have been socially and institutional structured in ways that are different from those who are not black and female.” Elabor-Idemudia argues that the racialization of Canada’s immigration policies were experienced by minority groups in diverse ways. When describing the experience of black women in particular, Elabor-Idemudia contends that African/black immigrant women’s experiences of discrimination and subordination were based primarily on their race, gender and place of birth. Patience Elabor-Idemudia, “The Racialization of Gender in the Social Construction of Immigrant Women in Canada: A Case Study of African Women in Prairie Province,” *Canadian Woman Studies* Vol. 19, No. 3 (1999): 38-44.

⁷ Debates about whether black women’s activism should be named “womanism” or “black feminism” reflect an acknowledgement of diverse theoretical approaches to studying black women’s lives. First coined by writer Alice Walker in 1983, womanism was defined to include black feminists or feminists of colour who felt alienated from mainstream feminist movements. While black feminism and womanism are closely interconnected because of their focus black women’s self-definition, social theorist Patricia Hill Collins reveals that womanism in its initial definition in the 1980s (namely by Alice Walker) was positioned as different from and superior to feminism. Collins explains, “...womanism appears to provide an avenue to foster stronger relationships between black women and black men” that conveyed little interest in working with white women. With this in mind, my research utilizes black feminism as part of black women’s response to the gendered racism inherent in white feminist movements but also to encompass the ways in which they fronted issues of sexism and racism while remaining part of white dominated institutions. Black feminism is used here to reflect the stories of black female educators who not only absorbed and re-casted white feminist frameworks, but also disrupted the assumption that black women relied solely on racial solidarity when engaging in activism. Patricia Hill Collins, “Sisters and Brothers: Black Feminists on Womanism,” in Layli Phillips, ed., *The Womanist Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 59-64.

with race/gender/class bias and the consequences of marginality and isolation.”⁸ As a result, black feminist pedagogy works to expand and develop intellectual inclusion that contradicts the marginality experienced in white male dominated academic institutions. Building on this notion, Annette Henry also situates black feminist pedagogy from a Canadian perspective as a critique of traditional education that was rooted in a wider struggle for the survival and wholeness of black communities.⁹ Working to rectify curricular omissions and distortions within schooling institutions, black feminist pedagogy, according to Annette Henry, draws on the social conditions that positions black women differently from their white counterparts, opening up new avenues of interpreting the curriculum. This then becomes a distinct black female mode of political activism where black women worked within mainstream institutions to empower black pupils.¹⁰ In this regard, some black women interviewed for this research project reacted to various forms of discrimination in schooling institutions and created distinctive pedagogical approaches that were often reflective of their positions as outsiders-within. Although not all black women educators used this pedagogical approach in their teaching practice, the fact that several black women educators searched for ways to combat historical erasures within the curriculum, prepared minority students for the social challenges that they may encounter outside of school structures and merged educational practice with community engagement, reveal that this was an important part of their professional lives.

⁸ Barbara Omolade “A Black Feminist Pedagogy” *Women’s Studies Quarterly* Vol. 15, No. 3/4 (Fall-Winter, 1987), 32.

⁹ Annette Henry, “Chapter 4: Black Feminist Pedagogy: Critiques and Contributions,” *Counterpoints* Vol. 237 (2005), 94.

¹⁰ Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 157-159.

As part of understanding the plurality of black women teachers' identities, workplace experiences affected these educators in competing and contradictory ways. On the one hand, educators created a unique pedagogy, largely based on their experiences within Ontario classrooms, to combat racial discrimination in school curricula. However, as some black women educators moved up the professional ladder to pursue careers as administrators and principals, they became increasingly ostracized from their communities for carrying and promoting institutional mandates while trying to foster their own individual autonomy and selfhood as well as their careers. Despite such challenges, not all experiences within the school system were negative; some black women teachers also created friendships with school administrators, received support and encouragement from their boards, and recollected positive interactions in their schools. Ultimately, many black women teachers in Ontario did not and could not choose between their communities and workplace environments; rather they developed strategies that allowed them to go back and forth between school board and community (often racial) expectations to carve out their own distinctive places within Canada's education system.

'They described us as, all the blacks, as savages': Black Women's Engagement with Eurocentric Models of Learning

As educators, black women encountered an education system and Eurocentric curricula that largely ignored the early presence of blacks in Canada and illustrated racist and stereotypical notions of Africa and its descended people. This Eurocentric curriculum often denied the black experience and contributions in Canada, situated knowledge production as white and Western, and represented Africa and the Caribbean

as static, unchanging, foreign and ‘backward’.¹¹ The prevalence of Eurocentric notions of racial inferiority and subservience in school curriculum not only directly challenged educators who identified as diasporic peoples connected to Africa and the Caribbean in varying ways, but it also isolated black women educators who then became the physical embodiment of negative stereotypes reinforced through school textbooks and the absented black presence within the curriculum itself.

In his study of the Canadian curriculum in the twentieth century, Henry M. Codjoe describes the absence of black knowledge in Canadian school curricula as the “willful ignorance and aggression towards blacks.”¹² By examining the role school curricula played in the creation and re-creation of ideological hegemony, Codjoe argues that black Canadian knowledge was ignored, devalued and unnurtured as a valid source of knowledge. Instead, he contends that African Canadians were not acknowledged as active participants in the development of the nation’s history largely because of the teaching of Western (white) ideas and cultures as superior and the vanguard of civilization itself. As part of his argument, Codjoe reveals that Canada had an exclusionary curriculum, which represented blacks (if it did at all) as incapable and inferior.¹³

¹¹ George J. Sefa Dei, “The Role of Afrocentricity in the Inclusive Curriculum in Canadian Schools,” *Canadian Journal of Education* Vol. 21, No. 2 (Spring, 1996): 170-186.

¹² Henry M. Codjoe, “Africa(ns) in Canadian Educational System: An Analysis of Positionality & Knowledge Construction,” in Wisdom J. Tetey and Korbla P. Puplampu, eds., *The African Diaspora in Canada: Negotiating Identity and Belonging* (Alberta: University of Calgary Press, 2005), 65.

¹³Ibid., 80. For more information on Eurocentric models of learning in Canadian schools, see: Nancy Hoo Kong, “Confronting a History of Exclusion: A Personal Reflection,” in *Educating African Canadians*, 58-68; Annette Henry, “Missing: Black Self-Representations in Canadian Educational Research,” *Canadian Journal of Education* Vol. 18, No. 3 (1993): 206-222; Keren Brathwaite, “The Black Student and the School: A Canadian Dilemma,” in S.W. Chilungu and S. Niang, eds., *African Continuities* (Toronto: Terebi, 1989), 195-216; T. Aoki, W. Warner, S. Dahlie and B. Connors, “Whose Culture? Whose Heritage? Ethnicity Within Canadian Social Studies Curricula,” in J.R. Mallela and J. C Young, eds., *Cultural Diversity and Canadian Education* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1984), 265-289.

As an extension of black exclusion in the Canadian curriculum, it should not be surprising that within Ontario textbooks, which reflected mainstream ideas, racialized peoples were either eliminated from or represented as auxiliary participants in the construction and development of the Canadian nation. Instead, Ontario's curriculum perpetuated blacks as 'foreign' and distinctly different from what it meant to be Canadian; that is, to be white and British or French, even as the demography of the province continued to change. In the cases where racial minorities were represented, several schools throughout Ontario used textbooks and curriculum plans that negatively represented various racialized populations. The banning of the book, *Little Black Sambo*, which was removed from Toronto public schools in 1956, was reflective of how negative stereotypes entered Ontario classrooms as well as how black community groups and some school trustees responded to racial stereotypes in school texts.

Written and illustrated by Helen Bannerman in 1899, *Little Black Sambo* was a story about a young boy who outwits four hungry tigers while on a fantasy adventure. In the story, Sambo is later rewarded for his bravery by his mother who serves him pancakes. Originally published in England, *Little Black Sambo* was hailed as a children's classic and gained widespread circulation in the United States and Canada. Illustrations that accompanied Bannerman's book depicted Sambo as having dark skin, white eyes, a broad nose and wide smile, tropes often stereotyped as 'black' characteristics.¹⁴ It was these negative racial connotations that Nova Scotian born Daniel Braithwaite remembered after his five year old son was subjected to reading and watching the film adaptation of *Little Black Sambo* in his school. Braithwaite along with other black

¹⁴ Tammy Mielke, "Transforming a Stereotype: Little Black Sambo's American Illustrators," in Lance Weldy, ed., *Crossing Textual Boundaries in International Children's Literature* (New Castle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), 251-258; Robin Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*, 295.

Canadian community members would go on to petition and have the book banned from Toronto schools.¹⁵

The banning of *Little Black Sambo* was met with great opposition, especially from members within the school system. After receiving initial petitions to have the book removed from schools, Toronto Board Director of Education, C.C. Goldring, and Superintendent Z.S. Phimister reported that “It is felt that it is unwise to ban from the public schools a book which has such a wide appeal for children, and which cannot be said to be discriminatory in that it is a children’s fantasy which portrays a little negro boy who has a great adventure in the jungle, from which he emerges successfully.”¹⁶

Ignoring the implicit stereotypes of black inferiority and cultural behavior perpetuated by caricatured illustrations of ‘blacks in jungles’, school administrators dismissed the concerns of Braithwaite and black community members denying that any racial bias existed in the selection of the school text. Alongside school administrators, local and national newspapers voiced their concerns about banning the book arguing that it was a ploy to coerce school trustees based on increasing racial tensions gaining momentum in North America. The *Hamilton Spectator* titled its piece about the book banning as a “Ridiculous Ban” and reported that,

It is a pity a sincere group of Negroes managed to talk an unthinking group of Toronto school trustees into the very thing that militates against a continuing crusade for genuine tolerance. They came before the board to protest *Little Black Sambo*, a book known and loved by children for decades because they claimed it

¹⁵ Born in Sydney, Nova Scotia in 1919, Braithwaite migrated to Toronto in 1927 and became active in various African Canadian community organizations such as the Negro Youth Club, the Young Men’s Negro Association and the youth division of the Universal Negro Improvement Association. His staunch advocacy of young African Canadian success and progress led to his leadership in the fight against racial discriminatory books in Ontario schools. Dawn P. Williams, *Who’s Who in Black Canada: Black Success and Black Excellence in Canada- A Contemporary Directory* (Toronto: D.P. Williams & Associates, 2002), 77.

¹⁶ Daniel Braithwaite, *The Banning of "Little Black Sambo" from the Toronto Public Schools, 1956* (Toronto, Ontario, 1978), 9.

caused ‘anxiety, embarrassment and mental suffering’ to Negro citizens. The trustees at once banned it from schools. We don’t blame the Negro people, although we don’t feel they could have thought out just what they were trying to accomplish. It was the school trustees who confirmed that jittery instinct of many of our elected officeholders to ride off in all directions at once when even a breath of ‘racial prejudice’ comes up.¹⁷

Criticizing the motives behind banning the book, editors of the *Hamilton Spectator* viewed it as a ridiculous attempt to take advantage of the racial politics of the time, a situation editors believed should be handled with patience and good sense. Similar to some school administrators, news editors believed the book was not about blacks at all, but rather about a heroic child who fought and defeated monsters in the wild. Believing the banning set a pattern of coercion, editors argued the claims about the book were unfounded and would simply set a precedent for finding thousands of other books to criticize.¹⁸ The reluctance and resistance to ban the book communicated the difficulty that black community members and educators faced in trying to change mainstream perceptions and representations of African descended peoples in the curriculum.

For educator June Brand, a close relative of Daniel Braithwaite, the banning of *Little Black Sambo* was an important issue in her home and reflected a longer history of racial prejudice experienced by black Canadians generations before her. For her family, *Little Black Sambo* represented the historical legacies of mistreatment and discrimination that African Canadians continued to face. Brand disclosed,

And I can remember lying up in bed hearing him [Daniel Braithwaite] on the phone at night talking to councilors and people. The arguments. I can remember him hanging up once. It took two years; it was a real fight to get *Little Black Sambo* out of the schools. It was because [Paul, Daniel Braithwaite’s son] had come home crying because they showed it in kindergarten and the kids started calling him

¹⁷ “Editors in Chorus Blast Toronto School Ban on ‘Little Black Sambo’, *Toronto Daily Star*, Monday February 13, 1956.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

‘little black sambo’. Then [Daniel Braithwaite] said, he was born in Canada as well, in Nova Scotia. He remembers that same incident. He remembers being called Sambo. So he didn’t want his children to have to go through that. So, when [Paul] came home with that, that was it.¹⁹

What commentators at the *Hamilton Spectator* interpreted as an opportunistic act with no desired purpose had real and historical meaning for the Braithwaite family. It was an experience that Mr. Braithwaite knew all too well and worked, at personal cost, to eliminate. After mobilizing support from the Ontario Human Rights Commission and several prominent members of the African Canadian community, the book was eventually removed from Toronto schools. What the banning of the book brought to light was the attitude of several school administrators, trustees, and mainstream media outlets who ignored the psychological damage and isolating affects that books like *Little Black Sambo* caused.²⁰

Little Black Sambo was just one of the many books endorsed by school administrators riddled with racial stereotypes that constructed the Canadian nation as an exclusively white space. In their 1971 analysis of social studies textbooks in Ontario, Garnet McDiarmid and David Pratt found that when portraying ‘negroes’ in textbooks, terms associated with the group discussed them as primitive, friendly, fierce, savage and

¹⁹ June Brand. Interview by author. Audio recording. Toronto, On., August 15, 2011.

²⁰ Little Black Sambo was used as anti-black epithet, similar to the “picaninny” stereotype in the United States, which often symbolized the lazy, docile, subservient black caricature. Within the North American context, Sambo came to exemplify a slave who was content in his state of servitude. In the United States, campaigns banning the book began in the 1930s, but gained traction into the 1970s as Civil Rights activists and educators organized to ban the book from libraries and elementary schools. In Canada, black discontent about the book led to the banning at least ten years before the United States. Lawrence Hill, *Dear Sir, I Intend to Burn Your Book: An Anatomy of Book Burning* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2013), 12-15. Also see: Robin Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*, 2; Phyllis J. Yuill, *Little Black Sambo: A Closer Look. A History of Helen Bannerman's The Story of Little Black Sambo and its Popularity/Controversy in the United States* (New York: The Racism and Sexism Resource Center for Educators, 1976); Kevin Plummer, “Historicist: Banning Little Black Sambo,” *Torontoist*, January 25, 2014, accessed December 3, 2015, <http://torontoist.com/2014/01/historicist-banning-little-black-sambo/>; Violet J. Harris, “African American's Children's Literature: The First One Hundred Years,” *The Journal of Negro Education* Vol. 59, No. 4 (Autumn 1990): 540-555; David Pilgrim, “The Picaninny Caricature,” accessed December 3, 2015, <http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/news/jimcrow/picaninny/>.

superstitious. In illustrations of Africans and Africa, there was an overemphasis on the exotic as well as scenes of ritual magic, frenzied dancing and subordination to whites. The report concluded that Africans were hardly ever seen in skilled or professional work and that Ontario school students would “envisage Canadian Indians as half-naked and feathered warriors; Asians as simple, pastoral and picturesque; Africans as backward and often strange.”²¹ Maintaining a master narrative that viewed racialized communities as foreign, other and inferior, school texts encouraged European ethnocentrism, misrepresented the historical experiences of racial minorities and marginalized their voices.²² Scholar Ken Montgomery describes this as part of curricular racism whereby school textbook histories of the nation contributed to racism by representing the nation-state, its citizens and “internal or external Others in essentialized or narrowly imagined terms, by excluding the perspectives and histories of certain people and groups, by ignoring the historical racisms and the multiple forms of oppressions to them...”²³ As a result, this curricular racism normalized European-ness, and therefore justified whiteness, as superior both ideologically and materially. Situating *Little Black Sambo* within this broader context of school texts that perpetuated racial stereotypes and promoted Eurocentric superiority, black female educators who taught this curriculum experienced

²¹ Garnet L. McDiarmid and David Pratt, *Teaching Prejudice: A Study of the Treatment of Minority Groups in Ontario Social Studies Textbooks* (Toronto: O.I.S.E., 1971), 86. Also see: Ken Montgomery, “Imagining the Antiracist State: Representations of Racism in Canadian History Textbooks,” *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* Vol. 26, No. 4 (December 2005): 427-442.

²² For discussions on the portrayal of racial minorities in Canadian school textbooks, see: M. R. Lupul, “The Portrayal of Canada’s ‘Other’ Peoples in Senior High School History and Social Studies Textbooks in Alberta, 1905 to the Present,” *Alberta Journal of Educational Research* Vol. 22, No. 1 (March 1976): 1-33; Jennifer Tupper, “Silent Voices, Silent Stories: Japanese Canadians in Social Studies Textbooks,” *Alberta Journal of Educational Research* Vol. 48, No. 4 (2002): 327-340; Peter Ward, *White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy Toward Orientals in British Columbia* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2002); Daniel Francis, *National Dreams: Myth, Memory and Canadian History* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1997).

²³ Ken Montgomery, “Banal Race-thinking: Ties of Blood, Canadian History Textbooks and Ethnic Nationalism,” *Paedagogica Historica* Vol. 41, No. 3 (June 2005): 317.

firsthand the silencing of their histories and challenges to their identities within mainstream institutions.

As a student teacher in Windsor, Ontario, Roslyn Meyers quickly realized that she would have to teach subjects in the curriculum that perpetuated racial stereotypes and depicted African descended peoples as uncivilized and barbaric. Despite being born and raised in Canada, Meyers spoke of a simultaneous fear and respect she had for the authority of white teachers and administrators throughout her educational career. Recalling that it was not until a white teacher told her that she was good at something did she finally envision herself in higher educational institutions, Meyers remembered Ontario schools as white dominated spaces of fear and distrust. One particularly traumatic experience marked Meyers' uneasiness and suspicion of white educators and administrators when she revealed,

... I was practice teaching with this one woman and she made me teach a class on I think it was an explorer in Africa. And the books were so old, they were probably my mother's books when she was in school. All I remember is, [and] it brings tears to my eyes now, all I remember is [that] they described us as, all the blacks as savages and you know, head hunter types, cannibalistic and rags or clothes, you know the whole stereotypical thing. And I wanted to cry [be]cause I kept telling her, do I have to teach it that way? Because I was even mature enough to know that it was just the perception. But I thought, do I have to say it like that to these kids? Do I have to continue this myth? [Be]cause I knew there were cities in Africa that were civilized with buildings and cars and those things. But she wanted it taught to the letter, this stuff. So when I taught the end of that session. She [said] I didn't give it my all. I said my heart wasn't in it. I couldn't. I never stood up to anybody white before in my life, I said I couldn't do it. I know I can't line myself up with this black thing like you're saying, like this book [is] saying. But I know television has told me otherwise. And she said: 'oh speak to me in confidence, I won't put it down, I won't tell anybody, but what is the real problem?' I just said I think it's a racial thing and I'm very uncomfortable doing it. She said: "well I understand what it's like being a minority." And I thought (pause). She said: 'I'm from Russia'. I said: 'no you could [not] understand unless you were born with an eye in the middle of your forehead and people stared at you and wondered what was wrong with you.' She wrote the whole thing up and sent it back to the college and said I was insecure and was not confident in what I was doing because I was whining basically because I had to teach this African class.²⁴

²⁴ Roslyn Meyers. Interview by author. Audio Recording. Windsor, On., August 19, 2011.

Similar to the stereotypical caricatures represented in *Little Black Sambo*, Meyers understood the damaging and negative effects that portrayals of blacks as barbaric, uncivilized and uneducated, had on the psychological and physical development of black students.²⁵ Recalling this as a traumatic experience, Meyers was aware of the limitations of her position within a white mainstream institution; here, she had little control or power to change the context under which she was forced to teach about Africans and African descended peoples. Her hesitation to stand up to a white person, especially in a position of authority, also reflected part of a longer history of African Canadian relegation and black women's distrust of white women.

Indicating a clear breach in relational trust and imbalance of power within the classroom, Meyers alludes to what scholar Maryann Dickar calls "white silence." In her examination of the ways in which a teacher's race impacts professional work, Maryann Dickar's study of black and white teachers in a New York urban high school revealed that white teachers often denied the significance of race or colour (displaying so-called colourblindness) in their classrooms and interactions with other educators to deny white

²⁵ Sociologists and anthropologists argue that racial stereotypes in schools create categories of difference inside and outside of school settings that often rationalize the subordinate position of racial minority students. These stereotypes are used to justify low educational and occupational expectations for students of colour, placing students in separate classes and maintaining segregated communities and limited employment prospects. Ultimately, constant exposure to racial stereotypes negatively affects the academic behaviour of racial minority students who adapt to their socioeconomic realities. Daniel G. Solorzano, "Images and Words That Wound: Critical Race Theory, Racial Stereotyping and Teacher Education," *Teacher Education Quarterly* Vol. 24, No. 3 (Summer 1997): 10; Also see: John U. Ogbu, *Minority Education and Caste: The American System in Cross-Cultural Perspective* (New York, Academic Press, 1978); Charles Ramírez Berg, "Categorizing the Other: Stereotypes and Stereotyping" in *Latino Images in Film: Stereotypes, Subversion, Resistance* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), 13-37; Craig McGarty, Vincent Y. Yzerbyt and Russell Spears, *Stereotypes as Explanations: The Formation of Meaningful Beliefs About Social Groups* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

privilege and rationalize their work with students of colour.²⁶ Dickar reveals that white silence was not only utilized as a self-defence mechanism but was also enacted as a tool that “protected whiteness as a normative identity.”²⁷ In Meyers’ case, her teaching associate’s denial of the negative racial stereotypes perpetuated by the curriculum reinforced a hierarchy of power which privileged her white experiences and voice, over Meyers’ knowledge as a woman of colour. Further, her supervisory teacher equated her ethnic whiteness with Meyers’ racialized blackness in a way that elevated and justified her classroom authority while denigrating and silencing Meyers’ legitimate claims and concerns.

This intra-gender racism, as further reiterated by Yanick St. Jean and Joe R. Feagin, started during slavery in North America but was also connected to the sex and racial discrimination that black women experienced in twentieth century workplaces. Conducting a qualitative research study involving more than 200 interviews of African American women in the United States, St. Jean and Feagin found that African American women experienced forms of humiliation and everyday callousness from white women in professional working environments. What is particularly informative about St. Jean and Feagin’s analysis is their identification of racial interactions between black and white women as connected to the historical past, particularly concerning relationships between slaveholding women and their black servants. In colonial Canada, despite its small and fragmented slave populations, enslaved black women’s presence and labour in domestic capacities indicate a similar relationship between black and white women.²⁸ This

²⁶ Maryann Dickar, “Hearing the Silenced Dialogue: An Examination of the Impact of Teacher Race on Their Experiences,” *Race, Ethnicity and Education* Vol. 11, No. 2 (July 2008): 116.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 124.

²⁸ Maureen Elgersman, *Unyielding Spirits*, 37.

gendered racism experienced by black women began during enslavement but also continued in domestic and home work spaces of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.²⁹ St. Jean and Feagin contend that black women have felt the controlling power of white women and that “white women’s conformity to rational racial notions and ideologies isolated them from black women.”³⁰ Indeed, Meyers’ recollection indicates a clear emphasis on black women’s fear, disappointment and later distrust of white women that supports St. Jean and Feagin’s analysis, both within the individual classroom setting and also on a larger systemic level. The inability of her teacher supervisor to *see* how school texts perpetuated racial stereotypes further marginalized Meyers as a classroom educator whose needs and knowledge had long been denied since her entry as a student in Ontario school systems. In many ways, Meyers’ account, which continued to cause her emotional pain twenty years later, documented how white privilege within institutional practices perpetuated not only racism and oppression but also alluded to the complex, fragile and potentially fraught alliance between white and black educators that could serve both as sites of humiliation and encouragement.

²⁹ Slavery ensured that constructions of black and white female identities were at constant odds with one another; one that existed in opposition to, was defined by, and therefore was dependent on the other. Black enslaved women’s lives particularly were under constant threat of white intrusion, which ranged from intimacy to mutual antagonism and violence. Scholars of female slavery document that black women struggled to protect their children, relationships and bodies from white mistresses. See: Patricia Morton, ed., *Women in Slavery: Emancipating Perspectives on the American Past* (Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1996); Marli F. Weiner, *Mistresses and Slaves: Plantation Women in South Carolina, 1830 – 80* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998); Barry Gaspar and Darlene Clark Hine, eds., *More Than Chattel: Women and Slavery in the Americas* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996); Hilary McD. Beckles, “Historicizing in West Indian Feminisms,” in Patricia Mohammed, ed., *Rethinking Caribbean Difference: Historicizing Slavery/The Impact of the Global Environment/Illusions of Development/Gendered Testimonies*, Special Issue, “Feminist Review” No. 59 (Summer 1998): 34-56; Hilary McD. Beckles, “White Women and Slavery in the Caribbean,” in Verene A. Shepherd and Hilary McD. Beckles, eds., *Caribbean Slavery in the Atlantic World: A Student Reader* (Princeton, NJ: Wiener, 2000), 659–669; Victoria E. Bynum, “White Womanhood, Black Womanhood: Ideals and Realities in a Piedmont Slaveholding Society,” in *Unruly Women: The Politics of Social and Sexual Control in the Old South* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 35–58.

³⁰ Yanick St. Jean and Joe R. Feagin, *Double Burden: Black Women and Everyday Racism* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1998), 131.

To further explicate the tensions of race and gendered distrust among black and white women teachers, the experiences of Harriet Williams charts the thin line of belonging and exclusion within interracial friendships. For Williams, systemic and social bias disrupted professional friendships and regulated these interactions to *only* school designated spaces. After hearing that her colleagues would be attending a nightclub in the Toronto area in late 1960s, Williams thought participating in this social event would be a way to strengthen and build new relationships with other teachers outside of the school environment. However, she soon learned that this social gathering was not for everyone when a white female colleague came to her with some concerns. Williams recalled her colleague and friend saying,

[Colleague says:] ‘-- they’re going to a nightclub and they’re all saying you shouldn’t come.’ I said: ‘Why, they don’t think I drink and dance too?’ She said: ‘Well, you know how it is. They don’t want you because you are coloured.’ I said: ‘Well, no problem, I’ll go home.’ So the rest of the staff went off to some nightclub and they ate and drank until morning and I went home. That didn’t bother me. You see things like that don’t bother me, [because] I knew the situation with the colour prejudice. I knew it. So things like that didn’t upset me or anything.³¹

While Williams explained that these experiences did not bother her, her recollection of the event many years later revealed that this exclusion served as a distinctive experience in her career as an educator. That she chose to highlight this as an experience worth mentioning suggested that it was indeed something that affected her. Furthermore, Williams’ narrative indicated that although she was considered a ‘friend’ with some of her colleagues during school hours, this did not necessarily translate to social spaces outside of the classroom. What is even more disturbing about this encounter was that Williams’ white friend used her membership within this mainstream/dominant group in a way that allowed her to express social power and authority over Williams and ultimately devalued

³¹ Harriet Williams. Interview by author. Audio recording. Toronto, ON., July 11, 2011.

their personal relationship for the sake of racial solidarity. In addition, that she expected Williams to understand and deal with this social separation based on race may indicate that she also ascribed to dominant stereotypes that portrayed black women as autonomous, self-reliant, strong and therefore able to handle the possible emotional and psychological effects of deeply engrained and systemic racial discrimination, which she may have chosen to read as a personal slight.³² Besides this, it is also possible that Williams' colleague did not value the friendship more than her racial and professional standing with other white colleagues and chose not to risk her own ostracism.

Similar to St. Jean and Feagin, Ella Edmonson Bell and Stella Nkomo connect contemporary tensions in professional relationships between white and black women as part of the dichotomized constructions of womanhood, a consequence of slavery, which fractured black and white women's identity formation and created competition between the races leaving both groups oppressed under the culture of patriarchy.³³ Within twentieth century professional work environments, Edmonson Bell and Nkomo explain that as a result of this legacy, white female professionals often separated diversity issues (read as race) from women's issues. As a result, "When white women miss the racial

³² In contemporary research, black feminist scholar Melissa Harris-Lacewell criticizes the myth of black women's strength as an affirming symbol which reinforces notions that black women have the superhuman capacity to deal with challenges imposed by their race, sex and class. Defined as a woman who is prepared to make physical and emotional sacrifices for the needs of others, the strong black woman has a "seemingly irrepressible spirit unbroken by a legacy of oppression, poverty and rejection." Harris-Lacewell argues that the strong black woman symbol can be harmful to black women's self-esteem because of its unrealistic expectations and effects on their health and psychological well-being. Melissa Harris-Lacewell, "No Place to Rest: African American Political Attitudes and the Myth of Black Women's Strength," *Women & Politics* Vol. 23, No. 3 (2001): 2, 9-11. Also see: Tamara Beauboeuf-Lafontant, *Behind the Mask of the Strong Black Woman: Voice and the Embodiment of a Costly Performance* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009); Chanequa Walker-Barnes, *Too Heavy a Yoke: Black Women and the Burden of Strength* (Oregon: Cascade Books, 2014); Michele Wallace, *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman*. 3rd Ed. (London: Verso, 1990); Robert Staples, "The Myth of the Black Matriarchy," *The Black Scholar* Vol. 1, No. 3-4 (1970): 8-16.

³³ Ella L.J. Edmondson Bell, Stella M. Nkomo, *Our Separate Ways: Black and White Women and the Struggle for Professional Identity* (Boston Mass, Harvard Business School Press, 2001), 236.

perspective, black women feel abandoned by their white female colleagues, making it difficult for black women to build authentic relationships with them.”³⁴ The fact that white women were attached economically and socially to the privileges of mainstream white society encouraged feelings of fear and mistrust among black women and reduced chances for building alliances. As an extension of the silencing power within black and white women’s professional relationships, Williams’ recollection revealed how professional women could connect with one another within school environments as teachers and professionals, but remain disconnected in mainstream social environments that privileged white women over their black colleagues. Given the materiality of institutional racism in the workplace, the burden and onus was placed on black women teachers to build alliances and shed their fears and mistrust of white colleagues for the sake of professionalism; while white female educators did not have the same obligation to connect to black educators, on account of their privileged positions based on their race.

While not explicitly indicating how this experience affected her professional identity and psyche, Williams claims that as a person of colour, she had to cope with the hand she was dealt. Expanding on this belief, she viewed this experience as part of her lengthy battle with discrimination and racial prejudice, and instead took pride in not letting this experience upset her. Her professional identity then was formed not in her ability to build social relationships with her white colleagues but rather in her ability to perform the trope of the strong black woman, explaining that “I’m not here to crack, I’m here to do my job.”³⁵ Ultimately, Williams understood her experience with white colleagues as part of workplace sexism and racism and chose to maintain silence and

³⁴ Ella L.J. Edmondson Bell, Stella M. Nkomo, *Our Separate Ways*, 239.

³⁵ Harriet Williams. Interview by author. Audio recording. Toronto, ON., July 11, 2011.

distance rather than to directly express her discontent. Her focus, and those of some other black women educators, was to work efficiently to dispel these stereotypes through her teaching skill and work ethic.

While Canada's Eurocentric curriculum proved to be particularly damaging for educators like Meyers who had to teach with texts that reinforced black inferiority, what was equally troubling were the ways white domination was reproduced through one-on-one interactions that facilitated peer distrust and isolation among black women educators.

‘I just stop[ped] going to the staffroom’: Black Women’s Experiences with Discrimination and Isolation in Ontario Schools

While the school staffroom represented a place where friendships could be forged and educators could find a break from classroom spaces, for some black female teachers, it became a site of oppression where they experienced overt forms of racism and separation. School staffrooms were often considered important meeting places that contained multiple embedded contexts of communication, knowledge sharing and relationship building. In this regard, educators clarified and presented their basic assumptions to and about one another, while creating a set of values and ideals concerning the teaching profession.³⁶ Functioning as a space where social relationships and values were created and presented, the ways in which black women experienced staffroom spaces was fundamentally important to how they felt connected to their working environments and other educators. In essence, the staffroom was equally as important as the classroom space in helping black women educators navigate teaching practice and pedagogical approaches, learn about new coping strategies and important

³⁶Anat Kainan, *The Staffroom: Observing the Professional Culture of Teachers* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1994), 113. Also see: Andy Hargreaves and Peter Woods, eds., *Classrooms and Staffrooms: The Sociology of Teachers and Teaching* (Stratford: Open University Press, 1984).

school news, as well as to cultivate professional relationships with other staff members. The isolating and exclusionary experiences that research participants faced reflected an informal network of communication that separated and divided black women's participation from the creation of a professional teaching culture.

When Tamara Migrant began practice teaching at a school near the Danforth area in Toronto in the 1960s, she was abruptly told by staff members that she was not permitted to eat in the staffroom but could have her lunch in the basement of the school.³⁷ Although she refused to eat in the basement, Migrant's need for professional accreditation and economic stability forced her to search for alternative places to have lunch. Migrant revealed, "I wasn't about to jeopardize my opportunity for a job so I went back, just wandered during lunchtime, [and] went for a walk."³⁸ She eventually told her teacher coordinator, another staff member responsible for supervising teacher candidates, who said he would take care of the situation. Remembering this as a particularly negative experience, she took comfort in the fact that she was able to voice her concerns; however, Migrant did not disclose any further during her interview if the staffroom situation had improved following her complaint.

Tamara Migrant was not the only educator who found staffrooms to be oppressive places. Even after moving up the professional ladder, and holding the position of school principal, Harriet Williams remembered the ways in which other educators isolated and ignored her presence in the staffroom. As the principal of a Catholic elementary school in Toronto between 1974-1976, Williams recalled that a group of educators would play a 'game' where they would leave her sitting alone in the

³⁷ Tamara Migrant, Interview by author. Audio recording. Toronto, On., July 26, 2011.

³⁸ Ibid.

staffroom. Whenever she moved tables to sit with this group, they would all leave.

Williams recalled this act as a ‘little thing’ which she pretended did not affect her, at least when she spoke to other educators. However, in remembering that this lasted for half of the school year, Williams explained,

And they played this game and I said: ‘Good, I can see this game. If they think I’m not seeing it, I can see it. But I’m not going to make a big noise about it.’ You see when you make noise, you lose your footing right there. So I just followed them. When the table got [sic] a lot of people, I’d just go and sit at the table too. Everybody get off the table, I am there, I come over [t]here too. And we played this game of table, chairs, table, chairs, probably for about the better part of the year.³⁹

Williams believed her silence on the matter gave her the ability to exert some control over the circumstances she was facing. Refusing to be isolated in a space that she was meant to supervise, Williams followed these educators until they finally acknowledged and accepted her presence within the staffroom. While one can speculate that because Harriet Williams was a principal, she may have been viewed as an authority figure and thus disconnected from her staff, Williams makes no mention of this. Instead, she attributed her presence as a *black* woman in a position of authority as the root of staffroom separation. In reaction to these isolating practices, Williams took pride in her ability to reclaim her right to be in the staffroom. Her awareness, which she labels as ‘seeing the game’, became an important way to help her navigate oppressive situations. She later recalled that after six months, staff members eventually welcomed her and she used the experience to assist other educators on staff who experienced isolation.

In *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle*, Katherine McKittrick analyses the politics of place and placing for black women in Canada. She argues that black women occupied ‘not-quite’ spaces of black femininity where their

³⁹ Harriet Williams. Interview by author. Audio recording. Toronto, ON., July 11, 2011

lives and histories are unacknowledged and expendable. She further explains that these spaces are “unacknowledged spaces of sexual violence, stereotype, and sociospatial marginalization: erased, erasable, hidden, resistant geographies and women that are, due to persistent and public forms of objectification, not readily decipherable.”⁴⁰ In response to their disparate locales, black women also developed their own ‘insurgent’ geographies where they addressed their space and place, by refusing to be passive and inserting black matters, experiences, knowledges and resistances into that space.

To this end, by insisting on acknowledgement by her peers within her school staffroom, Williams challenged forms of oppression within her workplace and resisted attempts to ignore and erase her presence. According to McKittrick, Williams was producing space within the context of domination and objectification and creating an alternative place of empowerment.⁴¹ That she had to do this, even as a principal, is a powerful statement about the ways some black women struggled for social and professional recognition within school settings.

While staffrooms offered narrow spaces of access and support for some black women teachers, for white educators, the staffroom broadened spaces of safety and comfort where they could express social and racial stereotypes with little consequence. Although she reported having strong relationships with a small group of educators throughout her teaching career, Jackie Morris remembered that staffroom discussions often involved derogatory racial comments and stereotypes. As an elementary school educator in Chatham, Ontario, Morris remembered her white male colleagues denigrating Ben Johnson’s intellectual ability after his historic 1988 Olympic gold medal win and

⁴⁰ Katherine McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 178-179.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 92.

subsequent cheating scandal. She overheard staff members comment, “I bet he couldn’t even get a job picking cotton” and she remembered that, “It was very hurtful[,] embarrassing. [And] I just stop[ped] going to the staffroom because if that’s what you got to say, I have nothing to talk to you about.”⁴² Despite her status as a ‘*visible* racial minority,’ Morris and her sensibilities were rendered invisible by her colleague’s privilege as a white male educator.

In a similar fashion, racial stereotypes were also directed at black students within the school, even in the presence of black female educators. Recalling that ‘dealing’ with racial prejudice was common practice throughout her teaching career, Jamaican born Afiya Oyo revealed the ways racial stereotypes permeated staffroom environments. After a ten-year old black student entered her school staffroom in the late 1970s, Oyo remembered one of her colleagues commenting ““Oh wait a second, isn’t he handsome. [I] can just see him as a porter in the airport.””⁴³ Oyo was deeply bothered by this comment and questioned: “Is that the only aspiration you want to communicate to this kid?”⁴⁴ Oyo’s white colleague’s off-handed comment expressed broader sentiments about her expectations of black employment in Canada. As discussed in chapter two, beginning with the inception of slavery in the seventeenth century, black Canadians were relegated to difficult, low-paying, service-type work. As part of a racial and gender stratified labour market that continued into the twentieth century, black men were typically engaged in seasonal work that included positions such as bellhops in local hotels, general labourers and porters on the railroads, and worked in foundries in auto plants. Recognizing that black Canadian men and women held economically unstable

⁴² Jackie Morris. Interview by author. Audio recording. Buxton, On., July 18, 2011.

⁴³ Afiya Oyo, Interview by author. Audio recording. Etobicoke, ON., June 9, 2011.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

jobs, Afiya Oyo's evaluation of her colleagues' comments highlighted how some educators envisioned and (un)consciously perpetuated ideas about limited career options for black students.

In their analysis of African Canadian education in the twentieth century, Keren Brathwaite and Carl James contend that despite having high educational and career aspirations, "the social construction of Black students as academically incompetent operated as a barrier to the realization of their educational goals."⁴⁵ As argued in chapter two, pushing students into lower level and vocational classes often left black students at a disadvantage in the labour market. As such, Afiya Oyo's memory of comments made by her colleague served as an indication of how some teachers reflected lower aspirations for racialized students.⁴⁶ At the same time, the ability of her colleagues to express these comments so freely, even as Oyo was present, highlighted the pervasive and informal nature in which racial prejudice and difference became imbedded within school environments. Of the participants interviewed for this project, at least four reported hearing negative comments made about black students while they were in the staffroom.⁴⁷ These comments ranged from subtle jokes to prejudicial remarks directed at black Canadian students. In one instance, staffroom negativity was so uncomfortable that

⁴⁵ Keren Brathwaite and Carl James, *Educating African Canadians*, 16.

⁴⁶ Scholars report that teaching staff and administrators harboured low expectations of minority students and this was reflected in the educational and social experiences of black Canadian pupils. This resulted in lower achievement levels and self-esteem as a disproportionate number of black students were streamed into lower educational programming limiting prospects of higher education and occupations. Anthony H. Richmond and Aloma Mendoza, "Education and Qualifications of Caribbean Immigrants and Their Children in Britain and Canada," in Ransford W. Palmer, ed., *In Search of a Better Life: Perspectives from the Caribbean* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1990), 82-85. Also see: Wanda Bernard and David Este, "Resiliency and Young African Canadian Males," in Michael Ungar, ed., *Handbook for Working with Children and Youth: Pathways to Resilience Across Cultures and Contexts* (California: Sage Publications, Inc., 2005), 437; Henry M. Codjoe, "Fighting a 'Public Enemy' of Black Academic Achievement – the Persistence of Racism and the Schooling Experiences of Black Students in Canada," *Race, Ethnicity and Education* Vol. 4, No. 4 (2001): 343-375.

⁴⁷ Afiya Oyo, Marcia Lambert, Melody Adekin, and Sheryl Harre all reported overt racial stereotypes and negative comments made about black students in the classroom.

Camille Mead "...stopped going to the staffroom during the recess break and even [began] eating in my own classroom all alone."⁴⁸ In another case, educator Melody Adekin completely rebuffed racist remarks and explained that, "any time they [white colleagues] went into a staffroom and they would talk about black students in any negative context, [they knew,] don't count me in. I was not going to do it. Don't even ask for an opinion...and they [white colleagues] were careful around me if they had something to say about black students."⁴⁹ These participants spoke of pervasive nature of staffroom negativity directed towards black students as a common and often unacknowledged part of their teaching lives.

As a result of the common nature of staffroom separation, the reaction of black women teachers to these experiences may have been overshadowed by fears of potential job loss and further ostracism. For this reason, some black women teachers redirected these isolating experiences by focusing more on developing their craft and directing efforts towards helping their communities. Consequently, when Jackie Morris, Tamara Migrant and Camille Mead chose to abandon staffroom spaces, they emphasized the development of their individual teaching approaches to engender a separate sense of empowerment, which they could not find in the staffroom. Rather, their actions reflected recognition of their positionality and workplace hierarchies fractured by gender and race, as well as attempts at self-preservation. However, one cannot help but wonder about the toll that these actions took, and what may have been perceived by their white colleagues to be the 'victory' of pushing them aside and out of the professional spaces which black women educators had a right to claim.

⁴⁸ Camille Mead. Interview by author.

⁴⁹ Melody Adekin. Interview by author.

In her discussion of black Canadian nurses in the twentieth century, historian Karen Flynn charts a similar trajectory among nurses encountered discrimination in hospitals across Canada. In *Moving Beyond Borders: A History of Black Canadian and Caribbean Women*, Flynn describes the story of Virginia Travis, a Canadian born nurse who entered nurses' training at Chatham General Hospital, Chatham, Ontario in 1954. Virginia's nursing director expressed reservations about promoting her to the next level of certification and told her "I would get my cap, but I had to stop acting like a monkey." Distraught over her director's comments, Virginia explained, "So in [my] first year, at eighteen years of age, I knew that I had to be very careful."⁵⁰ Flynn attributes Virginia's response as part of a larger systemic process that subordinated black women's responses under existing power arrangements. She contends that "working in an environment where white people's assessment of their behaviour tended to be colored by racist and sexist stereotypes, even if Black women had legitimate reasons to be angry, they tended to suppress their own reactions."⁵¹ In a similar fashion, educators Migrant and Morris policed their gendered and racialized performances within white dominated spaces; they understood quite clearly that their encounters with white colleagues were characterized by race, class and gendered prejudices and as such, they chose to maintain silence and distance rather than to directly express discontent. Opting to choose their battles, Migrant and Morris resisted and fought negative stereotypes by deflecting these experiences and refocusing on their jobs as professionals.

'It was not a nice note': School Spaces as Dangerous and Violent Locales

⁵⁰ Karen Flynn, *Moving Beyond Borders: A History of Black Canadian and Caribbean Women in the Diaspora*, 79.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 150.

At other times, experiences of exclusion within the school system took on more violent and dangerous tones for some black women teachers. In 1978, Barbadian born Melody Adekin worked diligently to build and maintain relationships with students of colour. As the only black teacher in her school, Adekin revealed that minority students felt that they could relate to her and often confided in her about grievances that they had with other educators. As part of her efforts to resolve issues between minority students and staff, Adekin mentioned some of the concerns raised by students during a staff meeting but refused to explicitly give the names of the students who spoke to her for fear of further retribution and subsequent animosity against the students. While the staff members did not openly express their disapproval, Adekin later received a threatening note in her mailbox, the contents of which she was still uncomfortable speaking about thirty-four years later. Adekin did eventually explain that, after a lengthy investigation and court case, a fellow white male educator was fired from the board.

In her recollection of the story, Adekin was still clearly bothered by the experience. She refused to offer many details about the incident but revealed the uneasiness that it caused her. After her reservations and explaining that she signed off her rights not to make the case public knowledge, Adekin hesitantly explained that the threatening note involved dousing her with acid. She recollected, “It was one of those challenges. Every morning you walked into that school not looking over your shoulder because you thought, you were working with people who were all there for the common good. You didn’t think that someone there would be wanting to, you know...it was not a nice note.”⁵²

⁵² Melody Adekin. Interview by author. Audio recording, Toronto, On., April 1, 2012.

While Ontario schools were believed to be places of safety, learning and egalitarianism, for Adekin, schools could be dangerous spaces that threatened her physical and psychological wellbeing. Situating Adekin's experiences where she was threatened with bodily harm as part of a boarder culture of (micro)aggression within Canadian institutions, everyday insults and indignities often took a substantial emotional toll on racialized communities. In their study of racial microaggressions, Sue, Capodilupo, Buccerri, et. al describe microaggressions as the brief and every day exchanges that send denigrating messages to people of colour. Identifying three categories which include microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidation, Sue, Capodilupo, Buccerri, et. al., contend that microaggression serves to create racially oppressive experiences for people of colour.⁵³ In Adekin's case, the microassault that she highlighted emphasized racial undertones that her colleague held privately and only manifested violently once his authority and control was threatened.⁵⁴ Adekin's maintenance of her colleague's anonymity as a result of the settlement of her case also supports what Sue, Capodilupo, Buccerri, et. al., describe as the invisibility of perpetrators. This invisibility stood as a powerful component of microaggression, which resulted in the acts themselves to "be explained away by seemingly nonbiased and valid reasons."⁵⁵ The consequence of diverse (micro)aggressive acts such as the one experienced by Adekin, often created negative working environments, frustration, self-

⁵³ Chavella T. Pittman, "Racial Microaggressions: The Narratives of African American Faculty at a Predominantly White University," *Journal of Negro Education* Vol. 81, No. 1 (Winter 2012): 83.

⁵⁴ Microassaults, as defined by Derald Wing Sue, Christina M. Capodilupo, et.al., are an extension of overt acts of racism. They are considered micro in nature because these racist beliefs are often concealed and only displayed publically when a person has lost control or feels relatively safe enough to engage in this behavior. Derald Wing Sue, Christina M. Capodilupo, et.al., "Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Implications for Clinical Practise," *American Psychologist* 62 (May-June 2007): 274.

⁵⁵ Derald Wing Sue, Christina M. Capodilupo, et.al., "Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life," 275.

doubt, isolation and even fear among persons of colour.⁵⁶ At the time of her interview, the negative impact this experience had on Adekin almost four decades later was reflected in her shifting body positioning, pausing, incomplete sentences and uneasy re-telling of her ‘not nice’ experience. The violent threats that Adekin describes then may have contributed to her feelings of disconnection from and distrust of white colleagues.

‘You’re still not seen as being capable’: Questioning Black Women’s Legitimacy and Credentials within School Environments

As an extension of the multiple forms of microaggression that some black women teachers faced within schools, the questioning of their legitimacy and qualifications stood as a subtle but more common exclusionary practice. Some black women interviewed for this project explained that despite having adequate training and qualifications, they constantly had to explain their expertise to white administrators and other teachers. At least five interview participants explicitly indicated that the questioning of their qualifications was a negative part of their professional careers and they believed the perception of their lack of training limited the acknowledgement of positive work they were doing within schools. Considering Ontario’s education system reflected broader political, economic, and social ideas, the challenging of black women’s credentials and knowledge within schools mirrored the silencing of black Canadian contributions and legitimacy in broader society. Here, I argue that while black Canadian populations remained inside the nation and/or were included (just as black women teachers were), in limited ways, within national discourses, they were still judged as illegitimate, temporary and ‘not-quite’ citizens through the constant questioning of their presence within

⁵⁶ Ibid, 278. Also see: Derald Wing Sue, ed., *Microaggressions and Marginality: Manifestation, Dynamics, and Impact* (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2010).

institutional spaces. These rights ultimately belonged to white men, with some access for white women.

Indeed parallel forms of exclusion were also reflected in 1950s Canada as mainstream gendered notions viewed teaching as ‘temporary’ work where all women, upon marriage or childbirth, were required to leave the workforce.⁵⁷ What made black women teachers’ experiences different were the multiple, intersecting ways in which the educational system restricted their access to professional status. As a result, black women educators were challenged on various fronts not only on the basis of their gender, as were white and other groups of women, but also race, place of birth, language, experience, training and additional qualifications.

Educational historian, Kristina Llewellyn argues that in the post-WWII period, Canadian social and political officials looked to schools to restore ideas of normativity based on white, middle class ideals. According to Llewellyn, white women teachers were held as the moral gatekeepers for future citizens and “in this case, their whiteness and middle class status were implicitly characteristic of their respectable role as models for the affirmation of normative citizenship.”⁵⁸ While white female educators negotiated and

⁵⁷ Marriage bans that existed into the 1950s in Canada revealed the sexual and moral regulation of women’s bodies and sexualities (particularly as teachers who would educate young children). During the twentieth century, educational historians argue that administrators, parents, ratepayers and professional teachers’ groups continued to be concerned about female teachers’ gender identities and sexualities. Marriage bans worked in conjunction with lower pay and limited advancement in administrative positions to encourage female teachers to leave their jobs and assume their appropriate domestic roles within the home. Sheila L. Cavanagh, “Female-Teacher Gender and Sexuality in Twentieth-Century Ontario, Canada,” *History of Education Quarterly*, Vol. 45, No. 2 (Summer 2005): 248. Also see: Sheila L. Cavanagh, *Sexing the Teacher: School Sex Scandals and Queer Pedagogies* (Vancouver, B.C.: UBC Press, 2007); Cecilia Reynolds, “Limited Liberation: A Policy on Married Women Teachers,” in Patricia A. Schumuck, ed., *Women Educators: Employees of Schools in Western World Countries* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987).

⁵⁸ Kristina R. Llewellyn, “Performing Post-War Citizenship: Women Teachers in Toronto Secondary Schools,” *Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies* Vol. 28, Nos. 3-4 (2006): 316. Also see: Franca Iacovetta, “Recipes for Democracy? Gender, Family and Making Female Citizens in Cold War Canada in Veronica Strong-Boag, ed., *Rethinking Canada: The Promise of Women’s History* (Don Mills,

revised these ideas of normative citizenship, Llewellyn reveals that they continued to embody symbols of postwar Canadian citizenship. Black women educators, on the other hand, were delegitimized through subtle, individualized practices that questioned their credibility and presence in professional work places. As a consequence of the embedded nature of racial prejudice in Ontario schools, the often undocumented and everyday personal interactions undermined black women power and authority as professional educators.

Jamaican born Enid Rubin worked as a principal for many years in Toronto and remembered the constant challenge she faced defending her educational qualifications and credentials within Ontario schools. When asked about her first experiences teaching in Canada, Rubin pointedly expressed the compounded struggle she faced trying to prove her worth and merit as a teacher. Rubin explained,

...you always have to be proving yourself. To be reflective of the education that you have, of the qualifications that you have. Because other people, when they have certain qualifications, they're seen as being *experts*. For the black educator, even when you have those qualifications, there [are] still questions. Might not be overtly, but by body language and by how you're treated and by information that is given to you or not given to you. You're still not seen as being capable. Even though your qualifications are right here in Canada. You obtained them right here in Canada.⁵⁹

Rubin strongly believed that as a black woman, the more education she obtained, the more pronounced her challenges and problems became as she moved up the professional ladder. She felt that the challenge of race-driven expectations specifically characterized black Canadian experiences and added, “that’s the challenges [sic] for every black person. Always having to prove yourself. Always having to be going the extra mile.

ON: Oxford University Press, 2002); Alison Prentice, “The Feminization of Teaching in British North America and Canada, 1845-75,” in Susan Mann Trofimenkoff and Alison Prentice, eds., *The Neglected Majority: Essays in Canadian Women’s History*, Vol. 1 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977), 49-69; Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation* (London: Sage Publications Ltd., 1997).

⁵⁹ Enid Rubin. Interview by author. Audio recording. Toronto, ON. August 5, 2011.

And I don't have a problem with that. My concern is that not everybody has to do that. It is that the same wasn't required of some other people."⁶⁰ This idea of 'going the extra mile' was often prevalent in the narratives told by other black female educators. In fact, interview participants often cited their pursuit of additional certifications, work in extracurricular activities in the school, participation in staff meetings and events in order to strengthen their qualifications and relevance in mainstream spaces. For Rubin, constant criticism about her capabilities was part of the lack of support she felt from Ontario school systems. She explained that while black women educators battled racism and sexism, they worked to be advocates for black students even at a time when they needed advocates themselves.⁶¹ Rubin's story further alludes to the increased stress and workloads that some black women teachers took on in response to the constant questioning and need to prove themselves. It seems that this added racialized pressure may have also contributed to black women's weariness, both physically and psychologically.⁶²

While Rubin's story reflects her early schooling experiences in the 1960s, the questioning of black women's legitimacy within schooling institutions would continue into the 1980s as federal employment equity clauses worked to create better access for women in administrative positions and equal opportunities in male dominated professions. For example, the Canadian Employment Equity Act of 1986 was designed to create equality in the workplace and to correct conditions of disadvantage for women,

⁶⁰ Enid Rubin. Interview by author. Audio recording. Toronto, ON. August 5, 2011.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Author Deborah Grayson reveals that black women have higher incidences of illness and disease than their white counterparts as a result of the cumulative effects of negative life stresses such as racism, sexism and classism that work to produce "patterns of health and illness in groups that share certain characteristics." Deborah R. Grayson, "'Necessity was the Midwife of Our Politics': Black Women's Health Activism in the 'Post'-Civil Rights Era (1980-1996)" in Kimberly Springer ed., *Contemporary African American Women's Activism* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 133.

Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities and visible minorities. Shortly after this legislation, the 1988 Ontario Pay Equity Act was created to eliminate gender discrimination in terms of wages differentials between women and men.⁶³ Attempting to counteract the discriminatory effects of occupational and labour segregation, particularly surrounding the wage gap between the genders, equity programs emphasized a complaints-based method of enforcement that largely focused on the public sector.

Although these employment equity programs led to substantial gains for women educators especially surrounding increased pay and administrative positions, not all women benefited from equity legislation in the same way. For the black women teachers in this study, whose intersectionality meant they were constantly challenged by systemic discrimination on multiple fronts, employment equity was used by some white administrators and other educators to denigrate black women's qualifications and suggest that black women were incapable of doing their jobs.⁶⁴ In addition, although standing outside of the parameters of this study, Ontario's equity legislation was less effective for black women, whose employment was largely concentrated in the private sector, particularly within homes or private care facilities, where weaker or no union participation existed and there was less accountability for the enforcement of equity

⁶³ Kim England and Gunter Gad, "Social Policy at Work? Equality and Equity in Women's Paid Employment in Canada," *GeoJournal* Vol. 56, No. 4, 281-283. Also see: Judge Rosalie Silberman Abella, "Equality in Employment: A Royal Commission Report – General Summary," *Canadian Woman Studies* Vol. 6, No. 4 (1985); Carol Agocs and Catherine Burr, "Employment Equity, Affirmative Action and Managing Diversity: Assessing the Differences," *International Journal of Manpower* Vol. 17, No. 4/5 (1996): 30-45; Joanne D. Leck and David M. Saunders, "Hiring Women: The Effects of Canada's Employment Equity Act," Vol. 18, No. 2 (June 1992): 203-220; Abigail B. Bakan and Audrey Kobayashi, *Employment Equity Policy in Canada: An Interprovincial Comparison* (Ottawa: Status of Women Canada, 2000).

⁶⁴ Kim England and Gunter Gad, "Social Policy at Work? Equality and Equity in Women's Paid Employment in Canada," 287.

legislation.⁶⁵ As a consequence, although black women teachers were able to rise through the ranks and gain promotions through equity related legislation and women teachers' organization advocacy, the intersections of gender and racial discrimination often led to the questioning of black women's status as merely filling equity quotas.

When Sheryl Harre was hired as a vice-principal in the Essex school board in the early 1980s, she found that while equity programs opened doors for her, they also served as the entry point for discussions about her competency as an administrator. Harre remembered,

When I got that appointment, some of the teachers said that: 'well you were a shoo-in when you went to the interview because you were black and you were a female.' Which annoyed me to no end. [I thought:] 'So you just disregarded any preparation that I've done, any courses I've taken and said it's because you're a black and you're a female?'⁶⁶

These sentiments irritated Harre who was an active participant in several curriculum writing committees, gained extra certification and maintained an aggressive approach to educational training in preparation for her administrative position with the Essex school board. Comments made by Harre's colleagues spoke to a teaching atmosphere which, despite equity legislation, perceived her to be less qualified, less competent and devalued her academic and professional merits and accomplishments. In fact, equity legislation was used as a means to question and undercut her claims for promotion. The skepticism about black women's qualifications was fashioned in the form of underhanded compliments or as a 'joke' so as to undermine the seriousness of accusations that

⁶⁵ Pat Armstrong, "The State and Pay Equity: Juggling Similarity and Difference, Meaning, and Structures," in Patricia Marie Evans and Gerda R. Wekerle, eds., *Women and the Canadian Welfare State: Challenges and Change* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997) 250.

⁶⁶ Sheryl Harre. Interview by author. Audio recording. Windsor, On., November 23, 2011.

reflected school culture(s) that continued to devalue black women's intelligence and skills.

Tamara Migrant reflected on similar experiences when she remembered a white male colleague who joked about her promotion as a school principal. Migrant recalled,

And one of the men had said as a joke: 'oh well they [school administrators] get to kill two birds with one stone, she's black and she's a woman.' And the director of education was at that time, a terrific administrator. I really quite liked him, he knew what he was doing and he did it. And he just said: 'I don't want to hear anything about that again'. Well I wasn't there, but everybody told me what he said, he said: 'How many of you have a Master's [Degree]? How many of you taught at the university? How many of you also have a specialist in Special Ed[ucation]? And seven other teaching subjects, how many of you are also qualified to teach secondary school as well as elementary? I see the numbers decreasing. I never want to hear that again'. And they just didn't say anything. And the fellow [colleague] came up to me after and said: 'You know I was just joking.' And I said: 'it's an inappropriate joke.' ... I mean there was a comfort in being the so-called majority. There is a comfort that allows you to open up your mouth and come out with any old goddamn stupid thing. (Laughter) Even though, they say people who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones, they [white colleagues] don't even identify that they live in a glass house. That's the comfort of being in a majority.⁶⁷

Migrant's story is very telling of the ways in which privilege, inclusion and exclusion were embedded in the everyday encounters of school life. While her colleague had the privilege of passing off his comments as a joke, the fact that he only felt accountable for these actions after being reprimanded by a white school principal is indicative of Migrant's limited potential and power in the eyes of her white male colleague. In addition, by offering his account of her expertise and skills to the teaching staff, Migrant's principal, by way of his position, unwittingly maintained white male authority by speaking for her. Consequently, even in this moment of 'triumph', Migrant's qualifications were only legitimized through white patriarchal authority, reinforcing her reliance on white male paternalism rather than on her own efforts.

⁶⁷ Tamara Migrant, Interview by author. Audio recording. Toronto, On., July 26, 2011.

While some white educators and colleagues did not consciously set out to delegitimize black teachers, the day-to-day, relatively subtle actions of racism and sexism worked to undermine black women teachers' agency and reflected what historian, Roxana Ng calls 'common sense' ideological processes. Adopting Antonio Gramsci's discussion of 'common sense' to describe how racist and sexist ideologies can be normalized both inside and outside of structural institutions like schools, Ng explains that racism and sexism can involve little consciousness and become embedded in ordinary acts. These 'common sense' actions "are embodied in people's daily practices as the normal way of doing things; in other words, ideologies, including racist and sexist ideologies, are taken for granted and normalized."⁶⁸ Thus, within school settings, it was quite possible to encounter colleagues and individuals who believed in equality and the elimination of racism in schools on an ideological and institutional level, yet who possessed 'common sense' racism and/or sexism that allowed them to view women like Migrant exclusively as beneficiaries of employment equity programs rather than as qualified candidates of various employment positions. It is also possible that this common sense or normalized process of prejudice in schools contributed not only to the negative experiences but also positive experiences that black female educators had with their colleagues. For as much as Migrant's positive reflection of the principal who spoke out about her qualifications serves an example of this contradiction, it is also possible that

⁶⁸ Roxana Ng, "Racism, Sexism and Nation Building in Canada," in Cameron McCarthy and Warren Crichlow, eds., *Race, Identity and Representation in Education* (New York & London: Routledge, 1993), 57. Also see: Himani Bannerji, *Thinking Through: Essays on Feminism, Marxism, and Anti-Racism*, (Toronto: Women's Press, 1995); Charmaine Perkins, "Any More Colorful We'd Have to Censor It," in Suzanne De Castel and Mary Bryson, eds., *Radical In<ter>ventions: Identity, Politics and Difference/s in Educational Praxis* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997) 247-268; John D. Brewer, "Competing Understandings of Common Sense Understanding: A Brief Comment on 'Common Sense Racism,'" *The British Journal of Sociology* Vol. 35, No. 1 (March 1984): 66-74; Ian F. Haney Lopez, "Race and Racism as Common Sense," in *Racism on Trial: The Chicano Fight for Justice* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2003), 109-132.

her principal was justifying his decision to promote Migrant into a position of importance.

‘[I had] absolutely nothing to shout about’: Exploring the Paradox of the Outsider-Within Through Positive Interracial Relationships

Alongside negative and overt forms of discrimination in their schools, some black women built lasting friendships with other non-black educators in the field and felt deep connections to their school boards and the opportunities that their positions gave them. These interracial relationships reflected not only the varying experiences and degrees of discrimination in Canadian institutions but also the possibility that educators who, after having accomplished careers as teachers, chose to remember and/or focus on the positive rather than the negative aspects of their teaching experiences. These positive relationships with white colleagues often centered on professional endorsement and promotions, one-on-one encouragement, and work recommendations. It seems that the black women teachers interviewed for this project equated their positive relationships with professional status and access and often remembered those who assisted in career advancement and encouraged their long-term tenures at specific schools. In other instances, some educators compared their positive experiences within schools to broader concerns about racial discrimination which was perceived to be more pervasive and harsher.

For instance, when Blaire Gittens recalled her employment with the Etobicoke school board as involving only subtle forms of racism, she compared these to the more overt discriminatory practices she experienced in England where she taught before

migrating to Canada.⁶⁹ In discussing whether she had any early encounters with discrimination in Ontario schools, Gittens explained, “some people might have more than [me], but I had no racism. I would say [I had] absolutely nothing to shout about.”⁷⁰ While she remembered that other educators in the field experienced varying forms of inequality, her recollection of lasting friendships with a wide range of non-black educators at the Etobicoke board overshadowed any negative experiences that she had. Weighing her positive encounters against more overt forms of intolerance faced by other black female educators, both in Ontario and England, Gittens believed hers were less serious. Eighty-one year old Sherri Gooding echoed similar sentiments when she described her experiences as an early childhood educator in Chatham, Ontario in the 1950s. When asked whether she experienced any discrimination in Ontario schools, Gooding responded, “I really don’t think I’ve ever noticed that. I don’t feel that I was put upon by anybody along those lines during that time. And I did a good job so that helps. I know it does.”⁷¹ While Gooding’s reflection that she never *noticed* any racism is different from a clear statement that racism did not exist, what is important is that she recalled positive encounters throughout the interview process. In addition, her emphasis

⁶⁹ Blaire Gittens. Interview by author. Audio recording. Toronto, On. July 5, 2011. The racial climate in twentieth century Britain reveals that blacks experienced discrimination in immigration, housing, employment and education. In 1968, Britain passed the Commonwealth Immigrants Act which made it difficult for new immigrants to enter the country and popular discourses connected black immigrant populations to twentieth century social ills of urban decay, unemployment and racial conflict. Continued restrictions were placed on black migrants making adjustment to British life difficult. Scholar Peter Fryer reported that between the 1976 and 1981, official reports indicated that 31 black people were murdered by racists or racially motivated acts. By 1981, black minority and ethnic communities erupted in violent protest after years of poor housing, high unemployment, increasing crime rates and the criminalization of their communities, resulting in the “Brixton riots.” J.A. Cloake and M.R. Tudor, eds., *Multicultural Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 61-64. Also see: *The Empire Strikes Back; Race and Racism in 1970s Britain* (London and New York: Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, 1982); Kabir Shukra, *The Changing Pattern of Black Politics in Britain* (London: Pluto Press, 1998); Constance R. Sutton and Susan R. Makiesky-Barrow, “Migration and West Indian Racial and Ethnic Consciousness,” *Special Issue: Caribbean Life in New York City: Sociocultural Dimensions* Vol. 7, No. 1 (January 1989): 86-107.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Sherri Gooding. Interview by author. Audio recording. Buxton, On, June 4, 2011.

on doing a good job in relation to discussions on racism may indicate the ways in which she thought she could control prejudicial responses by doing her job well and this may have given her a sense of empowerment.

In their study of the oral histories of women teachers in twentieth century Ontario, Rebecca Priegert Coulter and Helen Harper also found that many of the teachers they interviewed offered uncritical narratives of their teaching experiences and often recounted stories describing the pleasure of teaching and the joys of working. Citing Micaela Di Leonardo's term "rhetorical nostalgia," Coulter and Harper explain that, at times, women denied the existence of discrimination despite describing specific examples of gender inequality.⁷² Scholar Jennifer Helgren further supports this argument in her examination of American women's oral histories in the 1950s and 1960s. While Helgren's focus is on memory and girlhood, her discussion of the ways in which these women used nostalgic narratives to anchor their identities is particularly informative. For her interview participants, Helgren argues that nostalgia offered a glimpse into women's negotiation of gendered expectations and helped them "positively value themselves as they create[d] coherent life narratives."⁷³ Arguing that nostalgia in women's narratives was utilized for a variety of reasons, Helgren reveals that women used them as part of their real and imagined safe spaces. Using a similar approach to understand black women teachers, it can be argued that Gittens' and Gooding's nostalgic recollections may have been used as coping mechanisms to help protect and affirm their professional identities. While it is entirely possible that neither educator experienced racial and gendered challenges within Ontario schools and their narratives highlighted their positive

⁷² Rebecca Priegert Coulter and Helen Harper, eds. *History is Hers*, 23.

⁷³ Jennifer Helgren, "A 'Very Innocent Time': Oral History Narratives, Nostalgia and Girls' Safety in the 1950s and 1960s," *Oral History Review* Vol. 42, No. 1 (Winter/Spring 2015): 5.

professional work lives, there is also the possibility that their stories were more complicated than they were willing or able to discuss.

Although positive relationships with white colleagues allowed some black women teachers the opportunity to better understand how they could gain professional mobility and build cooperative work environments, of the twenty–six black female educators interviewed, only three women openly denied experiences of overt discrimination within their schools. This may indicate that, more often than not, black women teachers had multiple experiences of discrimination within Ontario schools and as a result, developed a variety of coping mechanisms that included interracial coalitions but also spoke to their roles as outsiders-within.

‘We had kind of a way that we’d identify with each other’: Exploring Black Women’s Coping Mechanisms Through Racial Solidarity

Understanding their tenuous positions within the education system, black women built alliances with other black educators not only as a means of camaraderie but also as a way of dispelling mainstream notions that rendered them as unqualified and temporary fixtures in Ontario’s school systems. By the middle of the 1970s, black educators were increasing in numbers and creating organizations such as the Black Liaison Committee throughout Ontario school boards.⁷⁴ This allowed for more collective activism and collaboration than previously possible and action largely focused around large school districts in Toronto, Montreal and Halifax.⁷⁵ Given that the black teaching population was small and separated in various schools throughout Ontario, black educators tended to

⁷⁴ Lauri Johnson, “Segregation or ‘Thinking Black’?: Community Activism and the Development Of Black-Focused Schools in Toronto and London, 1968–2008,” *Teachers College Record* Vol. 115, No. 11 (2013): 6.

⁷⁵ Keren Brathwaite and Carl James, *Educating African Canadians*, 95.

collaborate with one another on issues that would challenge systemic problems that affected minority children. According to Caribbean born educator, Cecily Tremaine, because there were so few minority educators in the field, many of them ensured that they got along with each other. In describing her teaching experiences in Toronto in the 1970s, Tremaine explained that,

There was a kind of an unspoken, how should I say, we talked with our bodies, our body language. Even though we might have disagreed, we still supported one another. We disagreed amongst ourselves, but if anything happened to one of us, we kind of came around and helped [to] support that one teacher. We were always on the lookout for each other. That's the way I would put it. And that is male and female.⁷⁶

Tremaine describes an unspoken coded language that black educators used to communicate with one another. This could include subtle posturing, eye contact, head nods, facial expressions and other gestures that verified mutual understandings of cultural expression and experience.⁷⁷ Recognizing that support from mainstream administrators was limited, Tremaine and other black educators protected each other from direct confrontations and challenges to classroom authority, professional qualifications, and racism from white peers and administrators. In this instance, Tremaine and her colleagues forged relationships with one another to ensure lasting careers and to legitimize their relevance in the field. The unspoken recognition of their collective oppression as black people further solidified bonds among educators, similar to the ones that black women created with one another in teachers' colleges.

In other instances, black educators acted as extended family members and sacrificed school hours to assist colleagues in need. When Tremaine was an educator

⁷⁶ Cecily Tremaine Interview by author. Audio recording. Markham, On., May 9, 2011.

⁷⁷ Ravi K. Thiara, "Hard, Feisty Women" – 'Coping on Your Own': African-Caribbean Women and Domestic Violence," in Ravi K. Thiara, Stephanie A. Condon and Monika Schrottler, eds., *Violence Against Women and Ethnicity: Commonalities and Differences Across Europe* (Opladen: Barbara Budrich Publishers, 2011), 234.

with the North York school board, she remembered the tight knit community that black educators had among themselves, a relationship that also crossed gendered barriers.

After a husband of a fellow educator died, Tremaine remembered that all black teachers at the school gave up their prep times to allow for her black female colleague to leave school and attend to affairs at home.⁷⁸

In searching to answer her question *Why Are all the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?* psychologist Beverly Daniel Tatum argues that within the corporate cafeteria, black adults also find ways to connect with those who look and share similar experiences. According to Tatum, because people of colour are often isolated and see few opportunities to connect with others, building coalitions provided networks of support in workspaces where they experienced racism and prejudice.⁷⁹ Having common experiences of diasporic migrations and racism in professional work spaces may have strengthened bonds of solidarity among black teachers like Cecily Tremaine and her colleagues and helped to sustain her professional identity. Tremaine ultimately described the ways in which black professionals developed their own codes, value systems and identity markers within Ontario schools. While the black women teachers in this study often shifted their boundaries of identity throughout their careers, it seems that in instances such as the one described by Tremaine, a foregrounding of blackness, especially in white dominated spaces, served as an act of professional and personal

⁷⁸ Ravi K. Thiara, “‘Hard, Feisty Women’ – ‘Coping on Your Own’: African-Caribbean Women and Domestic Violence,” 234.

⁷⁹ Beverly Daniel Tatum, *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? And Other Conversations about Race*, (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 88-89. Also see: Ali Rattansi, “On Being and Not Being Brown/Black-British: Racism, Class, Sexuality, and Ethnicity in Post-Imperial Britain,” in Jo-Anne Lee and John Lutz, eds., *Situating “Race” and Racisms in Space, Time, and Theory: Critical Essays for Activists and Scholars* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005), 46-76; Claire Alexander, *The Art of Being Black: The Creation of Black British Youth Identities* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

perseveration and support. Building this racial solidarity then meant some black educators ascribed to a code of loyalty to their black colleagues and communities rather than to white employers and peers.⁸⁰

Educator Afiya Oyo extended this discussion further when spoke about the future of teaching for black educators and the importance of encouraging other black teachers to enter the profession. After her forty-year career in education, Oyo recommended,

It is important for them [black teachers] to remember their roots in terms of where they've come from, ethnic background and so on. And not to be afraid to take care of the people who look like themselves. They're there for everybody but some people who are black will not even hire another black. You have to be fair. You have to say I am here to open the door for others and if I don't do a good job no one else is going to be let in. You have to make sure to do your best so that you pave the way for others.⁸¹

The importance of collective responsibility and solidarity is not surprising in Oyo's recollection. Given their growing but still limited numbers, it became crucial for some black women teachers to 'behave well' and work hard in order to ensure that other black educators would gain easier access to the field. The constant need to debunk stereotypes and to pave the way for future educators indicated a great deal of pressure for black women teachers who shouldered the burden of 'appropriate' behaviour in order to open access for others to come. Oyo's discussion of upholding high standards and performance for fear of limiting acceptance for other black educators also reflects what scholar Carolyn M. West describes as "role strain." According to West, black women's multiple roles as mothers, workers, partners, and other social categories were constructed as happily sought out by black women rather than as *necessary* identities. West reveals that this assumption presumes that black women can meet the obligations surrounding

⁸⁰ Joyce M Bell, *The Black Power Movement and American Social Work* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 169-170.

⁸¹Afiya Oyo. Interview by author. Audio recording. Etobicoke, ON., June 9, 2011

these roles and have no desire to delegate responsibilities to others.⁸² Instead, West contends that adopting and assuming these multiple, often concurrent obligations is often undesirable and unhealthy for black women. According to West's examination, Oyo's discussion can be contextualized as part of broader racial and gendered expectations that placed the burden of community representation, some of which was self-imposed, on black women teachers. As a result of this, Oyo was more vigilant and conscious of her behaviour in white dominated educational spaces while also emphasizing the need to build relationships with other black educators in order to buttress some of the role strain she may have encountered.

Recognizing the increasing ways in which they were scrutinized within school systems, some black female educators instead worked to resolve issues within their own groups and discussed problems they had with one another privately, so as not to perpetuate negative stereotypes about blacks but also to challenge racism within schools. After obtaining a position in Toronto, Cecily Tremaine was happy to find other black teachers at her school. Tremaine reported,

I mean there were racist teachers and all of that, but I must say it was a good experience because there were quite a few teachers of colour. And so we worked together very closely. We had kind of a way that we'd identify with each other you know. So that the racist teachers who were there didn't bother us very much.⁸³

According to Tremaine, the development of their own non-verbal communication and support was important for their survival and longevity within the profession. It became one of the many ways in which black women educators of this study sought to maintain their professional identities and cope with the microaggressions they faced within school

⁸² Carolyn M. West. "Mammy, Jezebel, Sapphire and Their Homegirls: Developing an 'Oppositional Gaze' Toward the Images of Black Women" in Joan Chrisler, Carla Golden, Patricia D. Rozee, eds., *Lectures of the Psychology of Women*, Fourth Edition (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2008), 290.

⁸³ Cecily Tremaine. Interview by author. Audio recording. Markham, On., May 9, 2011.

environments. Black women teachers used this approach not only as a tool to transfer knowledge and support between one another, but they also utilized this when teaching black students.

‘I think that I expect[ed] more of black students’: Black Women’s Resistive and Transformative Pedagogies

Having experienced their own forms of exclusion and discrimination within the school system, black women teachers worked to prepare all their students for contradictions in an education system that excluded some racial minorities from equal access and opportunity. Recognizing that the odds could be stacked against students of colour in particular, some research participants felt they needed to enforce strict guidelines and expectations in order to encourage these students to work harder and be prepared for the racial challenges that lay ahead. Nicolette Archer remembered having to maintain strict educational parameters for the sake of student success. She explained,

Well, my point is, if you let them [black students] slide by thinking life is going to be a bowl of cherries, with no challenges...I was strict because I knew. Being black, you got to be better than the white man or woman next to you. So you got to have that work ethic, you got to work harder.⁸⁴

At times these strict expectations put her at odds with many black students who felt that she was picking on them. She maintained that she risked positive relationships with particular black students in order to ensure they had a greater chance of academic success. Archer also subtly circumvented mainstream curriculum by organizing multicultural events, including students who felt ostracized by the school system through one-on-one interactions and gave extra attention to students who needed it. For instance, Archer conducted student interviews in community spaces with black parents who could

⁸⁴ Nicolette Archer. Interview by author. Audio recording, Windsor, On., August 19, 2011.

not make school appointed interview times and spoke directly to parents when she had behavioural issues with students in her classroom. In keeping with George Dei's idea of schooling as community praxis, Archer's approach blurred the lines between her professional occupation and community work. Often taking into account the communities in which her students' lived, she encouraged students to bring cultural artifacts such as traditional Turkish shoes for multicultural themed classroom events, as well as advocated for a black studies course within her school board.⁸⁵ Archer used her pedagogy to transplant cultural and community knowledge and participated not only as a professional teacher who maintained high expectations but also as a community worker striving for racial uplift and social advancement.

In other instances, because some black women educators taught few black pupils, they felt a particular closeness to black students and sought to equip them with skills intended to combat mainstream society. While Melody Adekin was teaching at her last school in Toronto, she recalled the moment when her only two black students did not hand in their final assignments. Remembering it as one of the saddest moments in her career, Adekin recollected that she did not want to fail the students because she felt that they were one of 'her own'. Feeling betrayed by the students, she remembered that her expectations were higher for those students knowing the challenges that they would probably face. She shared, "I think that I expect[ed] more of black students and sometimes that may be putting them in a particular bind because they may be giving it their very best. But I still expect them to [excel]. I guess it's because of the environment

⁸⁵ The Black Studies course Archer describes was eventually offered at Patterson Collegiate Institute in Windsor, Ontario in 1969. John Tomlinson, "GG Teaching Award 'Wonderful,'" *The Windsor Star*, December 09, 2011; *African-Canadian Roads to Freedom: African Canadian Connections to the Ontario Curriculum for Grade 10 Canadian History Since World War I* (Academic and Applied) and Grade 10 Civics (Open), (Greater Essex County District School Board, February 2010).

and how many things are stacked against us. So I expect you in my classroom to do well.”⁸⁶ While Adekin remembered that all her students thought she was particularly strict, her recollection of these two black students indicated that she may have gone out of her way to ensure that they understood the challenges that came with poor academic performance.

Adekin’s interview also acknowledged the ways in which ‘othermothering’ practices became infused with student learning for black women teachers. Black feminist theorist Patricia Hill Collins describes othermothering as the belief that the larger community was responsible for the ‘rights’ of child rearing. Disrupting mainstream ideas that viewed children as “private property”, black women used othermothering practice to create woman-centered networks and reclaim community based learning.⁸⁷ As an extension of the othermothering practice Hill Collins describes, the pedagogical approaches used by Archer and Adekin served to educate all children but specifically prepared black students for the racially-rooted challenges that lay ahead. This pedagogy was sensitive to the presence, history and needs of black Canadians and subverted mainstream notions that silenced African descended peoples and limited their opportunities in academic institutions.

While Archer and Adekin’s pedagogical approaches seemed to have limited impact on the broader curriculum changes, this connection to black communities distinctly characterized black women’s resistive and transformative pedagogies. In her work on the development of black British feminism, sociologist Heidi Safia Mirza argues that on the surface, black women’s pedagogies can appear conservative for their

⁸⁶ Melody Adekin. Interview by author. Audio recording, Toronto, On., April 1, 2012.

⁸⁷ Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990), 182.

connection with mainstream ideas and focus on inclusion, but they are also radically subversive for their work on social transformation. Charting black women's educational experiences as "out of place, disrupting, [and] untidy," Mirza challenges readers to look beyond essentialist notions of black women's responses to inequality as resistance within accommodation, but rather to view it as transformative.⁸⁸ Archer and Adekin's activities support this argument. They used their authority and position within schools to better prepare black pupils for the social and systemic oppression they might face while also transforming immediate social conditions in ways that had the potential to enrich black Canadian communities.⁸⁹ While it is difficult to chart whether this was a common practice by all black women teachers, the ability of some educators to augment curriculum within their individual classrooms recognizes the processes they used to insert diverse historical experiences within Ontario schools.

Whether it was through maintaining high standards in order to prepare children or accommodating parents outside of school hours and spaces, Melody Adekin and Nicolette Archer maintained pedagogies rooted in their positions as black professional women *and* community workers. This may have been a common practice for other black women educators whose professional lives were not separate from their goals for racial and community uplift. For Cecily Tremaine, her community and professional work remained deeply interconnected. Believing that community activism made her a better educator, Tremaine only began teaching after years of working with organizations like

⁸⁸ Heidi Safia Mirza, "Black Women in Education: A Collective for Social Change" in Mirza, Heidi Safia, ed., *Black British Feminism: A Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 269-276.

⁸⁹ According to Mirza, black and other minority women perform social transformation through their work in keeping black communities' collective desire for self-knowledge alive. Social transformation then is in the opening up of spaces of learning and teaching both within schooling institutions and communities. Heidi Safia Mirza, "Postcolonial Subjects, Black Feminism, and the Intersectionality of Race and Gender in Higher Education," in Roland Sintos Coloma, ed., *Postcolonial Challenges in Education* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2009), 243-245.

the Black Education Project, an after-hours tutoring project created in 1969 to help black students combat discrimination in Toronto schools.⁹⁰ Tremaine recalled, “What people don’t realize is that when you work in the community, you have more skills and strategies than anyone who has gone into the university and opened a book. The reasons that I do that [was] because you got a good combination of skills.”⁹¹

Equipped with the lessons she learned from her community work, Tremaine explained that she felt ready to deal with any group of students. When she was assigned to work with students at a racially diverse school in the heart of downtown Toronto, Tremaine felt like she could identify with the students there because they reflected the economic and racially diverse populations she worked with in her community.⁹² Bringing culturally sensitive material into the classroom, she organized school productions such as “When Cultures Meet”, a play on cultural diversity, organized school presentations from Indigenous community leaders, and was part of a TVO series on classroom management. After explaining that students at her school disrupted popular racial and economic stereotypes at a board assembly, Tremaine recalled with pride that, “when those so-called poor kids stood up and delivered in that assembly at 50/50 [equivalent]. Oh my goodness, that was something else. So I did all that kind of work. With other people as well. Because I’ve always been ... a community person.”⁹³

⁹⁰ Maureen Holgate, “Black Education Project: Community Programme Plays Remedial Role in Education of Black Students,” *Spear Magazine*, Vol. 4 No. 6 (January 1975): 5; Harold Hoyte, “Black School Gets Down to Real Problem,” *Contrast Newspaper*, November 1, 1970.

⁹¹ Cecily Tremaine. Interview by author. Audio recording. Markham, On., May 9, 2011.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid. In her interview, Tremaine describes her time at a middle school in North York where the student demographic of her school was comprised of predominantly low income, racially mixed children (with a high population of immigrant students). Her description of students performing at 50/50 challenged dominant perceptions and research that argued students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds were at greater risk of academic failure or substandard educational achievement. Tremaine, however, attributes the ability of her students to compete with other schools (perceived to have greater economic support and

Through her support and mentoring, Tremaine recalled that her students, who were considered economically and racially unprivileged and disadvantaged by school administrators, could perform equally, if not better, than her affluent white students when given support and encouragement.

It also seems that some school board administrators also recognized the importance of black women teachers and their connection to community work. For example, when the North York school board hired a cultural relations worker to provide information and suggest methods of relating more effectively to black communities in the Toronto area in 1967, they reflected a conscious awareness that there existed a clear disconnect between black communities and public schooling institutions. The board appealed to the government to take more financial responsibility in dealing with the city's black populations and hoped that by hiring a cultural worker, teachers would become more knowledgeable about what the problems in the black, particularly from the Caribbean, community were.⁹⁴ Believing that student disengagement in schools was linked to 'black culture', cultural workers were supposed to interpret and 'fix' black student issues, thereby absolving school administrators from having to investigate and possibly change board practices. In addition to cultural workers hired in North York, educator June Brand was hired as community liaison counselor for the Toronto school board to help connect community and educational mandates developing in urban schools. Brand was responsible for working with the Canadian-born black, Caribbean and African populations to resolve disputes in various schools and connected with community groups

predominantly white in student demographic) as a testament of her pedagogical approach. Tremaine began teaching in the school in the late 1980s until her departure in the mid-1990s. Also see: Ndieze Nnawuchi, *Achievement Gap in Public School Education* (Oklahoma: Tate Publishing, 2010), 16.

⁹⁴ "North York School Board to Hire Cultural Worker for West Indian Students," *Toronto Star*, January 20, 1976.

to help teachers better understanding how to communicate with their minority students.⁹⁵

The board made no distinction between varying schooling experiences among these diverse black populations, but instead conflated their experiences into a singular racialized category of ‘Blacks.’

Annette Henry’s cross-cultural ethnography on black educators in an Ontario urban elementary school examines the ways which black women teachers such as Cecily Tremaine and June Brand worked to assume control of education for black Canadian students. In *Taking Black Control*, Henry claimed that black women had unique pedagogies which “have creatively moved toward liberatory education, inside and outside of the mainstream institutions within which they teach.”⁹⁶ Henry argues that black Canadian women teachers operated from multiple agendas in order to authenticate black knowledge forms, namely through the inclusion of diasporic histories and heritage, while also providing the literacy and social skills to have students function in Canadian society.⁹⁷ Although limited by systemic discrimination, Brand and Tremaine engaged with existing mainstream structures while also creating black female spheres of influence that extended into their communities. Their ability to use community experiences to connect with diverse groups of students in Ontario schools, albeit within institutional confines, worked not only to give them access to some power but also authority within the classroom on their own terms. It is within this context that black women’s resistive

⁹⁵ June Brand. Interview by author. Audio recording. Whitby, On., August 15, 2011.

⁹⁶Annette Henry, *Taking Back Control: African Canadian Women Teachers’ Lives and Practice* (New York: SUNY Press, 1998), 66.

⁹⁷Annette Henry, “Learning from the Teaching of African Canadian Women: A Reflection for African American Students,” in Vincent R. D’Oyley and Carl E. James, eds., *Re/Visioning: Canadian Perspectives on the Education of Africans in the Late 20th Century* (North York, On: Captus Press Inc., 1998),129.

pedagogies worked to transform student opportunities, subvert racist expectations and challenge beliefs about racialized students.⁹⁸

In comparison to white women teachers, the connection to community activism that some black women included as part of their teaching practice was emblematic of the isolation they experienced within schooling institutions and differed from the pedagogies of their white counterparts. Renowned Canadian education scholar and teacher Sybil Shack's 1965 article in *Education Quarterly* best depicts this contrast in educational philosophies. According to Shack, it was impossible for schools to accept responsibility for the total behaviour of their students and extending teacher influence into the community was difficult and impractical. Shack emphasized that, "To expect the school to effect radical changes in its community is also unrealistic."⁹⁹ Although Shack identified herself as a member of an ethnic minority group, on account of her Jewish ancestry, she strongly connected her Canadian identity to the lessons she learned in school. Shack believed that,

The teachers across the country are Canadian. Like myself most of them have been formed by Canadian traditions. They pass on what they are. Most of our textbooks are Canadian, especially in the elementary school.¹⁰⁰

Shack's statement reflected her uncritical engagement with the status quo and the assumption to be Canadian meant educators and students were adequately represented in school textbooks and curriculum. As discussed in earlier parts of this chapter, for black students and educators, to be 'Canadian' was often read as white and of British or French ancestry. As a result, Shack's reflection that school and community work should be

⁹⁸ Heidi Mirza, "Black Women in Education," 276.

⁹⁹ Sybil Shack, "The School in Society," *Toronto Education Quarterly* Vol. IV, No. III (Spring 1965): 3.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

isolated from one another did not take into account the ways in which school practices were informed by societal expectations and assumptions.

Quite the opposite was happening for black women educators; sometimes as a response to expectations from black communities, they tried to engage in community practices to help supplement schooling environments that did not address black students nor accurately represent them in school texts and curriculum. The ability of some white educators to promote individuality and the separation of school and community was something that many black women educators could not easily promote. To remain deeply connected to their communities and use education to help community members deal with the broader challenges of mainstream society remained at the centre of their educational philosophies.

Rather, at least half of the interview participants developed pedagogical approaches based on the combinations of their training, experiences and diasporic identities. These multifaceted approaches opened spaces for some black students who were often disengaged from the school system and worked to challenge the mainstream curriculum's erasure of blackness by dispelling racial and gendered stereotypes and offering alternative models of teaching. Anti-racist scholar George Dei defines this as part of anti-racist pedagogy, which strives "to educate about how racism, sexism, and classism, while grounded in social structural factors, are linked to everyday practices in Canadian schooling."¹⁰¹ According to Dei, anti-racist educators worked to eliminate systemic forms of discrimination that excluded the social reality of visible minorities. In much the same ways, although not explicitly labeling themselves as anti-racist educators,

¹⁰¹ George J. Sefa Dei, "Reflections of an Anti-Racist Pedagogue in Sociology of Education," in Lorna Erwin and David MacLennan, eds., *Canada: Critical Perspectives on Theory, Research & Practice*, (Toronto: Copp Clark Longman Ltd., 1994), 291.

because many black female educators occupied similar spaces of exclusion they connected anti-racist ideals to their pedagogical approaches as a way to prepare their students for the marginalization they would encounter inside and outside of school settings.

In addition to this, some black women educators also encompassed feminist frameworks into their pedagogical approaches. Enid Rubin's educational philosophy was strongly rooted in her experiences as a racialized woman and remained distinctly feminist in nature. After migrating from Jamaica to Alberta, then settling in Ontario, Rubin's marriage ended and she became a single parent raising four children alone. Coming from a middle-class financial and educational background in Jamaica, Rubin's ex-husband refused to accept his limited and lowered status once he arrived in Canada and ultimately left his family. Believing that she was more prepared to deal with the challenges that her family faced in Canada than her husband was, Rubin mirrored a common immigrant experience: that of family displacement, economic disruption and spousal separation.¹⁰²

¹⁰² Immigration scholars chart a number of challenges facing immigrant families which included, levels of integration, socioeconomic achievement levels, the socialization of immigrant children, intergenerational difference and conflict, and union formation and dissolution. Family structures were linked to wider external social and economic forces, which affected marriage and kinship behaviors. Christine G.T. Ho argues that the greatest toll exacted by Caribbean transnationalism was marriage and relationship breakdown. Ho contends that Caribbean marriages often collapsed under the weight of new pressures they encountered in new host countries. According to Ho, gender ideologies (which were strongly connected to economics and access to employment) in a new society often contributed to friction between spouses. Christine G.T. Ho, "Transnationalism as a Gendered Process," *Latin American Perspectives* Vol. 26, No. 5 (Sept. 1999): 49. For more on challenges facing black immigrant populations in Canada, see: Joseph Mensah, *Black Canadians: History, Experiences and Social Conditions*; Barrington Walker, ed., *The History of Immigration and Racism in Canada: Essential Readings* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 2008); Carl E. James and Andrea Davis, eds., *Jamaica in the Canadian Experience: A Multiculturalizing Presence* (Nova Scotia: Fernwood Publishing, 2012); Babacar M'Baye, Amoaba Gooden, and Wendy Wilson-Fall, "A History of Black Immigration Into the United States and Canada with Culture and Policy Implications," in Zachery Williams, ed., *African Cultures and Policy Studies: Scholarship and the Transformation of Public Policy* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), 219-246; Amoaba Gooden, "Community Organizing by African Caribbean People in Toronto, Ontario," *Journal of Black Studies* Vol. 38, No. 3 (January 2008): 413-426.

For immigrants who came from relatively high socioeconomic backgrounds in their birth homes, the movement from being members of a racial majority, the transition of becoming 'black' in white Canada and their experiences of racial discrimination and prejudice placed heavy strains on familial relationships and at times, disrupted these family structures. It also meant that these challenges, one that Enid Rubin recollected as gendered in nature, informed her approaches within the classroom in the 1970s.¹⁰³ Rubin used this experience specifically to support women in the education field and remembered,

... I know the challenges that black women face. *I came here as a black woman challenged.* In so many ways; I was left as a single parent with four kids, so I'm very much aware of upgrading your education, taking care of the family and then taking care of yourself and also being active in the community. So my goal has always been to assist black women to achieve their potential and to make them aware of how important it is for us to work together. Regardless of whether we have a good education or not. Because at the end of the day, nobody cares whether you have a good education or illiterate, you're seen as a black woman.¹⁰⁴

Rubin's positionality helped her formulate a teaching philosophy that worked specifically to aid black women in the education system. She often spoke out to assist children from single parent homes, became actively involved in the Congress of Black Women of Canada for thirty years and was also one of its provincial representatives.¹⁰⁵ Her woman-

¹⁰³ Rubin explains that although she was a trained educator, upon migrating to Canada, she was given a lower professional designation and had to teach with a letter of permission. She explains that her husband refused to accept a lower economic and professional status in Canada, which later led to friction in the family. She explains, "...he was irate because of the life we had in Jamaica, we had a good life in Jamaica and then to come here and he had to do a lesser job than what he used to do in Jamaica." Early Canadian immigration policies (such as the West Indian Domestic Scheme and Live-In Caregiver Program) limited the entry of Caribbean migrants, and ultimately access to employment, that favoured black women and disproportionately restricted black men. As a result, black immigrant men who did enter Canada were often concentrated in skilled or semi-skilled blue-collar work, which saw limited mobility, contributed to lower socioeconomic statuses and created a gender imbalance between black Caribbean male and female migrants. Joe T. Darden, "The Impact of Canadian Immigration Policy on the Structure of the Black Family in Toronto," in Eric Fong, ed., *Inside the Mosaics* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 151-155; Enid Rubin. Interview by author.

¹⁰⁴ Enid Rubin. Interview by author.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*; The Congress of Black Women evolved from the Canadian Negro Women's Association (CANEWA) which was founded in 1951 by a small group of Black women in Toronto. The organization

centered approach, which was often geared to her circumstances in Canada, helped her develop strategies that would deal with the multiple forms of oppression that African Canadian pupils experienced.

Black women teachers then developed resistive and transformative pedagogies in response to their experiences within white dominated institutions; not only did they work to prepare black students for the challenges they would face as racial minorities, but some teachers also incorporated feminist viewpoints in their teaching practices. This approach remained specific to their positions as black women but also was based on individual re-workings of professional spaces. These women teachers then shifted their professional work and community orientated activism to serve others as well as their individual need for self-preservation.

‘Everyone will expect you to be the authority on blackness’: Maintaining Individual Self-hood

Black women teachers’ need for individual self-care and identity formation not only worked to preserve their professional careers but also resisted limited forms of inclusion that pushed them to be hegemonic representations of ‘the black community,’ often constructed as monolithical, unchanging, and outside of educational priorities. As Heidi Safia Mirza argues, black women not only resisted racism within educational institutions but they lived in other worlds, by which they redefined and recreated their own understandings of identity and black womanhood.¹⁰⁶ These worlds were often parallel and, at times, worked against what it meant to be *black* and *female*. Aware of

focused on assisting black women and their families, delivered various programs to support black education, health, housing and employment as well as addressed concerns surrounding racism, sexism and human rights. Lawrence Hill, *Women of Vision: The Story of the Canadian Negro Women's Association* (Toronto: Umbrella Press, 1996).

¹⁰⁶ Heidi Safia Mirza, “Black Women in Education: A Collective for Social Change,” 272.

community expectations, and burdened by those of the larger society, there were sometimes clashes between competing agendas to which black women teachers had to respond. As research participants made clear, they often had to work to shape their lives as professionals, who were not only tied to their communities, but also their careers.

After 38 years of teaching, Catholic school educator Bernadine Beacons recognized the importance of her role as a black Canadian female school superintendent but made clear distinctions between her professional and racial identities. Beacons revealed, “To be honest with you, I haven’t made it. When I speak, while I happen to be black and proud of that make no mistake about it. But I’m speaking as a superintendent.”¹⁰⁷ Having to make tough decisions that often affected her community, specifically concerning the school expulsions of minority students, Beacons was careful to highlight that her role was to implement board policy and distinctly wanted her position to be defined by her integrity. That Beacons distinguishes her race from her professional career is particularly telling; her account indicates that, at least within the Toronto Catholic school board, she believed she could not be both a superintendent and a black woman who was engaged in the project of community uplift. While Beacons may have been responding to racial hostility or limited support from the board, her comments also served as recognition of the heavy cost some black women teachers shouldered by participating in community work and racial uplift projects.¹⁰⁸ Left to subsidize the process of integration and access for black students within Ontario school systems,

¹⁰⁷ Bernadine Beacons. Interview by author. Audio recording. Toronto, On., July 22, 2010.

¹⁰⁸ Kevin K. Gaines, *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 136-139. Also see: Gaetane Jean-Marie and Anthony H. Normore, “A Repository of Hope for Social Justice: Black Women Leaders at Historically Black Colleges and Universities,” in Anthony H. Normore, ed., *Leadership for Social Justice: Promoting Equity and Excellence Through Inquiry and Reflective Practice* (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing Inc., 2008), 3 – 35.

community work and racial uplift informed Beacons of her duties to her race, but also clashed with her professional goals for career advancement. Walking the line between board designated disciplinary actions and community members who expected her to stand beside them given their common racial identity and her perceived empathy for their racialized experiences, Beacons emphasized, “I’m not speaking for the black race here; I’m not speaking for blacks on the whole.”¹⁰⁹ Beacons’ rejection of the position as a voice for diverse black communities can be read as reclaiming of black female self-hood. While her stance may have disrupted potential community relationships, it was one in which Beacons used to assert her own professional career and individual identity.

Given that black teachers were often considered leaders in their respective communities, they were often categorized as responsible for the educational progress of their communities.¹¹⁰ This notion of collective responsibility directly challenged black female self-hood and individuality forcing some women teachers to re-constitute and remove themselves from boundaries that categorized them solely on the basis of their blackness and/or professionalism. In the case of Beacons, it was more important for her to maintain an objective view of the educational cases she reviewed, rather than be solely motivated by concerns surrounding community responsibilities. While at times considerations of race were part of her educational philosophy, she asserted that it was not her sole, and perhaps not her primary, mandate.

¹⁰⁹ Bernadine Beacons. Interview by author. Audio recording. Toronto, On., July 22, 2010.

¹¹⁰ Shirley J. Yee, *Gender Ideology and Black Women as Community Builders in Ontario, 1850 – 1870*, 147. Also see: Marcia Wharton-Zaretsky, “Foremothers of Black Women’s Community Organizing in Toronto,” *Atlantis* No. 24 (2000): 61-71; Nkiru Nzegwu, “Confronting Racism: Towards the Formation of a Female-Identified Alliance,” *Canadian Journal of Women and Law* No. 7 (1994): 15-33; Suzanne Morton, “Separate Spheres in a Separate World: African Nova Scotian Women in Late 19th Century Halifax County,” *Acadiensis* No. 22 (1993): 61-83; Sylvia Hamilton, “Our Mothers Grand and Great: Black Women of Nova Scotia,” *Canadian Woman Studies* No. 11 (Winter 1982): 32-37.

In her analysis of self-definitions of the black female body, scholar Joan Maki Motapanyane argues that black women are raised in social environments that expect them to have super strength often neglecting its effect on their bodies. She further reveals that because black women were often expected to play various roles in their communities, social networks and families, those around them find it difficult to understand their desire for personal space.¹¹¹ According to Maki Motapanyane, black women's desire for personal space and for the purposes of this project, their vision for individual professional identities, was often misunderstood by both mainstream administrators and black Canadian communities and treated with animosity.

While some educators embraced notions of black community involvement and activism, it often meant that they were deemed as the sole representatives of these communities. Donna Lockette felt the pressure of being the authority on race and race issues at her school in Windsor-Essex county. After being hired to teach in a school with a high population of visible minorities in the late 1980s, Lockette reported the struggle she had with being the 'authority on blackness'. She admitted,

I learned a really important lesson from that job. I learned: never do anything because of the colour of your skin. So, never take a job because of your race. Ever. Because, everyone will expect you to be the authority on blackness. I'm not the authority on anything. So, you know, that's not my reality. I found what I didn't want to do from that job.¹¹²

Given that black communities were constantly affected by mainstream political, economic and social institutions, some black women educators were often left shouldering the burden of speaking for their communities. As a result, Beacons and Lockette had to radically oppose these dominant discourses that told them they were the

¹¹¹ Joan Maki Motapanyane, *Converging in Oral Communion: Black Women on Body Politics and Eros*, (Unpublished Thesis, Nova Scotia: Dalhousie University, 2002), 54.

¹¹² Debra Laforet, Interview by author. Windsor, On., August 20, 2011.

experts and spokeswomen within diverse black Canadian communities. Their rejection of this role can be interpreted as complicating the expectations of their 'blackness', both within black communities and outside of it, that largely relegated women into a singular homogenizing role, often as community nurturers, in society. That is to say, their decisions attest to the complex and difficult truths of existing within a mainstream institution as a marginalized 'Other' while trying to convey individual interpretations of education and equality. Heidi Mirza further supports this idea when she writes, "...black women do not accept the dominant discourse, nor do they construct their identities in opposition to the dominant discourse. They redefine the world, have their own values, codes and understandings, refuse (not resist) the gaze of the other."¹¹³ In many ways, Beacons and Lockette's experiences were reflective of individual value systems that refused and complicated dominant discourses that promoted them as the singular representatives of diverse communities but rather acknowledged their intersectionality and multiple lived experiences.

Conclusion

Black women educators experienced varying forms of discrimination both subtle and overt in nature. Even as mainstream institutions sought out black women educators for changing student populations, Ontario administrators continued to encourage a limited form of inclusion within schools. While changing social climates in 1960s and 1970s allowed for some flexibility and acceptance of ethnic and racialized populations, the experiences of black women educators exposed the varying ways schooling institutions also limited access for racial minorities. Experiencing multiple forms of oppression, black women teachers were restricted and isolated in school staffrooms,

¹¹³ Heidi Safia Mirza, "Black Women in Education: A Collective for Social Change," 275.

forced to teach Eurocentric curricula, rejected from social gatherings outside of school settings and faced violent threats while educating Canadian students. Yet alongside these experiences, some black female educators also built strong relationships with other educators, gained support from some white administrators and friends, and climbed the professional ladder to further their careers. Often occupying contradictory positions of hyper-visibility and invisibility, black women were conscious of their positions as outsiders-within and developed various coping mechanisms to deal with their conflicting experiences in Ontario schools. Some female educators developed distinctive black feminist pedagogies that merged anti-racist and anti-sexist approaches with their lived experiences as black women.

These resistive and transformative pedagogies were marked by individual classroom practices that infused lessons about African descended peoples, programs and alliances forged with other black educators, and the maintenance of high academic standards that served to equip racialized students with life in mainstream society. Through this, some black female educators remained connected to their ideas of community work and racial uplift. On the other hand, alongside these ideas, black women educators defined their identity through their relationships in the field and worked to characterize their own professional careers through circumstances not completely of their own choosing. They embraced and also rejected community roles to speak for themselves and their self-knowledge. Instead, black women's presence and reaction to varying forms of oppression used education a tool for social transformation and communal/racial survival.

Chapter Four:

***“We were like renegades. We were like radicals”:* Exploring the Continuum of Black Activism and Educational Initiatives in Toronto, 1960s – 70s**

Well blacks in Toronto were always aware of everything else going on. I remember when I was a child, there was a newspaper from Chicago, called the *Chicago Defender* and it used to be brought in by the men who worked on the railroad and everybody read that paper. The *Chicago Defender* talked about things that happened all through the [United] States, about lynching and this and that. And you would read the paper and you would know what was happening, what organizations were formed and what those organizations were fighting for... So we've always known what they were doing in the [United] States. And it's given us [black Canadians] a kind of comfort. Not what they're doing but the fact that they [African Americans] had it so bad. We were wrong. We were wrong. But it gave us a kind of comfort. We always felt that Canadians, having seen what went on in the States, would not visit the same situation unto the blacks here. Well, that was naive of us. Canadians just did it in a better, more sophisticated way.¹

Describing Black Power activism in 1970s Toronto, Tamara Mogrant was acutely aware of the long standing tradition and influence that African American experiences of racism and organizational activism had on black Canadian populations. However, according to Mogrant, what made black Canadians different were the ways in which they perceived their experiences as better than their American counterparts; this is a discrepancy that would characterize how black Canadians collectively organized and understood themselves within broader social justice movements in North America.

The 1960s ushered in an age of discontent and saw increasing public criticism of state institutions, including schools, and the ways in which the Canadian government dealt with its changing society. While Canadians watched and read about racial discontent and violence in the United States as the Civil Rights Movement grew, witnessed the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, and expressed their growing concern about the conflict in Vietnam, political activism and growing social unrest gave

¹ Tamara Mogrant. Interview by author.

rise to a counterculture in North America that directly challenged notions of citizenship and democracy in new and radical ways.

While the narrative of Canada as the ‘Canaan’ land, a place where blacks travelled through the underground railroad, obtained their freedom and equality and stood as human beings, remained in the national discourse of the country, it was becoming increasingly difficult to hide the fact that people of African descent within the nation felt excluded from equal citizenship rights. Despite the fact that national programs broadly encouraged human rights and equality, they did so without establishing effective ways to implement these practices on a local level.² Canada’s close proximity to the United States meant that the highly publicized Civil Rights and Black Power movements had a direct impact on Canadians in unprecedented ways. Believing that Canada was a place of equal citizenship and peaceful negotiations, white Canadians watched in horror as the atrocities of racial injustice played out on the global stage. At the same time, Canada’s growing black population recognized the paradox of a national policy that discouraged human rights violations but largely ignored black experiences of discrimination through a lack of equal access to education, housing and political representation.

Historian Bryan Palmer writes that the 1960s became a time in which ideas of Canadian identity, rooted in British imperialism, were destabilized and difficult to

² In 1948, Canada signed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and by the 1950s, almost all of its provinces enacted policies fighting against discrimination in employment, accommodation and public facilities. As part of the provincial Human Rights codes, Ontario passed the Fair Employment Practices Act in 1951, and later the Fair Accommodation Practices Act in 1954. With clear mandates promoting equality and social justice, it seemed that Canada was a nation where issues of prejudice and discrimination were non-existent. However, into the 1960s, the clear inequities faced by black Canadians who struggled to access housing, employment and schooling would challenge these ideas. Robin Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*, 427 -428.

define.³ In his work about the ironies of Canadian identity in the 1960s, Palmer argues that to be Canadian no longer meant to be English, but rather it was transformed and challenged by French-Canadian, women, black, gay, and Indigenous populations. Palmer argues that the 1960s allowed for old world ways, which promoted whiteness as Britishness, to adapt to new world orders by including ‘others’ into the Canadian imaginary. Even still, Palmer contends that the broadening of whiteness and citizenship, as envisioned by the inclusion of French Canadians and European migrants had its limitations and full citizenship rights for racialized bodies in Canada remained outside of nationalist discussions.⁴ Feeling a sense of alienation from traditional concepts of Canadian identity, black Canadians increased their political activism affirming a heightened consciousness about the place of black bodies in Canadian citizenry.

As a result, growing black militancy in the United States dramatically transformed debates about the meaning of black identity, citizenship and expanded the boundaries of democracy not only in America, but also within Canada. In his work on the baby-boom generation in Canada, Doug Owram argues that the lasting impact of the Civil Rights Movement and black activism in Canada was that it legitimized resistance to government authority. According to Owram, black activism demonstrated the effectiveness of mass protest, dissent and resistance.⁵ Although Owram explained that blackness was appropriated by French Canadians who portrayed their plight as the ‘White Niggers of America’ to authenticate their political activism⁶, I argue that blackness for racialized

³ Bryan D. Palmer, *Canada's 1960s: The Ironies of Identity in a Rebellious Era* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 15.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 134.

⁵ Doug Owram, *Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby Boom Generation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 167.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 168.

bodies in Canada exemplified an increasing political consciousness that began in the early nineteenth century. Black Canadians connected the marches and demonstrations they saw as African descended peoples internationally and defined their political activism through shared links of segregation, racial oppression and violence, as well as through collective organization, protest and resilience. Black activism in Canada then shared ideas, organizations and people across the 49th parallel but also reflected a heightened political consciousness among blacks that was distinctly Canadian.

It is within this context that Toronto's growing Caribbean and Canadian-born black populations adopted a more radical and Pan-Africanist stance to combat issues of prejudice and discrimination in housing, employment and education within the city. In the late 1960s and 1970s, Toronto became an important marker of black cultural renaissance and resistance. Not only did the city boast a sizeable black population, it was also home to several black university student groups (The Black Students Union at University of Toronto), cultural organizations (The Afro-Caribbean Theatre Workshop), community newspapers (Spear Magazine), bookstores (Third World Bookstore) and the ideal location for community workshops and conferences that focused on the black English speaking populations of Ontario.⁷ As a result, black Torontonians formed a considerable community base that worked to develop a unified and political attack against systemic forms of discrimination in various city institutions. Furthermore, Toronto was also the location where some of the black women teachers who participated in this study situated their permanent and lasting teaching careers.

⁷ Kevin Plummer, "Historicist: Third World Books and Crafts," February 7, 2015. Accessed on March 12, 2016 < <http://torontoist.com/2015/02/historicist-third-world-books-and-crafts/> >; Althea Prince, *Being Black: Essays* (Toronto: Insomniac Press, 2001), 33-34; Marci McDonald, "Toronto's New Black Culture," *Toronto Star*, August 23, 1969.

In Toronto, opportunities for collective action and volunteer work came at a time when some black female educators were developing their individual pedagogies and challenging the ways black children were educated in Ontario school systems. As part of the growing publicity and awareness of racially conscious causes, some black female educators joined black community organizations and continued advocating for equal education opportunities in their local areas. These organizations provided a strong place for identity formation and action at a time when many black women educators were developing their professional careers. While some women continued their activism and joined black organizations that endorsed black radical mandates, others became inspired by the activism of blacks in the United States and worked in their fields through individual acts; still others merged individual and collective action to discover who they were as black women.⁸

Informed by a particular brand of radicalism that developed in 1960s Toronto, this chapter will highlight how black women teachers helped to create and participated in social justice activism in ways that were unique to the city and its specific urban issues. This chapter is divided into two main sections: the first will highlight the nature of black organizing during this time period which was both moderate and radical in nature. Black Canadian organizations varied in their philosophical approaches to activism; some believed and appropriated the rhetoric and politics of the American Black Power

⁸ Knowledge of and participation in this growing black activism in the 1960s would assist black women in their negotiation for self-identity and definition. Patricia Hill Collins describes this as part of black feminist thought that empowered black women through a changed consciousness. In discussing the means through which black women were empowered to bring about social change, Hill Collins describes the ways change “can also occur in the private, personal space of an individual woman’s consciousness.” Even within conditions that limited one’s ability to act, this consciousness was essential for change. The increasing radicalism in the 1960s propelled a growing awareness and self-reflection amongst some black women teachers. While black women teachers were aware of increasing militancy and some remained outside of activist circles, others were deeply impacted by the changing tone of black activism and remained active participants in the movement. Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 111.

movement to encourage collective action and protest among black Torontonians. Other organizations, such as the Jamaican Canadian Association, were strongly opposed to activism that was violent in nature and instead focused on collaboration and community strength. The second part of this chapter will outline various educational initiatives such as the Black Education Project, the Thorncliffe Park School and the Black Peoples Conference, to argue that education became one of the primary ways in which black Canadians, including several research participants, took political, and at times radical, action. Black education programs that were created in the 1960s became the meeting ground where both moderate and radical philosophies met. By maintaining a strong connection to “Africa” as diasporic peoples and using Black Power rhetoric, albeit with a slightly different tone to speak to specific Canadian experiences, educational programs implemented during this period worked to ensure that black children and parents were taught their African roots and that they understood themselves as universally oppressed peoples. Interwoven into these sections are the stories of some black women teachers who were attracted to black community organizations as part of their growing black consciousness and racial pride. While black women did not hold many strong leadership positions within radical black organizations such as the Afro-American Progressive Association (AAPA), they played important roles as facilitators and volunteers within these groups.⁹ The work of some black women teachers in activist circles, as well as those of other black Canadian community members and allies, would help push the Toronto Board of Education to take a lead on anti-discrimination and anti-racist policies into the 1980s.

⁹ Chris Harris, “Canadian Black Power, Organic Intellectuals and the War of Position in Toronto, 1967-1975,” in M. Athena Palaeologu, ed., *The Sixties in Canada: A Turbulent and Creative Decade* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 2009), 333.

Blacks in Canada in the 1960s

In the post-WWII period, Canada's black population grew significantly as a result of a less restrictive immigration policy under John G. Diefenbaker. Prior to 1960, Canada had a restrictive immigration policy that gave white European immigrants preferential treatment ahead of all other groups. As stated in earlier chapters, the environment was such that persons of African descent and other visible minorities were deemed unsuitable for immigration into Canada. However, in addition to the largely ignored Indigenous populations, Canada's growing need for cheap labour meant that the nation was never fully a 'white man's country'; it had long permitted visible minorities as migrant labourers, and continued to employ groups of black migrants such as steel mill and coalmine workers in Nova Scotia and female domestic workers into Quebec, Toronto and other parts of Canada.¹⁰ It was not until 1962, after the passing of the Human Rights code, that Canada's immigration policy considered individuals based on education and skill rather than on race or ethnicity. Beginning in 1967, the "points system" evaluated potential migrants based on age, education, and occupational background. As a result, the number of professional and skilled blacks from the Caribbean and Africa increased immensely. Prior to 1961, black immigration to Canada comprised 1.52 percent of the immigrant population. However, between 1961 and 1970, it more than doubled to 12.67 percent of the immigrant population.¹¹ In 1951, the census reported a total of 18,000 blacks in Canada; by 1971, that number rose to 34,400, a total of 0.2 percent of Canada's population.¹² By 1981, the census reported that Canada had over 200,000 Caribbean

¹⁰ Joseph Mensah, *Black Canadians: History, Experiences, Social Conditions*, 70.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 75.

¹² Ann Milan and Kelly Tran, "Blacks in Canada: A Long History," *Canadian Social Trends* (Spring 2004) Statistics Canada – Catalogue No. 11 – 008, 3.

immigrants and 50,000 from Africa. The Canadian born black population was just under 40,000 and comprised less than fifteen percent of Canada's total black population.¹³ By 1981, Canada's black population now comprised 1 percent of the country's total population.

Blacks from areas such as Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, Haiti, Kenya and the Ivory Coast joined the migratory flow for economic stability and political freedom.¹⁴ Upon entry into Canada, many felt that the reality of life in Canada did not allow access to the economic and political stability they had originally hoped for. The gap between expectations and reality was often experienced through racial discrimination in hiring and employment practices, residential segregation, and racial stereotypes in broader Canadian society.¹⁵ In a survey assessing the perception and experiences of racial discrimination conducted by the Human Rights Commission in 1975, researchers found that of the of 210 adults and 54 youth surveyed, a significant number of black Torontonians felt an extreme bitterness towards the ways they were treated in Canada. Concerning education, forty-two percent of respondents believed that teachers in Toronto schools discouraged black students from pursuing academic subjects, and all black respondents agreed that discrimination existed in Metropolitan Toronto.¹⁶ These feelings of discontent and isolation became more prevalent as issues of racial oppression and dissatisfaction emerged on the global stage.

¹³ James Walker, *Racial Discrimination in Canada: The Black Experience*, 18.

¹⁴ Joseph Mensah, *Black Canadians*, 67.

¹⁵ James Walker, *Racial Discrimination in Canada*, 18.

¹⁶ Wilson A. Head, Ontario Human Rights Commission. *The Black Presence in the Canadian Mosaic: A Study of Perception and the Practice of Discrimination against Blacks in Metropolitan Toronto* (Toronto, Ontario: Black History Society, 1975), 30-31; 184-187.

The rise in the black immigrant population in Canada also resulted in the influx of black students in Canadian post-secondary, secondary and elementary educational institutions. In post-secondary institutions, the Caribbean student population grew from four hundred and fifty in 1955 to three thousand by 1965, with large populations at McGill, Queen's, Sir George Williams, Mount Allison, and Dalhousie Universities.¹⁷ In fact, the cohort of Caribbean born populations that immigrated to Canada during this period was highly educated and skilled on account of immigration requirements and the economic wealth of those who could afford to migrate. About eighteen percent of men and sixteen percent of Caribbean born female immigrants who migrated between 1960 and 1969 had some university education. By 1981, more than half of Caribbean born males (between the ages of 15 and 65) and forty-five percent of women had some university or post-secondary education. This was above the national average for other immigrant groups and Canadian born black populations (which stood at thirty-six percent males and thirty-four percent of females for similar measures).¹⁸ This rising Caribbean and African student populations added to Canadian born black populations and launched various black school groups within their universities. The Black Students Union at the University of Toronto and Black People's Movement of York University were two such organizations.¹⁹ These black youth and student run organizations remained at the forefront of an increasing push for racial justice in the late 1960s among black populations in Canada. Furthermore, these students were coming from areas in the Caribbean and West Africa that had recently won their fight for independence: Ghana in

¹⁷ Robin Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: A History*, 441.

¹⁸ Anthony H. Richmond and Aloma Mendoza, "Education and Qualifications of Caribbean Immigrants and their Children in Britain and Canada," in Ransford W. Palmer, ed., *In Search of a Better Life: Perspectives on Migration from the Caribbean* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1990), 78-79.

¹⁹ Althea Prince, *Being Black: Essays by Althea Prince* (Toronto: Insomniac Press, 2001), 57.

1957, Nigeria in 1960, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago in 1962 and Barbados in 1966. These student-led movements advocated economic and cultural self-sufficiency by mobilizing support for Pan-African and anti-imperialist movements in the Third World.²⁰

The anti-racist focus of these student groups also differed from other university student organizations at the time, which focused on increasing student participation and autonomy within university settings.²¹ Historian Roberta Lexier argues that while Canada's student movement within university systems was often divided on a diversity of issues, they were largely grounded by a set of common interests about increasing their roles and responsibilities in universities. As a result, white student leaders and organizations increased demands for participation in decision making processes and asked to be included in departmental councils, university board of directors and senates.²² Whereas predominantly white student activist groups in Canadian universities largely focused on an agenda of campus reform, which on occasion extended to non-student ideological issues, black student organizations extended their activism to broader social issues that connected diasporic communities, highlighted racial injustice both inside and outside of schooling institutions, and encouraged black collective action.

²⁰ Agnes Calliste, "Anti-Racism Organizing and Resistance: Blacks in Urban Canada, 1940s – 1970s," in Jon Caulfield and Linda Peake, eds., *City Lives & City Forms: Critical Research & Canadian Urbanism*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 295. Also see: Ibram H. Rogers, *The Black Campus Movement: Black Students and the Racial Reconstruction of Higher Education, 1965-1972* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Steve Hewitt, *Spying 101: The RCMP's Secret Activities at Canadian Universities, 1917-1997* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002); Colin G. Clarke, ed., *Society and Politics in the Caribbean* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1991); B.F. Bankie and K. Mchombu, *Pan-Africanism/African Nationalism – Strengthening the Unity of African and its Diaspora* (Trenton, NJ: Red Sea Press, 2008); Martha Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2012).

²¹ Marcel Martel, "'Riot' at Sir George Williams: Giving Meaning to Student Dissent," in Lara Campbell, Dominique Clement and Gregory S. Kealey, eds., *Debating Dissent: Canada and the Sixties* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 101.

²² Roberta Lexier, "To Struggle Together or Fracture Apart: The Sixties Student Movements at English-Canadian Universities," in *Debating Dissent*, 85, 92.

For Canadian born educator Clara Topkin, increasing access to black student activism dramatically changed her psychological conceptions and aesthetic articulations of black womanhood. Charting the impact that Black Power politics and rhetoric had on her identity, she recalled the 1960s as a time of learning about who she was and embracing her uniqueness as a black woman largely by professing it in various ways to those around her. She explained,

Here I am. All this stuff is going on in the United States, and I am trying to read about it, but I am really really outside of the thing. I remember what a life change it was. My ex-husband was very supportive and was all for me being natural. It was a major decision for me to stop straightening my hair and go natural. That was when I met that guy, that Jamaican. That was my identity crisis period where I am wearing dashikis, having the big Afro, and I had this one American professor that I worked on this geography project with him. He was on the enemies list in America. I got this strange sense that my phone was tapped.²³

Topkin became part of black student activist organizations on her university campus and despite marking African American experiences as outside of her purview, her ‘identity crisis’ revealed the ways in which black Canadian university students adopted African diasporic cultural aesthetics and ideologies. Topkin also characterized a difference within black Canadian activist circles through her relationship with her radical Jamaican friend from Toronto. Topkin’s revelation that her Jamaican friend taught her that Egypt was ‘black’ and exposed her to the origins of black history would symbolize the increasing influence of black Caribbean student populations in shifting the style of black Canadian consciousness and action in the 1960s.²⁴ Topkin was also connected to

²³ Clara Topkin. Interview by author. Audio recording. Etobicoke, On., May 12, 2011.

²⁴ The Black Power era was also characterized by increasing discussions of Pan-Africanism, which connected arts, values and cultural nationalism back to its source, continental Africa. More specifically, Pan-Africanists urged African Americans to view themselves as culturally African and connected early African civilizations and ancient Egypt. Egypt, or Kemet, stood as the original ‘Black’ civilization and a model of early African achievement, and black artistic and intellectual advancement. Molefi Kete Asante and Ama Mazama, eds., *Encyclopedia of Black Studies* (California: Sage Publications, Inc., 2005), 94; Algernon Auston, *Achieving Blackness: Race, Black Nationalism and Afrocentrism in the Twentieth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 112; Patricia Hill Collins, *From Black Power to Hip Hop: Racism, Nationalism and Feminism* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006), 102.

other social justice movements as her radical white professor taught her about American surveillance, satellites that encroached on international boundaries and nuclear reactors controlled by the United States. Influenced by these diverse experiences, Topkin embraced culturally ‘African’ clothing, wore her hair natural, and began reading more books on black history.²⁵

Topkin’s early participation in activist communities would inform her work years later as she gained employment as a librarian in Windsor, Ontario. Here, she began advocating for more materials representing accurate black history and began reconceptualizing how the history of blacks was categorized in her school library. Instead of placing books about black history in one clearly identifiable section, she merged stories about blacks throughout the library and included them as part of Canadian history. For example, Topkin categorized John Brown’s raid on Harper’s ferry under the military history section of the library. Topkin explains, “John Brown came to Ingersoll, which was just outside of London, to try to recruit black men to fight against slavery and the Harper’s Ferry Raid. Well, that’s military. So I would say well let’s categorize this kind of history differently, in a way that will really bring out the significance of the stuff.”²⁶ Her efforts to re-categorize black history came directly from her discussions and

²⁵ Black radicalism, most notably in the United States, also embraced fashion as an expression of black pride and political activism. Emphasizing ‘Black is Beautiful’, the image of the black activist was a person who was culturally, nationally and internationally aware of transnational links between Africa and individuals in the African Diaspora. As a result, the role of Africa within the lives of blacks in the diaspora was represented in the return to natural, more Afrocentric, styles of dress and hair styling. Fashion then was intimately connected to the political activism of the Civil Rights and Black Power movements and black activists used Kente cloth in their clothing designs, and ‘natural’ hair designs called Afros. This represented a rejection of white beauty standards and an affirmation of black pride and identity. J.A. Brown-Rose, “Black Power Movement,” in Richard M. Juang and Noelle Morrsette, eds., *Africa and the Americas: Culture, Politics and History Vol. 1* (California: ABC-CLIO Inc., 2008), 176; Mary Vargas, “Fashion Statement or Political Statement: The Use of Fashion to Express Black Pride during the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements of the 1960s,” *Bridgewater State University Undergraduate Review*, Vol. 5, No. 19 (2009): 95.

²⁶ Clara Topkin. Interview by author.

experiences with black radicalism. She later worked to increase the availability of black history materials in her school, attended community meetings and worked with the Black Education Project, which will be discussed later in this chapter. Working to find herself and remain active in the black radical movement in Canada, Topkin also recognized the contradictions in her belief in activism and her personal preferences. Remembering this, Topkin recollected with laughter that despite having her Angela Davis hairdo, she listened to CHFI easy rock.²⁷ Topkin's marriage to a white man also did not hinder her ambitions to learn more about black history, a point she emphasized in her interview. Instead, Topkin remembered that she used these lessons to help fulfill her purpose in the education field.

Learning about Africa and developing a deeper connection to black history, Topkin's experiences also reflected clear generational differences that highlighted the radical thinking of the period. While embracing revolutionary ideals, Topkin recognized that her philosophy was drastically different from that of her father who worked as a Human Rights officer in the 1950s. Reflecting on why she resigned from her job at the Ontario Human Rights Commission, Topkin remembered, "If I hadn't met this Jamaican or if I hadn't been so full of that black identity stuff... At the time, my dad was in the Federal Human Rights and he would try to tell me: '[Clara], you have to try to work within the system. You have to be cool.' But I wasn't in the mood to be cool."²⁸ Topkin echoed a difference in ideologies that was reflective of larger national organizations headed by older African Canadian leadership. She also conveyed the growing anger and frustration occurring with the younger generation who wanted immediate changes in

²⁷ Clara Topkin. Interview by author.

²⁸ Ibid.

Canadian institutions. It was for this very reason that black community organizations attracted her and other black female activist educators.

‘Anything affecting blacks anywhere, affects us in Canada’: The Continuum of Black Activism in Toronto

Black radical activism in Canada was most characterized by the Congress of Black Writers, organized at McGill University by Caribbean students, and the Sir George Williams Affair, largely because of their international focus, national attention and connections to radical diasporic organizations and leadership in North America, the Caribbean and Africa. Scholar David Austin contends that both events captured national and international headlines as acts of black militancy highlighting racial oppression in Canada. Arguing that Black Power was an international experience, Austin describes the Congress of Black Writers as a four-day conference held between October 11 and 14, 1968, meant to discuss issues of colonization and the legacies of slavery on peoples of African descent. The conference connected blacks from around the world including, Stokely Carmichael, former member of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and prime minister of the Black Panther Party, C.L.R. James, a Trinidadian born socialist, and Walter Rodney, a Guyanese born historian and political activist.²⁹ Austin argues that the militant atmosphere of the Congress helped to set the tone for the subsequent Sir George Williams Affair which began in the spring of 1968 after Caribbean students filed a complaint to the University administration that science professor, Perry Anderson, was awarding them lower grades than their white colleagues for comparable work. Failed administrative action resulted in the two-week occupation of the student computer lab and subsequent fire caused over a million dollars’ worth of

²⁹ David Austin, *Fear of a Black Nation*, 16-17.

damage to the university computer centre. Sparking outrage from both the white and black Canadian community, Sir George Williams Affair shattered ideas of racial harmony in Canada.

While Austin makes a specific case for the importance of Anglophone speaking Montreal blacks in Canada's black radical movement in the 1960s, his discussion of black internationalism describes the ways in which the Sir George Williams Affair impacted blacks in Ontario and other parts of Canada. Austin describes "a kind of international nationalism or a vision of Black nationality that imagines Blacks as part of a global population of citizens, a scattered nation that is embedded in but transcends geographic boundaries."³⁰ The shared experience of racialization and racism in the Americas deeply impacted black Canadians who imagined themselves as part of a stateless nation comprising of both continental Africa and its diaspora. As such, the black radical experience, while gaining notoriety and publicity as an American manifestation, was a global phenomenon.

As an extension of increasing black internationalism, black Canadians remained closely connected to the black American experience. In the summer of 1967, Canadian born educator Nicolette Archer was living in Detroit with her husband while taking summer teacher training courses in Windsor. She often travelled back and forth across the Canada-US border on the bus until race riots in Detroit broke out on July 23, 1967. Erupting as a response to increasing police brutality directed at African Americans, segregated housing and schooling, and rising unemployment in the city, the riots in Detroit lasted five days leading to the deaths of thirty-three blacks and ten whites as well

³⁰ David Austin, *Fear of a Black Nation*, 35.

as thousands of arrests and injuries.³¹ After being denied entry back into the United States for three days, Archer remembered returning to her home in the Detroit in the aftermath of the rioting and looting that took place days earlier.

Oh, yeah. We [Archer and her husband] slept in the bathtub a couple times. Well, slept? We just sat there. We were on a street with double duplexes and we were on the second floor. At night the National Guard would come through and if you lit a cigarette near a window that was like a bullet, because a bullet would make that light, and they would shoot. You could hear the bullets ricocheting. Because the driveways, they were about this wide, you know. And you could hear the bullets. You'd go out in the morning and see the bullets had ricocheted on the brick and you'd see little pieces of brick on the ground.³²

Archer recollected that Ontario residents were fearful that rioting in Detroit would spill over into Windsor. She recalled the increasing tension and surveillance that black Canadian communities experienced and made particular mention of the cancelation of Windsor's Emancipation Day celebration in 1968. Archer's personal experience of the events in Detroit described how some black Canadians were thrust into the racial politics of the 1960s, sometimes unknowingly. For Archer, the growing awareness of radical black experiences in the United States became part of the Canadian psyche and influenced black Canadian communities throughout the province. Manifested earlier in the century through political movements such as Garveyism, the Harlem Renaissance and a growing influence of Pan-Africanism and Black Power, black internationalism was fluid and transnational in nature.

When black Canadians witnessed racial tensions highlighted through the Congress of Black Writers and the Sir George Williams Affair, in addition to media coverage on racial tensions in the United States and Africa, a shift in consciousness impacted on their

³¹ Herb Colling, *Turning Point, The Detroit Riot of 1967, A Canadian Perspective* (Toronto: Natural Heritage/Natural History Inc., 2003), 36.

³² Nicolette Archer. Interview by author. Audio recording, Windsor, On., August 19, 2011.

ideas of political organizing and created a redefinition of community activism during this period. I argue that as an extension of this internationalism, black Canadians reflected a continuum of black activism that shifted back and forth from traditional notions of action, best exemplified through a more moderate stance of lobbying, petitioning, and advocating in the courts, to more radical points of activism which highlighted aggressive, and at times, violent protest and by creating black cultural programs which emphasized racial pride and collective action. Black activists, often younger in age in comparison to the leaders of larger community organizations, and university educated, sought out pockets of radicalism and stressed urgency about political, economic and social changes for racial minorities in Canada. At the same time, some black organizations were also wary of labeling themselves as too radical. Wanting to separate themselves from negative discourses about radical protests like the Sir George Williams Affair, larger organizations like the National Black Coalition of Canada, worked to distance themselves from militant radical movements in the city.³³

For educator Donna Lockette, the clear differences between black Canadian activist ideologies were best reflected within Ontario schools themselves. The increasing tensions and social discourse about racial injustice in the 1960s forced a reassessment of her place within growing discussions about blackness in Canada. As a young woman in high school in Windsor during the 1960s, Donna Lockette admitted to the difficulties she had locating her blackness within North American discourses about black racial pride and militancy. Shortly after the Detroit riots of 1967, Lockette explained that there were growing discussions and ideological divisions about appropriate forms of black activism

³³ Barrington Walker, "The National Black Coalition of Canada, 'Race,' and Social Equality in the Age of Multiculturalism," *The CLR James Journal* Vol. 20, No. 1 (Fall 2014): 167.

happening in her community. In her high school, this manifested itself when peers criticized her for not being dark enough. Describing changing black activism in the Windsor area as divided into two different camps, Lockette opined,

Because the race riots [in Detroit] had happened, a real surge in being aware that you were African-Canadian came about. There were some families that were extremely militant, and some who weren't. I don't even know if the families were militant. I think there were individuals who were militant. I don't know. There were people who knew that there needed to be change[s]. It was like the Malcolm X and the Martin Luther King dichotomy, eh? All going towards the same place, just going about it in different ways, but not that different. I think there were more similarities than people realized at that time. So, there were students who just hated everybody. It didn't matter what colour you were, they just hated you. There were students who wanted change in a different way. The kids who hated everybody, they wanted change too. They just didn't know how to go about creating it. So, it was pretty interesting.³⁴

Describing the difficulty and anger that some black Canadians felt in the Windsor-Detroit area, Lockette explained how increasing black activism not only encouraged militant action among community members, but also created tensions within black communities about appropriate forms of community (racial) representation. While Lockette did not explain whether she was aligned with more militant activism in her school, she described the period as a time of re-evaluation, hurt and healing. More importantly, Lockette charts this continuum of black activism as it played out in Ontario schools. As Lockette emphasized, black Canadians challenged racial discrimination openly but were different from African Americans in their activist approaches and methods.

While the radical activism of the 1960s caused Lockette to examine definitions of blackness within her community, Sheryl Harre saw the use of the term 'Black' as an affirmation of black consciousness that reflected a more politicized rendition of black Canadian activism at the time. Canadian born educator Harre described blackness as a

³⁴ Donna Lockette. Interview by author. Windsor, On., August 20, 2011.

tool of empowerment that helped her draw connections to her ancestry. As a teacher in the 1960s, Harre received criticism from her white counterparts who said she was not black enough. Instead, Harre affirmed her blackness through radicalized language and discourse when she argued that,

Because we started using that word 'Black'. That was not used before the Civil Rights [Movement] in the United States. You were [either] Coloured or Negro. Mostly Coloured over here. And then I would start saying Black. And they'd [say]: 'But you're not really black'. And I would always stop them cold as soon as they said that. And say: 'Yes I am, my mother's black and my father's black, my grandparents are black, I am Black! Now, because the master happened to rape my great great grandmother, and I would never put it as a relationship - raped her. My skin is this colour, because obviously, something, made our skin the colour it is.³⁵

In his discussion of the Detroit riots of 1967, Herb Colling writes that while many black Canadians in the Windsor area preferred the term “coloured” and “negro”, these terms were falling out of favour by 1965.³⁶ Instead, “Black” became a common expression, although not adopted by all black Canadians. Working to reject former hegemonic beliefs that lighter skin tones indicated beauty and privilege, activists in the Civil Rights and Black Power Movement of the 1950s and 1960s embraced Afrocentric models of beauty by affirming and celebrating darker skin complexions. The “Black is Beautiful” motto then encouraged African Americans, and persons of African descent in the broader diaspora, to embrace and praise all shades of blackness. As a result, activist circles took pride in their heritage and appearance and rejected hierarchies based on colour, although societal constructs of shadeism remained entrenched.³⁷ Agnes Calliste’s

³⁵ Harre is lighter in complexion and makes specific reference to this in her discussion of skin colour and blackness in 1960s Canada. In this instance, it is possible that Harre was articulating a more politicized sense of Black identity in her interactions with white colleagues who believed she was not ‘black’ enough. Sheryl Harre. Interview by author. Audio recording, Windsor, On., November 23, 2011.

³⁶ Herb Colling, *Turning Point, The Detroit Riot of 1967*, xiii.

³⁷ Antoinette Marie Landor, “*Does Skin Tone Matter?: Exploring the Impact of Skin Tone on Colorism within Families, Racism and Racial Socialization Among African American Adolescents*,” (PhD Thesis, The University of Georgia, 2012), 16.

discussion of black activism from the 1940s to the 1970s also emphasizes the importance of identity politics, as emphasized through black history and culture, as an important component of Black Power politics in Canada. She explains that because racism was viewed as an issue of identity and culture as much as it was about access to state institutions, the Black Power Movement then questioned the entire social order.³⁸

Harre's increasing knowledge about racial pride and history not only encouraged her to identify as being black, but also to connect the historical legacies of slavery as part of her black identity. While her colleagues associated blackness as something that was reserved for those darker in complexion and from the United States, Harre challenged these white notions of what blackness, in Canada at least, was supposed to be.

In addition, for Sheryl Harre, increasing black activism in the 1960s and 1970s was a response to the ways in which white Canadians denied racial inequality and compared it to the American context. Harre explained,

And they were also comparing [black Canadians] with blacks from the United States, who were far more angry than we were over here. But you felt it though. Or they [white colleague] would say: 'When I see you, I don't see colour.' And that was another thing. You're just another person. I said: 'No. But you have to see colour because if you don't see that I'm a black woman, then you're denying me who I am. I don't have blue eyes and blonde hair. So when you see me you may not think negatively of me, but don't say I don't see colour. [Be]cause everybody sees colour. I see when you come back and you've got a suntan. I see it. (Laughter) So then they would say: 'Oh I didn't mean, I didn't know.'³⁹

Increasing black activism in Canada for Harre ushered in a personal awakening that she used to advocate for herself within schooling institutions. Speaking about the fight for equality and racial pride, black militancy in Canada was shaped by the specific politeness and ignoring of racial difference within the nation. As a consequence, Harre

³⁸ Agnes Calliste, "Anti-Racism Organizing and Resistance," 286

³⁹ Sheryl Harre. Interview by author.

welcomed the changing tone of black Canadian activism and used this discourse to challenge racist assumptions both inside and outside of school settings.

In much the same ways that Lockette and Harre described both moderate and radical forms of black Canadian activism in border communities like Windsor, shifting ideologies about what black activism should look like in the 1960s continued to be debated by black community activists and various cultural organizations with increasing frequency in larger urban centers such as Toronto. By the time Sydney Alfred Williams, a consultant from Toronto, published a brief titled, *The Advent of a Black Power Movement on the Canadian Scene* in 1968, the discussion about changing forms of black activism was well under way. In his brief, Williams reported that a new militancy was developing among Toronto's young non-white population. He believed that these militant non-whites identified with the Black Power Movement in the United States and were empowered to no longer accept their inferior status in the city. As a result of swelling student numbers and increasing political and social awareness, student groups were angry about the existing political order and embraced Black Power rhetoric with a different tone than previously used by black leadership at the time. In his brief, Williams quoted an unidentified young militant leader who changed his support of black equality to a more radical stance when he stated,

Black Power contains a certain finality; a certain terror, the last action by a man who has been irrevocably cornered. And it must be understood by blacks and by whites, that terror and fear, and violence, are constituent parts of a social movement which seeks to reverse all attitudes, the conditions and the livelihoods of one group, at the expense of another group, which rightly or wrongly, is considered by the former group, to be oppressive.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Sydney Alfred Williams, *Brief on The Advent of a Black Power Movement on the Canadian Scene*, Toronto, On, March 29, 1968, 6.

Speaking directly about Black Power politics in the United States, some young militant members in Toronto embraced the violence and fear advocated by some Black Power groups to counter racial discrimination in their city and championed it as part of ‘their’ cause. Calling on black Canadians to correct racial injustice through violence and aggressive protest, this militant young leader cited by Williams expressed his frustration and anger with the conditions of blacks in Canada in a new and distinct way than previously expressed by black Canadian leaders. It is interesting to note that Williams highlighted the fact that this student was once an advocate for peaceful negotiation but had now taken a more militant position at the time the brief was published. His discussion indicated a change in black activism that may have been influenced by age, place of birth, and the rise of Black Power publicity and rhetoric in the media. Williams’ brief largely focused on the generational divide that existed between young black activists and older black leaders in Toronto. While Williams’ brief documented notions of radical militancy on the rise in Toronto, his report largely cited unnamed individuals, excluded his methodology and did not clearly outline the source of his information and research participants. However, what his assessment did indicate was a changing atmosphere and tone among black activists in the city.

Williams also clearly indicated that despite the more radical tone from Toronto’s young black communities, there was no evidence of any organized campaign designed to disrupt the Canadian social order through violence.⁴¹ The young, more militant minded black groups in Toronto, Montreal, and Nova Scotia would continue advocating for a more unified front to combat racial inequality in Canada. To achieve this, they organized large conferences, invited speakers from the United States and Africa, developed and

⁴¹ Sydney Alfred Williams, *Brief on the Advent of a Black Power Movement*, 12.

attended community events and joined organizations such as The Black Students Union of Ontario, the Black People's Movement in York University, and the Afro-Canadian Liberation Movement in Halifax, to address growing concerns about their unequal treatment in Canada.⁴²

In Toronto, the 1971 Black Peoples Conference was one such initiative set to address rising discontent among blacks in the city. Working to mobilize blacks in Canada and provide political direction, the conference helped to establish networks of communication among blacks across the provinces. Spearhead by the National Black Action Committee and the National Council on Black Education and Culture, the conference hoped to unify Canadian-born, West Indian and American-born blacks as "one". It was a clear attempt to move beyond individual or specific community action and mobilize as a large black political body. Including blacks from various geographic spaces, the overall theme of the conference was to "have a free and united Africa, so that all Black people can be truly liberated."⁴³ Sister Akousa (June Ward), one of the main conference organizers conveyed the importance of unity through education at this conference. Akousa explained, "Black people are not homogenous. Even though we work towards the same goal (the liberation of Black people) we have different approaches. We think that education is important... is vital."⁴⁴ Akousa, a first year commerce student at the University of Toronto, believed that the conference would allow blacks to learn from one another and stand together politically to stimulate change. As

⁴² David Austin, *Fear of a Black Planet*, 16-22.

⁴³ Harold Hoyte, "Meet the Dynamic Young Woman Behind Big Conference. Sister Akousa," *Contrast Newspaper*, March 20, 1971.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

part of its connection to Africa, the conference also hoped to send moral and financial support to liberation struggles in Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau.

Given that the basic tenets of Pan-Africanism involved racial solidarity and looking towards Africa as the true ‘homeland’, the desire to unify blacks across the globe was imperative.⁴⁵ Sister Akousa’s activism in the black liberation struggle in her birth home, Guyana, did not conflict with her conception of Pan-African blackness within Canada. In many ways, Akousa’s position spoke to the multiple, intersecting and competing identities that formed black consciousness in Canada. These identities were often boundary-less and spoke across “nations, languages, ethnicities, sexualities and genders.”⁴⁶ It is possible that Akousa believed that this recognition of unity despite difference would allow strong solidarity among blacks in Canada and grant them access to social influence and cultural power.

As a result of a growing political awareness among black communities, over 2000 delegates attended the Black Peoples Conference that emphasized education, housing and employment as problems affecting blacks in Canada. It seemed that the conference advocated two agendas, one that spoke specifically to black Canadian experiences of discrimination, and another that advocated a pan-African stance recognizing the global plight of blacks across the world. Speaker Horace Campbell emphasized that, “anything

⁴⁵ Imanuel Geiss, *The Pan-African Movement: A History of Pan-Africanism in America, Europe and Africa*, (New York: Africana Publishing Co., 1974), 4. Also see: Ronald W. Walters, *Pan Africanism in the African Diaspora: An Analysis of Modern Afrocentric Political Movements* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993); Toyin Falola and Kwame Essien, eds., *Pan-Africanism, and the Politics of African Citizenship and Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2014); B.F. Bankie and K. Mchombu, *Pan-Africanism/African Nationalism: Strengthening the Unity of Africa and its Diaspora* (Trenton, NJ: The Red Sea Press, Inc., 2008).

⁴⁶ Andrea Davis, “A Feminist Exploration in African Canadian Literature” in David Divine, eds., *Multiple Lenses: Voices from the Diaspora located in Canada* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), 250.

affecting blacks anywhere, affects us in Canada.”⁴⁷ According to conference promoters, militant solidarity was necessary in order for blacks to liberate themselves from oppressive systems within their local climates. At the conference, it was clear that black radicalism was prevalent amongst many black Canadians. Speakers at the event remained highly critical of the Canadian government and demanded that black Canadians view issues of education and housing as *political* problems. When Campbell equated the discrimination that blacks were facing as genocide, he referenced Josiah Henson to galvanize his audience into action. Claiming “Henson believed in establishing independent Black institutions and that he had guns to protect his family from the Ku Klux Klan in Dresden, Ontario,” Campbell drew clear connections to racism in Canada, encouraged black collective action through the building of institutions, but also alluded the possibility of using violence to protect black families and communities.⁴⁸ Working to unify diverse black communities, speakers at the conference hoped that collective action would give participants the political collateral, through numbers, to force change, similar to the large mobilization encouraged by blacks in the United States. Still, there was not a focus on violent action but rather collective support to demand change, specifically on an international scale. Furthermore, members of the Black Peoples Conference were supportive of and active in various initiatives in Toronto; this included the Black Education Project, which will be discussed later in this chapter, the National Council on Black Education and the Black Heritage Association, further emphasizing the need for collective thinking particularly about black education.

⁴⁷ “Unity Education, Culture, Positive: Unity and Liberty our Target Campbell Declares,” *Contrast Newspaper*, March 6, 1971.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

Within the context of heightened political activism and increasing state repression, some black organizations in the city worked diligently to remove themselves from anything that was deemed *too* militant. Members of larger cultural organization, such as the Jamaican-Canadian Association, had leaders and mandates that followed traditional forms of activism typical of several African Canadian communities. They wrote petitions, submitted briefs, appealed to newspapers and community members and largely encouraged cooperation rather than violent agitation. Existing alongside the more assertive direction that some black radical groups and individuals were taking, many of these organizations were at odds with one another. On March 1968, the president of the Jamaican-Canadian Association denounced black extremists who were misinterpreting what they saw as the African Canadian experience. M.W. Thompson thought that Black Muslimism⁴⁹ did not have the social, historical, economic and political conditions to develop in Canada. Directly associating black Muslims as Black Power advocates, Thompson argued that, “If we [JCA] fail to provide the leadership, the Black Muslims will step into the vacuum and do irreparable damage to our image and create a lasting discomfort for us and perhaps, for our children.”⁵⁰ Recognizing radicalism as damaging to the image of blacks, Thompson connected this perception to notions of black respectability by calling for black bourgeoisie, middleclass businessmen, intellectuals and academics to support community groups and organizations that would assist in fostering

⁴⁹ Black Muslimism is commonly known as the Nation of Islam, an African American religious movement founded in 1930 by Wallace Fard Muhammad. Black Muslimism is best remembered through its religious leaders such as the Honorable Elijah Muhammad who shaped the Nation of Islam as a movement of black self-confidence and self-help. The movement is most evoked through Elijah Muhammad’s protégé, Malcolm X. C. Eric Lincoln, *The Black Muslims in America. Third Edition* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994), 94-117. Also see: Sohail Daulatzai, *Black Star Crescent Moon: The Muslim International and Black Freedom Beyond America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012).

⁵⁰ M.W. Thompson, “Reflections on Black Power,” *Jamaican Canadian Association Monthly Reporter*, Vol. 6, No. 1. March 1968.

pride and self-respect. He believed that by providing leadership, direction and monetary support, community leaders could help fight issues of racial discrimination.

Speaking largely, but not entirely, to middle and upper class blacks in Canada, Thompson believed that by supposedly raising fear and spreading hate, black radicals would chip away at the freedom and tolerance that was given to all blacks in Canada. Expanding this focus, Thompson made clear the need to differentiate the work of his Association from growing radical sentiments developing in various communities in Ontario. He declared, “As a responsible ethnic Association the record should be set straight on our attitude towards black extremism or radicalism, because our membership being predominantly of persons of African descent, there could be uncertainty, if not confusion, on our stand.”⁵¹ Worried about the increasing publicity that Black Power advocates were receiving in Toronto, Thompson claimed that these individuals were not in the country long enough (an allusion to African American influences as recent and foreign) to make claims about the future of race relations in Canada. Instead, he claimed that through legislation, the Ontario Human Rights Commission, and “the press and other news media that are always ready to expose abuses of individual rights and freedom irrespective of race and colour,” black Canadians could live in racial harmony.⁵² Directing leadership responsibilities to black organizations and black community programs, Thompson believed that encouraging self-respect and pride would serve to unify blacks and help them to remain in mainstream Canadian life rather than isolating them (completely) through extremist black views. Encouraging blacks to continue interacting with Canadians of all races, Thompson believed that black extremism, as

⁵¹ M.W. Thompson, “Reflections on Black Power.”

⁵² Ibid.

expressed through the “psychopathic love of violence or the smashing of heads,” did not have a foothold in Canada.⁵³

Thompson was not the only one to push against perceptions of extreme radicalism in the city of Toronto. Dr. Daniel Hill, director of the Human Rights Commission, believed that his organization could assess and appeal to local and national bodies to end racial discrimination throughout Canada. Hill responded directly to Williams’ brief on *The Advent of the Black Power Movement in Canada* calling it unfounded and unlikely. In a June 25, 1968 letter to the Minister of Labour, Hill wrote,

Movements of violent social protest among negroes in the United States invariably spring from a physical ghetto in which poverty stricken negroes are confined. Fortunately, those few Canadian negroes who live in Ontario are not faced with the overwhelmingly depressing problems that plague American negroes in urban areas. I seriously doubt—given the same population of Ontario negroes and the different social climate that exists here—that a serious Black Power Movement could take hold.⁵⁴

Hill believed that issues of racial injustice in America were largely class based and because Canada did not have large economic disparities and poverty between the races, black radicalism was not present nor did the circumstances to encourage this development exist. In many ways, he was right about the inability of black Canadians to mobilize a larger social movement that spanned across various cities and provinces. Black Canadians did not have the numbers to launch effective boycotts nor did they have consistent and identifiable targets of totally segregated regions like those found in the United States.⁵⁵ Furthermore, these diverse black communities had varying agendas and concerns which may have made a unified movement more difficult to accomplish.

⁵³ M.W. Thompson, “Reflections on Black Power.”

⁵⁴ Daniel G. Hill, Letter to Honourable Dalton Bales, Q.C., Minister of Labour, June 25, 1968. Daniel G. Hill Ontario Human Rights Commission papers. RG 76, F 2130 Daniel G. Hill Fonds.

⁵⁵ Ken Alexander and Avis Glaze, *Towards Freedom; The African-Canadian Experience* (Toronto, Umbrella Press, 1996), 155.

However, Hill's assumptions that Ontario lacked the necessary pre-conditions for a radical movement to take place were questionable.

Hill's focus on a relatively moderate African Canadian organizing tradition was also echoed in larger organizations such as the National Black Coalition of Canada (NBCC). The National Black Coalition of Canada, a communal body concerned with supporting black organizations on a federal level, also recognized growing militancy in Canada and publically denounced the growing radicalism among some blacks in Toronto. In their August 1975 monthly bulletin, NBCC organizers recognized that increasing militancy caused a rift within the black community in Toronto and threatened to spread to other areas in Canada. NBCC claimed that "young socialist radicals" were counterproductive to the mandates that national coalitions were working so hard to achieve. Allegedly working against African principals of respect for elders, NBCC claimed that black radicals rejected the views of the older generation and the organization adamantly claimed not to be aligned with repressive systems on the right or left. They advocated for black awareness through democracy and giving blacks a voice in the decision-making process but criticized black radicals for appropriating issues specific to American politics and lacking the leadership and discipline to lead a successful revolution.⁵⁶

NBCC believed that black radicals only frightened blacks from attending meetings and working towards positive social action. The organization chastised black radicalism as "lacking in seriousness and discipline that is an essential ingredient of any

⁵⁶ Historian Barrington Walker argues that NBCC was influenced by American Civil Rights mobilization and activism and its leaders focused on a path of mainstream respectability rather than on more radical tenants of black activism in the 1970s. Barrington Walker, "The National Black Coalition of Canada, 'Race,' and Social Equality in the Age of Multiculturalism," *The CLR James Journal* Vol. 20, No. 1 (Fall 2014): 166-167.

successful revolution. They are more concerned with image than structure. They cannot build, because building requires a blue print of some kind and for the Toronto ‘radicals’, this is a ‘white thing.’”⁵⁷ Fighting against black publications that claimed that NBCC was ‘selling out’ black Canadians to the government, NBCC considered these accusations a vicious attack on the organization’s credibility and a way to divert government funds away from the organization. In response, NBCC appealed to the government on a national level and claimed that “It is our duty to ensure that all Blacks in the Black community have an opportunity to fulfill their dream of liberation without being railroaded, and frightened into submission to the dictates of ‘radical elitism [sic].’”⁵⁸

Distinguishing themselves from the rhetoric of militancy borrowed from the Black Power movement, it appeared that NBCC, JCA and individual community leaders like Daniel Hill took positions that were characteristic to black activism in Canada since the beginning of the nineteenth century. Typically, these forms of black activism were reflected through the building of churches, schools and mutual aid societies that functioned as places of political and social engagement. Through these organizations, blacks fundraised, fostered collective action, and promoted self-reliance that continued into the twentieth century. It was also common that in fighting against racial discrimination in Canada, black organizations used political lobbying and union movement advocacy rather than other forms of activism such as aggressive agitation.

Historian James W. St. G. Walker argues that a similar process was happening in Nova Scotia in the 1960s. In his discussion of black radicalism in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Walker argues that organizations such as Black United Front (BUF), maintained the

⁵⁷ M.W. Thompson, “Reflections on Black Power.”

⁵⁸ “The Assassins,” *The Spark: Monthly Bulletin of NBCC (Ontario Region)* Vol. 1, No. 1 August 1975.

black community's traditional non-confrontational approach to mainstream racism while incorporating radical innovation. This innovation was reflected in the ways in which black Canadians took charge of their own affairs and set the terms for the community's future development.⁵⁹ Describing early African Nova Scotian activism as an "unaggressive strategy seeking cooperation," Walker reveals that in 1965, Nova Scotia's black communities experienced an increasing militancy, particularly among African Canadian youth, who advocated for a change in consciousness that promoted black pride and African culture. One of Walker's key arguments is that organizations like the BUF brought together moderate and radical streams in Nova Scotian activism to give the black community a sense of worth and power.⁶⁰

While Walker describes the ways in which both radical and moderate forms of black activism co-existed in Nova Scotia, there were members in the city of Toronto who recognized and used the language of black radicalism to mobilize black groups against racial oppression in their communities. Often younger in age than those who had come to represent the black community's leadership, these black activists believed that aggressive action would encourage drastic change and more immediate attention. Burnley 'Rocky' Jones, Rosie Douglas and the Afro-American Progressive Organization all used the rhetoric of the Black Power Movement, invited Black Power activists to their functions, and called to action blacks who were unhappy and tired of their treatment and position in Canadian society.⁶¹ In other instances, some black activists emphasized the need to embrace a black revolution in Canada. For example, the *Toronto Daily Star* reported that

⁵⁹ James W. St. G. Walker, "Black Confrontation in Sixties Halifax" in *Debating Dissent: Canada and the Sixties*, 175.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 186.

⁶¹ David Austin, *Fear of a Black Nation*, 98- 106; "Called Racist by Black, White Radicals Cheer," *Globe and Mail* December 14, 1968.

Burnley “Rocky” Jones, labeled as a black militant by the paper, claimed that Canada’s black revolution was under way and there would no longer be any warnings.⁶² Stating that white society had been warned time and time again, Jones told reporters in Toronto that minority groups were not pleased with the way things were going. He stressed urgency, agitation and most importantly collective action that connected Nova Scotia and Ontario to black radical ideologies.

Jones was not the only one to criticize the hidden nature of racial difference in Canada and call for radical black action. Drawing direct connections to the Black Panther Party, the Toronto based Afro-American Progressive Association (AAPA), exemplified growing radical mandates in the city. AAPA was founded by Norman ‘Otis’ Richmond, a prominent journalist and radio personality who came to Toronto from the United States in protest to being drafted into the Vietnam War, and Aruban born Marxist, Jose Garcia.⁶³ Asking all black organizations to rally around the cause championed by the Black Panther Party, the AAPA asked blacks not to distance themselves from the organization, but rather stand by the Party as brothers and sisters in the fight for racial justice.

Today we see our brothers lighting the way with a fire so bright, so fervent, we can see our manhood, feel it, taste it, and luxuriate in its warmth, its joy, its aspirations. We will have our manhood. This eternal flame roaring in our veins must never go

⁶² Burnley ‘Rocky’ Jones was considered one of the most vocal and militant youth leaders in Halifax’s black community. Dubbed by the Canadian press as Canada’s own “Stokely Carmichael”, Jones was investigated by the RCMP for suspected “subversive activities” in the 1960s. While working with grassroots organizations like Kwacha (‘Freedom’) House, Jones utilized new tactics for identifying and speaking out against systemic discrimination in Canada. Seeking to change black consciousness, Jones reflected an important difference in black activism which advocated for direct confrontation, boycotts, occupations and subtle hints of violence. “No More Warnings - Canada’s Black Revolution Under Way, Says Militant,” *Toronto Daily Star*, Monday February 22, 1971; Kass Banning, “‘Nation Time’ at Kwacha House: The Transitional Modalities of Encounter at Kwacha House-Halifax,” in Thomas Waugh, Michael Brendan Baker, and Ezra Winton, eds., *Challenge for Change: Activist Documentary at the National Film Board of Canada* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010), 191; James W. St. G. Walker, “Black Confrontation in Sixties Halifax” in *Debating Dissent*, 174-5.

⁶³ David Austin, *Fear of a Black Nation*, 42.

out. We must all fan the embers into flames of liberation. The brothers and sisters have lighted the fire with their blood and their lives. This courageous sacrifice cannot and must not die because of the want of outrage or the chains of lethargy. We must support our brothers and sisters. The A.A.P.A. supports the Black Panther Party 100%.⁶⁴

Using words such as manhood, liberation, brothers and sisters, and sacrifice borrowed directly from the tenets of black liberation in the United States, the AAPA believed that support for the Black Panther Party, perceived in popular discourses as one of America's most dangerous organizations, was important for blacks in Canada. Recognizing that one of the ways of quelling black organizations was to divide them and separate their ideologies, the AAPA called for steadfast solidarity in support of black liberation. In her analysis of black organizing traditions in Canada, Agnes Calliste contends that more militant groups, like the AAPA, viewed racial oppression within the context of capitalism, imperialism and the international political economy.⁶⁵ These ideas were distinctly different from other organizations that viewed black Canadian oppression strictly from the lens of race or community development and were often led by professional middle-class blacks.

When the AAPA organized and sponsored a rally to support jailed Black Panther leaders Huey Newton and Clifford Watkins at the Ontario College of Education auditorium in Toronto, some 600 people, including white militants, attended the event.⁶⁶ Three Black Panthers from Detroit spoke at the event and American Panther leader Ron Scott, deputy minister of justice for the Panthers' Michigan chapter, compared Toronto

⁶⁴ Afro-American Progressive Association. An Association Under the Charter of A.A.P.O.O (Afro-American Progressive Organization of Ontario). Memo to All Black Organizations. The Ontario Human Rights Commission received it on Feb. 25, 1970. *Afro-American Progressive Association. RG 76-3-0-787. B444381*

⁶⁵ Agnes Calliste, "Anti-Racism Organizing and Resistance: Blacks in Urban Canada, 1940s – 1970s," 286.

⁶⁶ Martin O'Malley, "Blacks in Toronto," in W.E. Mann, ed., *The Underside of Toronto* (Toronto/Montreal: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1970), 137.

with Watts and Detroit.⁶⁷ The organization went even further and advocated for exclusive black membership within the organization and encouraged a break from alliances with white militants. Holding different ideologies from the interracial collaboration promoted by the JCA, AAPA member Jan Crew criticized white participants at the rally and questioned the parameters of their alliances with the organization. Addressing white attendees at the rally, Carew concluded, “Don’t pat yourself on the back for the beautiful race relations in Canada. You don’t have less race prejudice in Canada, you have less black people.”⁶⁸ In response to the rally, *Globe and Mail* reporters claimed that several speakers touched on the idea of violence but stopped short of advocating for it. The rally held by the AAPA drew strong connections not only to American black militancy but also the potential of black radical protest and rioting happening in various parts of Canada.

AAPA and Rocky Jones adopted a language and activist position that was distinctly different than those endorsed by larger national organizations. They embraced black radicalism and called for a revolution that may have left some fearful of a re-creation of the racial discontent exhibited in the United States. It also represented a clear ideological shift among black organizations, incorporating ideas of collective action and the use of violent and radical language. Therefore, activism in Toronto reflected clear differences between more moderate and radical forms of organizing in the 1960s. However, further analysis into education programs of this time period reveal that there was a continuum of activism that did not clearly separate moderate and radical mandates for black Canadians. Instead, black Canadians debated and adopted some of the black

⁶⁷ Martin O’Malley, “Blacks in Toronto,” 137.

⁶⁸ “Called Racist by Black, White Radicals Cheer,” *Globe and Mail* December 14, 1968.

radicalism discourse, largely from the United States, while also promoting traditional black Canadian forms of organizing, keeping education at the core of this experience.

‘A generation of blacks who will demand respect’: Black Activism Through Educational Initiatives

Despite varying philosophies around black activism in the 1960s, education programs became the place in which moderate and radical forms of black engagement met. Recognizing the educational disparities discussed in chapter two, the Black Education Project (B.E.P) was created in 1969 to “take the responsibility of giving Brothers and Sisters a chance to develop the skills necessary for survival and for building a strong black community.”⁶⁹ Mainly mobilized by young people in Toronto, the B.E.P had volunteers from the Black Students Union at the University of Toronto, the Black Peoples Movement of York University, and the Ryerson Afro Caribbean Association. Many of these students helped with recruiting as well as giving financial assistance to the organization.⁷⁰ In their yearly organizational summary, organizers believed that the B.E.P was created as a result of three main social changes: 1) the rise of pan-Africanist black power, 2) young West Indian immigrants coming from countries recently involved in anti-colonial struggles and 3) the widespread impact of the Sir George Williams Affair.⁷¹ With a mandate to mobilize community members to fight against racism on all spheres, the B.E.P hoped to focus more specifically on the police (mis)treatment of young black people and schools. The B.E.P offered tutoring for various school-aged children as well as assistance to adults who wished to upgrade themselves. A remedial program was

⁶⁹ Maureen Holgate, “Black Education Project: Community Programme Plays Remedial Role in Education of Black Students,” *Spear Magazine*, January 1975 Vol. 4, No. 6, 5.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *The Black Education Project, 1969-1976*, Multicultural History Society of Ontario Archives, BLA 1227-BEP

also added to assist students underachieving in school. The B.E.P also held a specific mandate of catering to the cultural and recreation needs of the community and also facilitated programs in dance, drama, society, arts and crafts. They conducted trips to places of cultural significance for black students such the black farming community in North Buxton and also to the Muslim Mosque in Buffalo.⁷² Through its yearly summary in 1970, the B.E.P called for community rallies and meetings, served as representatives to government bodies on local issues, and also lent support to various groups concerned with struggles in Africa, the U.S. and the Caribbean.

Caribbean born educator Cecily Tremaine remembers the B.E.P as one of the few organizations available to assist blacks in dealing with mainstream forms of racism. She described the organization's strong focus on education as one of her main motivations for joining the project in the mid-1960s. Tremaine recollected,

The mandate of the B.E.P was really to promote the equality of educational opportunities for black children and to make sure they had access, and to make sure they [could] succeed. So a lot of the work was done in the schools. It wasn't like a social agency kind of thing. It was really school specific. It did a lot of work, a whole lot of work.⁷³

According to Tremaine, the B.E.P's emphasis on education marked the organization as distinct from other black cultural groups and reflected an important component of black organizing during this time period. The B.E.P's focus on teaching African history and racial pride also indicated a shift in black collective activism of the 1960s. While earlier black educational advocacy projects often focused on gaining access to mainstream common schools after the 1850s, the B.E.P's work challenged mainstream treatment of black students by teaching pupils their cultural history and

⁷² *The Black Education Project, 1969-1976.*

⁷³ Cecily Tremaine. Interview by author.

promoted political unity to mobilize blacks in the community, largely through Pan-Africanist discourse.

Speaking to the racially charged language of the time, the B.E.P was also careful not to label itself as too radical, despite its strong ties to black liberation and anti-colonialism issues. The B.E.P ran its school programs four nights a week out of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) hall on College Street in downtown Toronto and encouraged student volunteers to recruit members and advocated for culturally relevant materials, resources and programs within Toronto schools.⁷⁴ The significance of the B.E.P's use of the UNIA's hall is of particular importance for this chapter's focus on the continuum of black Canadian activism. Created in 1914, the UNIA started in Jamaica under charismatic leader Marcus Garvey but came to its greatest influence in the 1920s.⁷⁵ The organization soon grew and expanded its chapters in the United States, Montreal, Winnipeg, Halifax, and Toronto. In Toronto, the UNIA was a central hub for black social activity and the organization often rented its hall out to black community groups for social events such as dances, dinners, and meetings. Most importantly, it was a community networking space for black Torontonians until its official closing in 1982.⁷⁶ The UNIA hall became the primary place where the B.E.P held its program and it stood as an independent school initiative created by members of the community.

In discussing the B.E.P's Saturday classes and after school study groups, educator Akua Uku remembered the importance of older community members that who

⁷⁴ Harold Hoyte, "Black School Gets Down to Real Problem," *Contrast Newspaper* November 1, 1970.

⁷⁵ Robin Winks, *Blacks in Canada*, 416-417.

⁷⁶ Carla Marano, "'Rising Strongly and Rapidly': The Universal Negro Improvement Association in Canada, 1919 – 1940," *The Canadian Historical Review* Vol. 91, No. 2 (June 2010): 253 – 254.

helped not only to create the UNIA in Toronto, but also established the foundations for which organizations like the B.E.P were built on. Recalling that some of her family members were part of UNIA, Uku explained, “There were even some of the [family members], they were active and helping to oversee the social activities in the UNIA hall. You know there were many, many people that were out and they just spent a great deal of time trying to help younger people and to pave the way for them.”⁷⁷

Sociologist Althea Prince also echoed the close connections of elders in black Canadian communities, through organizations like the UNIA and the Home Service Association, who nurtured and cared for younger black activists even as they became more radically motivated by the increasing political discourses they heard within their universities.⁷⁸ In her collection of essays on being black in Canada, Prince writes of the changing attitudes among young black activists in late 1960s Canada. While Prince accounts for a change in black activism that reflected a new kind of collective consciousness and rebellion, she argues that this was rooted in the older traditions of members in black Canadian communities. She writes, “We returned to these organizations and African-Canadian Elders again and again, battle-worn from facing down racism in our daily lives. And they would pass on their wisdom and lick our wounds into healing, so that we could go forward again.”⁷⁹ Consequently, while Prince attended the Congress of Black Writers in Montreal and described her consciousness awakened by black radicalism in the United States, her activist work remained deeply connected to older traditions of lobbying for legislative change, petitioning governing bodies, and continued community advocacy work that characterized early black

⁷⁷ Akua Uku. Interview by author. Audio recording. Scarborough, On., July 20, 2011.

⁷⁸ Althea Prince, *Being Black: Essays by Althea Prince* (Toronto: Insomniac Press, 2001), 57-59.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 59.

organizing in Canada. In much the same ways, B.E.P's student volunteers and teachers were also motivated by "Pan-Africanist 'Black Power'" but continued to be influenced by older lessons of black community organizing housed in the UNIA hall.

Despite Ontario's move towards more intervention and investment in education, programs like the B.E.P largely functioned outside of ministry priorities. According to R.D. Gidney, the Ministry of Education at the time largely focused on school consolidation, a homogenized educational administration, and the efficiency of students in Ontario.⁸⁰ This meant that concerns of black Torontonians surrounding the teaching black cultural history and an acknowledgement of specific issues facing blacks students, which included the streaming of black pupils into vocational programs, fell squarely on the shoulders of black Canadian parents and educators. The B.E.P's particular focus on addressing the disproportionate number of black drop outs in Toronto schools, as well as the increased number of students in "opportunity" or vocational classes/schools reflected the growing concern regarding this community responsibility.

As a result, the B.E.P remained a vital source of community activity and strength not only to help advocate for racial equality within the Toronto Board of Education, but also to address absences inside black Canadian communities. Educator Cecily Tremaine emphasized the importance of the B.E.P to Toronto's black community when she recalled,

It [the B.E.P] was extremely important. That committee gave us a sense of strength and self-esteem and it was just a powerful thing. You couldn't put [it] into words. We did a lot of advocacy for parents who didn't know the system and the parents who the system was taking advantage of. We gave them the knowledge and the tools to deal with the system. Because remember the parents who came here were accustomed being single parents in your home. But then all these negative labels were on you. And we knew the system was racist. Because we would look at the amount of black students that were streamlined into these general courses and vocational courses. And then working the

⁸⁰ R.D. Gidney, *From Hope to Harris*, 49 – 50.

community, you'd have young people come and say to me: 'you know Ms.-- , I went to see the guidance person and she is telling me that I should go to McDonalds'. So the Black Education Project, that's what it was - helping black kids to succeed and providing families with the strategies for dealing with this predominantly racist society.⁸¹

For Tremaine, the challenges faced by students in her schools were directly linked to the challenges faced in their communities. As a result of broader racial stereotypes, limited access to employment, and systemic discrimination in schools, the work of the B.E.P often tackled a wide-range of challenges facing black Canadian communities that suited the goals of some black women teachers. In Tremaine's case, the B.E.P was an empowering organization that allowed her to bridge both her professional work and community life. Despite the negative connotations that being in an activist group brought black Canadians at the time, some black women teachers worked with these organizations for several years.

Afiya Oyo also remembered the impact that the B.E.P had on her life as an educator. For Oyo, working with the B.E.P's organizing member, Marlene Green, served as a direct connection to community development and support.⁸² As a volunteer with the B.E.P in the 1970s, Oyo remembered that the organization would help support parents who were afraid to talk to school administrators about their children. For her, the organization not only provided resources about black history and racial pride, it also encouraged parents to participate in their children's education. Oyo described the organization as an important tool for the black community that was influenced by black

⁸¹ Cecily Tremaine. Interview by author.

⁸² Dominican born Marlene Green was heavily involved in solidarity work among black communities in Toronto. Green assisted with a diverse range of social justice projects which included advocating for the Black Power uprising in Trinidad in 1970, working with African students supporting liberation in South Africa in 1968 and helping to raise funds for Caribbean students involved in the Sir George Williams Affair. Green became the B.E.P.'s first executive director and assisted in setting up after school tutoring programs within the organization. Green was eventually hired as a community relations officer with the Toronto Board of Education in the early 1970s and advocated for training programs and organized workshops on racism within the board. Tim McCaskell, *Race to Equity*, 9.

liberation struggles. She explained, “Oh yeah, the project was one to empower blacks through tutoring, etc. It was an empowerment project. Very effective, very well run and supported. At the time the black community needed that.”⁸³

Maintaining clear connections to issues of black liberation, the B.E.P also supported another school initiative in the Thorncliffe Park area. Working in close collaboration with the B.E.P, Thorncliffe Park School was run by the Black Heritage Association and catered to nearly 100 students. Opening on June 20, 1970, students met on alternate Saturdays in the church hall of the Chapel in the Park and the organization also worked to train teachers to meet the increasing demands of black studies in the city. The school ran entirely on donations, volunteer teachers, some of whom were university students, and was not connected to the Toronto public school board. Ron Blake, director of the Black Heritage Association explained that “We [Thorncliffe Park School administrators] have the names of about 30 qualified persons to be trained in the Black experience to take on the additional classes. We have a special training program with seven student teachers at a time from which we draw our staff.”⁸⁴ The school emphasized black history and racial pride as two of its main mandates. Reporter Harold Hoyte clarified that,

The art classes have an African bend. Children draw Black Images, they create in their own minds a self-awareness and self-pride that is not encouraged in the main education system. The result will be a generation of blacks who will demand respect based on their own pride and dignity as a people of tremendous capacity and achievement.⁸⁵

Drawing on the language of Black Nationalism and racial pride, the educational initiatives at the school focused on the cultural and historical relevance of African

⁸³ Afiya Oyo. Interview by author. Audio recording. Etobicoke, ON., June 9, 2011.

⁸⁴ “Record Attendances in Toronto: Black Schools Booming,” *Contrast Newspaper*, April 15, 1972.

⁸⁵ Harold Hoyte, “How Black School Operates,” *Contrast Newspaper*, April 15, 1972.

Canadians. While emphasizing that the school was not the breeding ground for black radicals or racial hatred, school leaders meant to depict the importance and relevance of the black presence throughout history. The language of reporters and school directors clearly indicated the recognition of tensions concerning issues particular to black radicalism. Organizers worked to situate themselves as different from the well-publicized and negatively perceived black radical organizations, in the United States as well as from the growing radical black presence happening in Montreal and Halifax. Yet, the Thorncliffe Park School borrowed the language and initiatives from African liberation movements and black pride that reflected a black consciousness that was radical and politicized in nature. Ron Blake emphasized, “There is no point teaching a child Black pride in school and then he returns to a home of white values to find his parents are themselves not conscious of their heritage, so the seminary department conducts classes for parents.”⁸⁶ Understanding that true education was not only for young children, Thorncliffe Park School leaders worked to educate adult members in the community as well. The clear importance of insisting upon black pride in these educational initiatives stood to combat the marginalization of blacks in Ontario’s public school system.

Despite its more moderate stance in comparison to organizations like AAPA, Thorncliffe Park school also experienced its share of resistance. Members of the Thorncliffe Park school reported that there was a church organist who practised in the rooms during the times it was designated to be used by black students. They further complained that the church secretary eavesdropped on classes and accused the B.E.P’s

⁸⁶ Harold Hoyte, “How Black School Operates”, *Contrast Newspaper* April 15, 1972.

staff members of teaching prejudice.⁸⁷ Racial tensions at the time were heightened by mainstream fears of black militancy and aggression, as reflected through various media outlets in North America. Scholar David Austin highlights this as a fear of a black nation where, at the height of radical black politics in Canada, particularly through the lens of the Congress of Black Writers and the Sir George Williams Affair, mainstream media outlets and community members responded with fear and surveillance as discussions of black radicalism shifted from the United States into Canada.⁸⁸ In fact, the *Toronto Daily Star* reported that FBI assistant director, William C. Sullivan warned Torontonians at a Commercial Travellers Association of Canada meeting that American Black Power advocates had been crossing the border to spread their doctrine of revolution in Canada.⁸⁹ For many in Canada, the fear of violence and hostility, whether or not that fear had any basis, was real. As a result, racial pride presented through the platform of community educational programming was often read as radical in nature, foreign, and an invasive force that needed to be approached with caution.

When Cecily Tremaine joined the Black Education Project because of its mandate to advocate for parents and children in the education system, she also remembered the increased surveillance and policing the organization received as a result of their activist work. Despite this, she continued to work with the organization because she believed the B.E.P helped black children to be successful and provided their families with strategies for dealing with a system that did not speak to their needs. Tremaine noted,

⁸⁷ Harold Hoyte, "Case of a White Organist and Black Students," *Contrast Newspaper*, April 15, 1972.

⁸⁸ David Austin, *Fear of a Black Nation: Race, Sex and Security in Sixties Montreal*, 146; Steve Hewitt also argues that the RCMP maintained strong surveillance of Black Power activists in Canada. According to Hewitt, they were particularly concerned with the ways in which Black Power ideology found 'sympathetic' allies among Quebec separatists and Indigenous advocates of Red Power. Steve Hewitt, *Spying 101: The RCMP's Secret Activities at Canadian Universities, 1917-1997* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 156-158.

⁸⁹ "Black Power Active Here, FBI Says," *Toronto Daily Star*, December 4, 1968.

There was some rumour about them [the RCMP] tapping lines. I mean they [RCMP] felt very threatened by us. They saw us as an activist group. Today, activist is a positive term, but back then, activist wasn't a positive thing. We were like renegades. We were like radicals; are you kidding me? Marching in the streets, championing [against] the white system and thing. Are you kidding me? We were misfits. Now activist is a very prestigious term.⁹⁰

While the organization gave Tremaine a sense of collective strength and self-esteem, the fact that the B.E.P was perceived by some white community members as potentially dangerous was telling of the fragile racial lines that existed in 1960s Canada. Nonetheless, Tremaine's experiences signaled a new sense of black mobilization and advocacy, particularly through educational initiatives, which stood in spite of the potential dangers and surveillance some faced by doing activist work in the 1960s.

With increasing scrutiny and surveillance of black populations in the city, it is possible that Thorncliffe Park school and the B.E.P, spaces where students were taught black self-pride, were viewed as meeting places for black radical thought and indoctrination by the white majority. Thorncliffe Park school and the B.E.P then, needed to be watched vigilantly, for fear that these foreign ideas would pollute the minds of young black Canadians. Educator, Tamara Migrant hinted to this growing tension once the B.E.P gained more support and black cultural organizations increased throughout the city. Migrant revealed that the success and expansion of the B.E.P's programs encouraged others to demand more programming throughout the city. She explained, "With the Black Education Project, because you know as they got one thing. [For example,] I wanted two [after school programs] in York and somebody else in North York would want it and somebody else in Scarborough would want it and some other group. And they [mainstream society] saw these groups [increasing]; they got nervous

⁹⁰ Cecily Tremaine. Interview by author.

about these groups.”⁹¹ Given the increased attention and scrutiny that several activist organizations received in the 1960s, it is not surprising that the B.E.P and Thorncliffe Park school may have been viewed with apprehension and criticism.⁹² Despite the fact that racial pride was emphasized in both programs, Thorncliffe Park school and the B.E.P revealed no indication of violent militancy in their mandates or organizational reports. It seems that their programs were focused on educational racial uplift as radical action rather than the full radical/militant agenda of other black organizations.

After remaining in the community for seven years, the Black Education Project and Thorncliffe Park school also faced many challenges surrounding funding and support. For example, a year after its creation, the B.E.P offices still did not have telephones, adequate textbooks, funds for transportation, and sufficient staffing facilities.⁹³ As early as 1970, the B.E.P reported problems with receiving state funds to run their programs. When the organization received a \$3000 grant from the City of Toronto to implement its first summer programme in 1970, the B.E.P organizers reported that, “The Summer Programme was an overwhelming success, but at the end of the summer certain city councilors made public allegations that the program coordinators had disappeared with the money leading the BEP to establish a policy of not soliciting government money because of the confusing and divisiveness such funding would

⁹¹ Tamara Migrant. Interview by author.

⁹² Steve Hewitt and Christabelle Sethna argue that the RCMP spied on various women liberation groups such as Toronto Women’s Liberation and New Feminists, because the state perceived them as left-wing subversive threats. According to Hewitt and Sethna, the RCMP’s surveillance of women’s liberation groups was part of a larger focus on domestic social movements that ‘threatened’ social order. Steve Hewitt and Christabelle Sethna, “Sex Spying: The RCMP Framing of English-Canadian Women’s Liberation Groups During the Cold War,” in *Debating Dissent*, 135-136.

⁹³ Harold Hoyte, “Case of a White Organist and Black Students,” *Contrast Newspaper*, April 15, 1972.

cause.”⁹⁴ Shortly after this, the B.E.P would request funds from York University’s Black People’s Movement and the Black Students Union at the University of Toronto. In 1972, the problems of funding and support continued to plague both the B.E.P and the Thorncliffe Park School. In response to funding shortages, every black person in the community was urged to support financially the educational initiatives of black Canadian communities and warnings were given through community newspapers such as *Contrast* asserting that a failure to support these programs would fail inner-city youth in Toronto. Members of the community were reminded that failing to support these programs was a failure to invest in the future.⁹⁵ Furthermore, as the B.E.P expanded its community function, particularly by implementing a summer program, more funding was necessary for more staff and programming. Still, the organization continued to struggle to receive financial support and by 1973, the B.E.P would change its policy surrounding government grants and once again apply for state funding to continue its programming. This time, the organization applied and received a \$10,000 grant from the Secretary of State for Multiculturalism in 1973. The concern with receiving government-supported funding was that the B.E.P came under increased bureaucratic scrutiny, particularly surrounding board organization, in order to comply with funding criteria.

Agnes Calliste argues that while black Canadians worked diligently to start educational programs and advocate for change in the education system, they were largely unsuccessful in institutional transformation as one consequence of increased government funding. Calliste argues that, “The state co-opted and regulated the Black Power movement in several ways, for example, through an appeasement policy of

⁹⁴ *The Black Education Project, 1969-1976*, Multicultural History Society of Ontario Archives, BLA 1227-BEP

⁹⁵ Editorial, “Black Schools Deserve Support,” *Contrast Newspaper*, July1, 1972.

multiculturalism and by funding some African Canadian organizing. These state initiatives worked against the continuation of self-supporting militant black Canadian organizations by sidetracking their energies and stifling protest.”⁹⁶ Sociologist Tania Das Gupta describes this as a form of expansive hegemony where the state co-opted the values of minority (read as ‘antagonistic’) groups to justify their agendas of control. According to Das Gupta’s adaption of Antonio Gramsci’s description of expansive hegemony, multicultural policies and programs limited anti-racist initiatives by (re)constructing particular notions of equality that fit in with dominant ideals of Canadian nationalism. Das Gupta argues that this reproduced a particular brand of Canadian racism which was polite, systemic and even democratic.⁹⁷ With this in mind, the state funding of black Canadian organizations shifted the focus of community anger and discontent to fit appropriate program and funding criteria, encouraged the production of ‘official’ organizational documentation that state agents then legitimized and formally selected and ranked as fitting into Canada’s national policy of Multiculturalism. By adhering to these requirements, grassroots agitation and resistance activism (because not all black Canadian organizations were unified) were effectively neutralized. Furthermore, as Das Gupta reiterates, the continued reliance on government funding created and accented competition and resentment among community organizations.

As a result, because the state allocated funding to specific programs and organizations that complied with government regulations, it is possible that the B.E.P,

⁹⁶ Agnes Calliste, “African Canadians Organizing for Educational Change,” in *Educating African Canadians*, 99.

⁹⁷ Tania Das Gupta, “The Politics of Multiculturalism: Immigrant Women and the Canadian State,” in Enakshi Dua and Angela Robertson, eds., *Scratching the Surface: Canadian Anti-Racist Feminist Thought* (Toronto: Women’s Press, 1999), 194-198; Also see: Daniel Schugurensky, “Syncretic Discourses, Hegemony Building and Educational Reform,” in Thomas Clayton, ed., *Rethinking Hegemony* (Australia: James Nicholas Publishers Ltd., 2006).

which needed state support, lost its radical edge. Despite receiving its \$10,000 grant from the government, the B.E.P organizers reported that the 1973-1974 academic year faltered largely as a result of a lack of action from its Board of Directors and also as a result of weakened relationships with other community groups. Although the annual report does not detail the nature of this discrepancy, it is possible that obtaining the grant, may have caused a rift between board members and the broader community. Despite these organizational challenges, it was the advocacy work encouraged by members who worked both within these community groups and schools, some of whom were participants in this study, that eventually pushed the Toronto Board of Education to investigate issues of racism and the quality of education given to minority students within their board. As such, the women who participated in this research project observed and helped to implement the ideological goals set out by these educational initiatives that led to some direct and long-term success.

‘Terror and fear of violence...ought not to form the basis of decisions’: The Toronto Board of Education’s Response to Racially Diverse Communities

The work of black community organizers and parents involved with the B.E.P and Thorncliffe Park school effectively lobbied and increased pressure on Toronto Board of Education to address growing racial inequalities within its schools, especially surrounding disproportionate dropout rates, limited minority educators and its Eurocentric curriculum. Located in one of the most culturally and racially diverse cities in the province, the board had little option but to respond to and support changes within

its local communities.⁹⁸ Standing as the largest school board in the province, the Toronto Board of Education (TBE) was hailed by white educators and community leaders in the 1970s as progressive because of its wide range of initiatives and promotion of educational accessibility.⁹⁹ As a result of its large and diverse student population, the TBE was open to internal examinations of its organization and helped to facilitate several reports and activities assessing their programming and its effect on pupil learning, some of these reports and assessments included discussions concerning the treatment of racial minorities. On May 1974, the Toronto Board set up the Work Group on Multicultural Programs to investigate programs and issues facing the city's multicultural population culminating in a report released in 1976.¹⁰⁰ Emphasizing an Anglo-conformist model, the 1976 report promoted the belief that schools could and should be part of a child's language and cultural development, largely through English as a Second Language classes (ESL).¹⁰¹ In addition to its heavy emphasis on ESL, the Work Group's report also focused on several issues which included: Educational Opportunities Deficiencies, the Maintenance of Original Culture and Language and Community Relations and the Multicultural society. Out of forty-three briefs reviewed by the Work Group, three were from black Canadians. Recognizing that different cultures faced various challenges within its schools, the Work Group believed that it was the school board's job to assist

⁹⁸ Education historian Rose Fine-Meyer argues that the Toronto Board was particularly accountable to its community because many parents in the city were active in community-led programs and advocated with school officials to implement programs for their specific needs. As a result, community newspapers and large advocacy groups created a powerful voice for the expansion of inclusive programming in the Toronto Board. Rose Fine Meyer, "Including Women: The Establishment and Integration of Canadian Women's History into Toronto, Ontario Classrooms – 1968 – 1993," (PhD Thesis, University of Toronto, 2012), 87.

⁹⁹ Toronto Board of Education (TBE) later merged with boards of education in York, East York, North York, Scarborough and Etobicoke in 1998 to form the Toronto District School Board. Helen Lenskyj, *A Lot to Learn: Girls, Women and Education in the 20th Century* (Toronto: Women's Press, 2005), 164

¹⁰⁰ Jim Cummins, "Linguistic Minorities and Multicultural Policy in Canada," 99.

¹⁰¹ Vandra L. Masemann, "Multicultural Programs in Toronto Schools," in John R. Mallea and Jonathan C. Young, eds., *Cultural Diversity and Canadian Education: Issues and Innovations* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1990), 358-359.

students during their critical period of cultural adjustment and recommended booster programs as well as English as a Second Dialect (focusing more specifically on Caribbean students) to help combat some of these issues.¹⁰² As part of its focus on including ethnic minorities into its school programming, the Work Group recommended that curricula provisions be included to reflect the make-up of the community and school demographics.

A critical assertion within the report was its acknowledgment that racism was no longer something that school administrators could look at from a distance but that it was indeed present in the city and within Toronto schools. Despite this recognition, the Work Group was clear to caution that “Terror and fear of violence either as aggression or reprisal ought not to form the basis of decisions to work toward the eradication of racism even though we can predict violence as a consequence of racism itself.”¹⁰³ Instead, the Work Group stressed sensitivity towards issues of racism and called for a task force to help with in-service training sessions, encouraged the creation of credit courses for ESL specialist certification and language study centers, and asked that new Canadian staff members be brought into schools. While addressing the increasing agitation and more radical action towards racial injustice happening in the city, the Work Group still maintained its focus on multiculturalism by heavily emphasizing bilingualism and biculturalism, and privileged linguistic challenges as the root of cultural adjustment issues facing Toronto pupils. Despite this fact, the 1976 report gave black Torontonians the basis they needed to advocate for workshops and research focusing on black

¹⁰² The Board of Education for the City of Toronto, *Draft Report of the Work Group on Multicultural Programs*, May 20, 1975, 53.

¹⁰³ The Board of Education for the City of Toronto, *Draft Report of the Work Group on Multicultural Programs*, May 20, 1975, 98.

Canadians, with a strong emphasis on Caribbean students, in Toronto schools.¹⁰⁴ The suggested recommendations would result in a series of public consultations raising community and institutional awareness about racism in Toronto schools but offered few measures of accountability concerning how these recommendations would be implemented.

By 1977, the Sub-committee on Race Relations was formed by the TBE to address racial inequality in schools and its subsequent 119 recommendations released in 1979 were widely embraced by racial minorities in the city of Toronto.¹⁰⁵ In this report, discussions of racism took on a stronger tone than the 1976 Work Group report; here, the Sub-committee cited specific and intimate cases of racial discrimination faced not only by committee members but also black Canadian pupils and parents. As a result, the Board directly condemned expressions of racial/ethnic biases from trustees, administration, staff or students. In addition, the TBE approved recommendations to intervene on incidences of racial discrimination within its schools, provide opportunities for in-service programs on race relations, create equal opportunity measures for minority educators, and called for the Ministry of Education to include multiracial and multicultural courses in certification requirements for positions of responsibility.¹⁰⁶ The Board also extended its support of initiatives within the community by sponsoring conference fees for teachers and members who wanted to attend various workshops

¹⁰⁴ Tim McCaskell, *Race to Equity: Disrupting Educational Inequality*, 13

¹⁰⁵ Paul Carr, "Transforming the Institution, or Institutionalizing the Transformation?: Anti-Racism and Equity in Education in Toronto," *McGill Journal of Education* Vol. 34, No. 1 (Winter 1999), 59.

¹⁰⁶ Toronto Board of Education, *Final Report of Sub-Committee on Race Relations*, May 1979; Ontario Alliance of Black School Educators, *Voices of Ontario Black Educators: An Experiential Report*, May 29, 2015. Accessed on March 12, 2015

<http://onabse.org/ONABSE_VOICES_OF_BLACK_EDUCATORS_Final_Report.pdf>

conducted by minority groups in the city.¹⁰⁷ According to recommendations in the 1979 Report, it seemed that the Board was moving towards a more aggressive and broader approach to tackling racial issues with its schools and communities. The Report served as one of the first attempts towards creating a race relations policy within the Board and acknowledged that the Board needed to do something about the racial disparities among its students.

Yet, despite these early initiatives, some of which included black Canadians, the Toronto Board of Education prioritized concerns of ethnicity and gender equity in the 1970s with limited engagement in the systemic inclusion of discussions of race and racism. It was not until the late 1980s and early 1990s that anti-racist discourse gained support from the Ontario Ministry of Education.¹⁰⁸ Up until this period, the Board's assessment of racism inside its schools was predominantly marked by numerous, albeit scattered, committees and activities (often at the insistence of black community members). While the board made efforts in the late 1970s to recognize the problems facing racial minorities within Toronto schools, the success of inclusive recommendations made by the Sub-Committee on Race Relations yielded minimal tangible outcomes since no systematic plan of implementation was ever created until the

¹⁰⁷ For example, in 1979, the Board agreed to pay conference expenses for members who chose to attend the National Black Coalition of Canada Conference titled "The Role of Blacks in Canadian Unity" held at the King Edward Hotel, Toronto from April 27 - 29, 1979. *Minutes of the Toronto Board of Education*, Wednesday April 11, 1979.

¹⁰⁸ According to educational scholar Paul Carr, the Ontario Ministry of Education did not develop a formal policy on anti-racism and ethnocultural equity in education until 1993. Prior to this period, racial minority educators played a central role in the implementation of anti-racist education. Carr charts the trajectory and development of racially inclusive policies as follows: 1) In the 1970s, the board focused on class inequality and the changing demographic shift involving students whose second language was English. 2) By the 1980s, a more open discussion of inequity and "race relations" was opening up dialogue, although there was a strong focus on gender equity during this period. 3) By the 1990s, anti-racist discussions were codified and implemented board wide. Paul R. Carr, "Transforming the Institution, or Institutionalizing the Transformation?: Anti-Racism and Equity in Education in Toronto," 59-61.

late 1980s.¹⁰⁹ Instead, the Board responded to public concerns by creating sporadic committees and groups which included the Race Relations Committee, Holocaust Studies Advisory Committee, Anti-Apartheid Conference Planning Committee, Black Studies Committee and other groups in a way that allowed for an entry point to channel concerns about racial inequality, without making comprehensive institutional changes.¹¹⁰

Conclusion

The initiatives created by the Black Peoples Conference, the Black Education Project and Thorncliffe Park school reflected the need for African Canadians to take direct political action against institutional racism in Canada. Hoping to forge alliances with one another, these organizations recognized the global impact of Pan-Africanism and black radicalism. They not only adopted, but also changed, some of the language of the Civil Rights and Black Power movements in relation to the Canadian context. In hopes of being viewed as less militant and less threatening, some of these organizations and activists tried to emphasize a non-aggressive form of racial pride more aligned with traditional forms of black Canadian organizing. It seems that the goal was not to take hold of equality by force, but to unify in such a way that black Canadians could no longer be ignored. Carrying traditions of community uplift and cooperation, larger black organizations were somewhat successful in their appeals for government involvement and acknowledgement of racial injustice, but they also drastically hampered smaller groups who did not follow their more moderate mandates. Indeed, the creation of the National Black Coalition Canada in 1969 was the result of a conference partially financed from a federal grant and larger social organizations such as the Canadian Council of

¹⁰⁹ Paul R. Carr, "Transforming the Institution," 62.

¹¹⁰ Tim McCaskell, *Race to Equity: Disrupting Educational Inequality*, 83; Keren Brathwaite and Carl James, *Educating Black Canadians*, 94.

Churches.¹¹¹ And yet a small, growing group of black Canadians were embracing more aggressive and radical language to encourage black activism in Toronto. This brand of black radicalism in Toronto differed from that which evolved in the United States in its ability to recognize and acknowledge its divergent black populations. Considering Toronto's large and younger Caribbean and African born populations, blacks in Canada were increasingly becoming aware of their varied geographic origins but remained connected to one another as diasporic peoples. The liberation struggles that took place in their 'homelands' also exemplified the importance of collective action and gave them the knowledge to advocate for change within their local regions. However, black radicalism in Toronto also differed from the American context in that it did not foster large-scale social demonstrations, but rather smaller movements that varied depending on demography and the extent to which racial discrimination was felt in local areas. As such, while some in Toronto found issues around which to unify and about which to advocate, several other parallel battles were happening elsewhere in Dresden, Montreal and Halifax. In terms of organizational sustainability, the activism of blacks in Toronto did not reach the international notoriety that other movements in Africa, America and the Caribbean did in part as a result of the constraints and compromises which came from the acceptance of state support and sponsorship.

Despite the challenges and diverging philosophies among black activists in Toronto, black women teachers saw the need to educate black children about their history and instill pride in their communities as a fundamental component to black community organizing. As a result, organizations encouraged and motivated some black women

¹¹¹ "28 Groups Form Black Coalition, Ask Inquiry into Racism in Canada," *Globe and Mail* October 20, 1969; Peter Churchill, "Church Council Votes \$10,000 for Blacks," *Globe and Mail* November 28, 1969.

teachers to advocate and merge their work as classroom teachers with community activism. Through these organizations and increasing racial awareness, participants in this study learned about themselves and the challenges that faced their communities. Essentially, their experiences highlighted the unevenness of the black experience in Canada. The need to tell this story spoke to Rocky Jones' words: "We got to a school system that says nothing about us or to us or for us. That is killing us. If that continues, where will we be? We will be without a people. We will be exterminated."¹¹²

¹¹² *The Black Man in Nova Scotia, Teach-In Report*. St. Francis Xavier University, January 1969.

Chapter Five:

“I personally wasted a lot of time with feminism”: Examining the Limitations of the Canadian Women’s Movement, 1970s – 1980

Now, unions keep us with the people that we have. It’s our responsibility. We’re teachers, to challenge their beliefs, to challenge their value system. As a board, that’s our job to challenge that white privilege thing. It’s not OK. You know what, you are not doing yourself any good in this world economy, and you’re not doing your students any good in this global economy. Perpetuating the white privilege myth, it’s not a myth, it’s a reality. Perpetuating it and keeping it going is not OK. We do it through our hiring practices, we do it through the way we treat children and staff, the way our unions support the staff. We do it in so many different ways. We have to make changes. I don’t know how. But one of the ways in starting is to challenge where we are at right now.¹

When Donna Lockette criticized her teachers’ union - the Federation of Women Teachers’ Associations of Ontario (FWTAO), she described the collective responsibility that all educators and school boards had in challenging white privilege within Ontario school systems. Her critique about unions, largely through the lens of her mandatory membership in the FWTAO, alluded to systemic issues of privilege and racial discrimination within some union organizations. While the Federation served to advocate for the professional status of women teachers in Ontario, Lockette felt that the role of the union went further than this; she believed the organization could not only represent the diverse racial dynamics of its membership base but should also challenge broader social expectations that positioned whiteness as a marker of privilege and power.

As noted in chapter four, twentieth century global unrest by way of liberation movements, which included the fight for civil rights, rights for Indigenous peoples, gay and women’s liberation, and anti-colonial and independence struggles, received extensive

¹ Donna Lockette, Interview by author. Windsor, On., August 20, 2011.

coverage in North American newspapers and media outlets, affecting the consciousness of Canadian citizens in diverse ways. This growing culture of dissent accompanied by the mobilization of older social organizations, as well as the creation of newer national organizations, offered critical perspectives about the ways in which the Canadian state treated its citizens. Alongside these experiences stood an increasing national awareness, rising political gains and surge in state-supported social programs that amplified the fight for social change and equality, which appealed to the individual and community priorities of some black female educators.

Already encouraged by national cultural organizations that criticized racial injustice in the province, some black women teachers were also informed by and participated in the growing women's rights movement in Canada. This chapter will discuss women's organizations involved in Canada's women's rights movement and the impact of second wave feminism on black female educators. By examining the recommendations of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women (RCSW) in 1967 and the mandates of the Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario (FWTAO), this chapter will argue that while many black educators embraced the fight for racial equality, others were ambivalent about universal (white) sisterhood as it was promoted by the women's organizations in the late 1970s and 1980s. Although the RCSW and FWTAO represented only two of the vehicles through which Canadian women organized during this time period, an analysis of these groups offers a lens into Canadian feminism at both the provincial and national levels.

While this chapter will discuss some of the philosophies and specific programs advocated by the RCSW and FWTAO, I chose both these organizations because they

spoke directly to and for female educators and thus highlighted the complexities of women's organizing as it related to black women teachers and education more broadly. Considering that the creation of the RCSW was understood as a significant event in the development of the Canada's women's movement, I use this commission as a way to understand how some mainstream women's organizers created a specific brand of feminism that excluded racially diverse populations. Advocating a liberal feminist agenda by lobbying for legislative changes within the government, the RCSW's conception of 'woman' excluded difference based on the axes of race, class, age, ability, and other categories of identity. The FWTAO similarly promoted women's increased access to education and equal pay but also had its roots in liberal feminism for its emphasis on gender equality within school systems and assertion of women's special capabilities as leaders in Ontario schools.² However, this brand of Canadian feminism, based on white middle-class ideals, gave little access for black women educators, who searched for other avenues to obtain equality based on their multiple forms of oppression.

As discussed in chapter two, white women were members of the social and politically dominant group because of their ability to reproduce and educate responsible Canadian citizens.³ As a result, broader hierarchical patterns of race and sex difference

² Rebecca Coulter argues that FWTAO primarily focused its energy on promoting opportunities for women in leadership positions and on developing materials to combat sex-role stereotyping in Ontario classrooms. She contends that liberal feminism, with some elements of radical/cultural feminism, was strongly promoted within the organization. Coulter explains that teacher federations like FWTAO provided the platform for which teachers would participate in a gender-equity agenda. Rebecca Prigert Coulter, "Gender Equity and Schooling: Linking Research and Policy," *Canadian Journal of Education* Vol. 21, No. 4 (1996): 437.

³ Kristina Llewellyn, *Democracy's Angels*, 45. Also see: Adele Perry, "'Fair Ones of a Purer Caste': White Women and Colonialism in Nineteenth-Century British Columbia," *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (Autumn, 1997), 502-504; Sandra Burt, "Women's Issues and the Women's Movement in Canada Since 1970," in Alan Cairns and Cynthia Williams, eds., *The Politics of Gender, Ethnicity and Language in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 133; Sarah Carter, "Britishness, 'Foreignness,' Women and Land in Western Canada 1890s-1920s," *Humanities Research* Vol. 13, No. 1 (2006): 43-60.

were manifested in Canadian women's organizations in the 1970s that privileged categories of analysis based on white, middle class womanhood and ignored discussions of racism within the feminist agenda. Expanding on scholar Glenda Simms' analysis of the Canadian women's movement, this chapter links white women's privileged status within organizations to the legacies of slavery, colonization and racial domination. As Simms contends, Canada's women's movement was likened to the trope of 'Miss Ann', the white mistress or female of authority within a slave society. Simms argues that 'Miss Ann' was the personification of white women's predisposition to women of colour. Miss Ann's complacency in the "big house" created alliances to white men on the common ground of racism, which enabled her to ignore gendered and racial attacks on black women.⁴ As an extension of this, Simms argues that the inability of Canadian women's organizations to integrate perspectives of racialized women within the feminist agenda revealed distorted power relations which acknowledged that all women were oppressed by their gender, but failed to see that the nature of that oppression was experienced differently by women of colour.⁵

Fundamentally, the ways in which mainstream women's movement advocated for gender equality hinged on notions of whiteness as a signifier of power; this hierarchy of power would affect black women who were not only informed by and participated in the women's movement but also abandoned mainstream women's organizations for their limited view of Canadian womanhood. Revealing everyday relationships of power and inequality, this process of privileging gender equality (as experienced by white women)

⁴ Glenda Simms, "Beyond the White Veil," in Constance Backhouse and David H. Flaherty, eds., *Challenging Times: The Women's Movement in Canada and the United States* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992), 178.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 179.

alluded to what scholar Malinda S. Smith calls the creation of ‘other Others.’ Adopting Sara Ahmed’s use of the term, Smith argues that within the Canadian academy in the 1970s and 1980s, the category of “woman” and gender difference became *the* signifying marker of difference. Smith contends that Canadian equity practices, as shaped by feminist advocacy in academic spaces, engendered a dividing practice that privileged white women as “the Other” and further marginalized non-whites as the undifferentiated “other Others.”⁶ According to Smith, it meant that as white women gained access and power in academic spaces, created policies and produced empirical data to support their everyday experiences, white feminists shifted the gaze from equity (then broadly defined) to gender equity. As such, equity for white women was seen as an achievable goal, while equity for other groups (visible minorities), were envisioned as challenging and something that could happen in the near future.

Smith contends, as do I, that this shift in language is important to note because while Canadian institutions could profess to care about equity and inclusion, administrators could construct these equity practices based on white hegemonic ideas and effectively silence racial minority women from equity discourses constructed on categories other than gender. According to Smith, this meant that for ‘other Others’, equity was about *becoming*, through limited recognition, rather than achieving systemic change.⁷ In much the same ways, while women’s organizations in Ontario moved towards creating gender equitable spaces for (white) women, that space became less open

⁶ Malinda S. Smith, “Gender, Whiteness and the ‘other Others’ in the Academy,” in Sherene Razack, Malinda Smith and Sunera Thobani, eds., *States of Race: Critical Race Feminism for the 21st Century* (Toronto: Between the Lines Press, 2010), 37.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 39.

for black women teachers, who gained some support by virtue of their gender, but struggled to find organizations that addressed their intersectional experiences.

Despite the fact that union participation and lobbying allowed black and white women teachers to join forces and tackle systemic challenges in the education system, some black female educators worked outside of union activities to gain equal access to jobs, government resources, and education in their local school environments. Some research participants felt disengaged from their white counterparts on issues of gender equity and instead adopted some of the discourses and ideals of the black and women's liberation movements to structure and advocate for their own professional status. This, at times, stood outside of and even conflicted with larger national feminist organizations. Ultimately, this chapter will problematize the relationship between racism and feminism as it existed for some black women educators. It will describe the ways in which research participants understood themselves as occupying in-between spaces where they built alliances, borrowed discourses and strengthened identities unique to their personal experiences as black women. As the final chapter of this project, I hope to highlight the uneven and conflicting ways black womanhood was part of, but also stood separate from larger social justice movements in the late twentieth century.

‘We subscribe to the fundamental principle of equality of the sexes’: The Royal Commission on the Status of Women

As stated in earlier chapters, educational institutions shaped and structured ideas of Canadian citizenship based on notions of white, middle-class constructions of masculinity and femininity. The resistance and dissent that characterized social movements beginning in the 1950s forced the Canadian state and its institutions to

expand ideals of citizenship to include more people, namely European immigrants and white women, within limited hegemonic Eurocentric models. However, Canada's Indigenous and racialized populations were still excluded from mainstream agendas and political policies *reacted* to growing discontent among these groups through smaller state-sponsored initiatives rather than restructuring government policies for institutional inclusion.

While many women were still working as secretaries, nurses, clerks, and sales personnel, the high number of women in the education sector made it ripe for women's union participation and increased political action. In fact, between 1965 and 1975 the number of women in unions had increased by 144% allowing for the emergence of a more robust organizational structure to address various women's issues with increasing force.⁸ After various legislative gains such as Ontario's Female Employees Fair Remuneration Act of 1952 which protected women's rights to equal pay, women's organizations increased in number and continued lobbying for various issues such as paid maternity leave, reproductive rights, and the implementation of equal pay within the labour market. There were also changes in access to higher education; by the 1960s, Canadian women comprised one-third of the undergraduate student population and were gaining an increasing presence at the graduate level.⁹ Reinforced by the changing structure of Canadian families, a growing number of the female labour force between the

⁸ Wendy Robbins, Meg Luxton, Margrit Eichler and Francine Descarries, eds., *Minds of Our Own; Inventing Feminist Scholarship and Women's Studies in Canada and Quebec, 1966-76* (Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2008), 11.

⁹ Roberta Hamilton, *Gendering the Vertical Mosaic: Feminist Perspectives on Canadian Society*, Second Edition (Toronto: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2005), 125.

ages of 25 to 34 were either sole or primary wage earners within their homes; this included many women who were never married or no longer married.¹⁰

Despite this, there were still significant differences in the promotional patterns, hours of work, and financial rewards between men and women. Speaking to the discrepancies between legislative gains and the lived realities of women's employment, Canadian women revitalized older organizations such as the Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs (created in 1930), created newer organizations like the Voice of Women (founded in 1960) and began raising the consciousness of women about the social, political and economic inequality they faced on the basis of gender. These organizations were normally led and organized by university women who were dissatisfied with their role in the growing student movement.¹¹ The national organizations that emerged from the efforts of second wave feminists pressured governments to implement legislative changes that would assess and address the changing role of women in Canadian society.

In response to Canadian women's increasing demands for legislative changes to facilitate gender equality, the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada was created on February 16, 1967 to study the status and condition of women in Canadian society. The Commission was established by the government, amidst direct agitation from women's groups and through the advocacy work of Laura Sabia, president of the Federation of University Women who threatened to bring two million women to march

¹⁰ Sandra Burt, "Women's Issues and the Women's Movement in Canada Since 1970," in Alan Cairns and Cynthia Williams, eds., *The Politics of Gender, Ethnicity and Language in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 117.

¹¹ Sandra Burt, "Women's Issues and the Women's Movement in Canada Since 1970," 135.

on Parliament Hill if a Commission was not established.¹² Prime Minister Lester Pearson responded to women's demands and set up the Commission to identify the impact of the economy, education, family, public life and conditions of citizenship on Canadian women's lives. Marking a pivotal moment in the second wave feminist movement in Canada, the Commission provided a crucial piece of documentation specifically assessing the conditions and recommended solutions to the challenges facing women in Canada. Holding a series of hearings in various cities across Canada, the Commission gained wide spread media attention and drew awareness to women's issues nationally. Of the 167 recommendations, the Commission covered a variety of themes such as fair employment practices, changes to the Indian Act and paid maternity leave.¹³

Women on the Commission were white, middle-aged and married. There were no women of color, immigrant, Indigenous or working class women on the Commission and the focus of its recommendations largely represented liberal feminist ideals.¹⁴ The liberal feminist ideals held by women on the Commission and early national women's organizations supported the notion that the state could facilitate gender equality and social justice. As a result, their advocacy work was largely through lobbying for legislative changes within state apparatuses and government bureaucracies. Gender historian Roberta Hamilton notes that early second wave feminists believed that while the state was the locus for patriarchal control, it was also a place where women should be included as equal citizens. Hamilton argued that liberal feminists believed that "through

¹² Marjorie Griffin Cohen, "The Canadian Women's Movement," in R. Pierson, M. Cohen, P. Bourne, and P. Masters, eds., *Canadian Women's Issues, Volume I: Strong Voices* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1993), 5.

¹³ Marjorie Griffin Cohen, "The Canadian Women's Movement," 6.

¹⁴ Gail Cuthbert Brandt, Naomi Black, Paula Bourne, and Magda Fahrni, eds., *Canadian Women, A History*, Third Edition (Toronto: Nelson Education Ltd., 2011), 528.

education and lobbying, archaic laws and attitudes [could] be changed, allowing women to achieve all levels of political, economic and social power.”¹⁵ The Royal Commission's emphasis on legislating equality and close connection to government policies meant that it transferred mainstream ideas of gender equality, largely on the basis of employment, as it was experienced by the white majority with limited discussions about women's access to labour on the basis race, sexuality, ethnicity, ability and religion.

As a result of its focus on legislative change, the Commission came under increased scrutiny and was criticized by some feminist activists for operating as an extension of government control working to limit radical feminist action. For example, Kate Alderdice, socialist and leader of the League for Socialist Action (LSA) and its successor, the Revolutionary Workers League, wrote several discussion papers and articles examining the rights of women, Third World and Native peoples, youth and immigrants, and remained highly critical of the Commission's conservative recommendations.¹⁶ In her essay titled, “Women's Liberation in Canada,” Alderdice criticized mainstream women's organizations for not fighting to end *all* forms of oppression, particularly among Indigenous, Quebecois and working-class people.¹⁷ She claimed that the radical tenets of the women's movement were largely shut out from government sponsored women's organizations and claimed that the advisory council created to act on the Royal Commission recommendations were conservative and did not adequately fight for women's rights. She explained, “The government's aim here is obvious. It wants to set up its own organizations and spokeswomen and pass them off as

¹⁵ Roberta Hamilton, *Gendering the Vertical Mosaic*, 75.

¹⁶ Lis Angus, Introduction to *Various Quills: A Selection of Writings, An Anthology of Essays and Articles by Kate Alderdice, published in her memory 1984*.

<<http://www.socialisthistory.ca/Remember/Profiles/Alderdice-Angus.htm>> Retrieved on May 13, 2014.

¹⁷ Kate Alderdice, *Women's Liberation in Canada* (Toronto: Pathfinder Press Ltd. December 1975), 5.

real representatives of Canadian women, as opposed to the independent organizations created by women themselves. It knows that women like Dr. Cooke and Laura Sabia, “chairman” of the Ontario Advisory Council and long-time conservative party member, will not stray outside the basic framework of government policy.”¹⁸ Alderdice’s critique of the Commission and its conservative mandates exemplified the radicalization of younger members in the women’s liberation movement in Canada and reflected her belief that in order for true equality to happen, a restructuring of society was necessary, one that moved away from government frameworks.¹⁹ While Alderdice placed a spotlight on the overall conservatism and limits of liberal feminist ideologies, her critique of the Commission also highlighted the limits of broader mainstream women’s organizations and the groups of women they proposed to speak for and to.

While the Commission facilitated a national assessment of the challenges facing Canadian women, its discussion of the issues women faced in education is particularly important for the focus of this study. Although the Commission's recommendations made clear references to gender minorities, it did less to address additional categories of difference, which included race, religion, place of birth, and class. Scholar Toni Williams contends that the frequent association of ‘women’ as ‘minorities’ within the report rendered racialized women (who were then ‘minorities’ within the ‘minority’ of women) as invisible and effectively erased ‘minority women’ from the Commission’s conception of womanhood.²⁰ Drawing parallels between racial and gender inequality, the

¹⁸ Kate Alderdice, *Women’s Liberation in Canada*, 18.

¹⁹ Speech was presented by Art Young on behalf of the Political Committee of the Revolutionary Workers League (RWL) to the memorial meeting for Kate Alderdice, 1983. *Socialist History Project* <<http://www.socialisthistory.ca/Remember/Profiles/Alderdice.htm>> Retrieved on May 29, 2014.

²⁰ Toni Williams, “Re-forming ‘Women’s’ Truth: A Critique of the Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada,” *Ottawa Law Review* Vol. 22, No. 3 (1990): 753.

Commission described women as a minority group in need of human rights protection because of their subordinate economic and political status in society. While it seems that the Commission did not seek to intentionally exclude racial and other minority women from its campaign for equality, the particular use and comparison between minority status and gender became an important distinction in the Commission's ability to reflect issues facing (racial) minority women, given its overarching view of white femininity as the normalized category of Canadian womanhood. Instead, the Commission positioned its claims for gender equality by using the language of human rights, as it was articulated by civil rights activists, as well as racial and ethnic minorities in the United States and Canada.²¹

In defining its guiding criteria and principles, the RCSW's report explained that the rights of women were clearly outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and that "all human beings were born free and equal in dignity and rights."²² The Commission made clear that no distinction should be made between men and women and that the goal of Canadian society should be access to equal opportunities for everyone, affording men and women the same rights and freedoms.²³ Commission members reported that, "we subscribe to the fundamental principle of equality of the sexes as

²¹ Scholars Dominique Clement, Will Silver and Daniel Trottier, argue that until the 1970s, ideas of Canadian human rights were firmly rooted in British traditions of civil liberties. In the 1940s and 50s, Canadians largely defined human rights violations on the basis of racial, religious and ethnic discrimination. As a result, early human rights statutes largely ignored discussions of gender discrimination. By the time Ontario's Human Rights Code was implemented in 1962, discrimination on the basis of religion, race, and ethnicity, in accommodations, employment and state services, served to reinforce gender blindness. However, as a result of the social movements of the 1970s, a "rights revolution" led to the Federal Human Rights Act of 1977, which sought to reflect the increasing diversity of human rights in Canada, including discrimination on the grounds of gender. As a result of this, communities of colour accessed the language of human rights in ways that women, including black women, were unable to do until the 1970s. Dominique Clement, Will Silver, and Daniel Trottier, *The Evolution of Human Rights in Canada* (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, 2012), 2, 16, 21-22.

²² *Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada*, Ottawa, September 28, 1970, 209-21, xi.

²³ *Ibid*, xii.

human beings and as citizens and we believe that any action either legislative, corporate or individual which infringes on equality violates a fundamental human right.”²⁴

Although the language of human rights was used by various organizations, the distinction between race and gender, according to Annis May Timpson, was that the RCSW utilized the human rights framework to ensure that “questions about women’s status and rights were seen as credible political issues.”²⁵ However, as chapter four argues, the difficulty in gaining institutional equality through human rights language and legislation for black Canadians continued into the 1980s despite having statutes that specifically addressed discrimination on the basis of race. The separate and distinct identifying categories that black Canadian communities and women’s organizations used overshadowed the intersectionality of oppressions as experienced by racial minority women.

This is not to say that the RCSW completely ignored the presence of racialized women in Canada, but rather that the Commission conceived of race in a particular and limited way. In the section titled “Women Immigrants,” the Commission reported that women’s access to education was limited as a result of language barriers and the difficulties of understanding Canadian society.²⁶ Similar to the educational concerns addressed by Ontario schools in chapter two, RCSW’s concerns around linguistic inequalities largely focused on European immigrants rather than on possible economic and political inequalities that affected Canadian born black women or English speaking black immigrants from the British Commonwealth.

²⁴ *Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada*, Ottawa, September 28, 1970, 3.

²⁵ Annis May Timpson, *Driven Apart: Women’s Employment Equality and Child Care in Canadian Public Policy* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2001), 28

²⁶ *Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada*, Ottawa, September 28, 1970, 209-213.

In emphasizing its discussion of women immigrants, the Commission explained, “many immigrants are handicapped by their inability to understand or speak the prevailing language of the community in which they settle. Learning a new language is especially difficult for women since they are less likely than men to join the workforce immediately.”²⁷ The focus on linguistic rather than on social and cultural challenges facing various immigrant groups may have indicated that the Commission focused on non-Anglophone white immigrant populations and their inability to adapt to Canadian life. What is more telling is that there was no discussion of the racial discrimination and bias within Canadian immigration policies that limited racialized women’s access to employment opportunities in Canada. Furthermore, the report’s revelation that immigrant women were less likely than men to join the workforce immediately negated the migration patterns of Caribbean born black women who entered Canada for employment, their higher participation rates in the labour market and their proficiency in English and French.²⁸

Sociologist Vijay Agnew emphasizes this discrepancy in her critique of the report’s inclusion of immigrant women. Arguing that the report lacked an understanding of the issues facing women of colour, Agnew contends, “They [RCSW] described immigrant women in ways that subordinated them to Canadian women and ascribed a

²⁷ *Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada*, 209.

²⁸ Joseph Mensah reported that in comparison with all Canadian women, the fraction of black women with neither English or French language abilities was less than two percent. Joseph Mensah, *Black Canadians*, 150. Also see: Agnes Calliste, “Canada’s Immigration Policy and Domestic Workers from the Caribbean: The Second Domestic Scheme,” *Socialist Studies* No. 5 (1989): 133-65; Makeda Silvera, *Silenced: Talks with Working Class Caribbean Women and Their Lives and Struggles as Domestic Workers in Canada*; Dionne Brand, *No Burden to Carry: Narratives of Black Women Working in Ontario, 1920s to 1950s*; Peggy Bristow, et. al., “*We’re Rooted Here and They Can’t Pull Us Up*”.

second-class status to them.”²⁹ Agnew explains that the report discussed race and class as special considerations facing immigrant women rather than as integral components to their identity. Describing gender as the only source of oppression facing women, the report, according to Agnew, made discussions of racism invisible and separated experiences concerning immigrant women from sections titled ‘Women and the Canadian Economy’ and ‘Women and the Family.’ Instead, the report emphasized language acquisition as the main barrier facing immigrant women, while ignoring broader issues of racism, sexism, discriminatory immigration policies and access to social services that also influenced equality for immigrant women.³⁰ Similar to the ways in which larger state institutions responded to immigrant populations, the Commission believed that the primary issue facing immigrant women was their inability to master the ‘two founding’ languages and adapt to the Canadian way life.

Consequently, the RCSW addressed immigrant women largely from a Eurocentric framework that maintained racial hierarchies, which largely excluded women of colour. In her analysis of the RCSW, scholar Bronwyn Bragg argues that the Commission was comprised of an elite group of women who were familiar with the language of Canadian nationalism, liberal humanism, and social change through state sanctioned channels.³¹ When the RCSW declared that ‘the full use of human resources is in the national interest,’ they claimed their citizenship rights to the Canadian state, largely through women’s economic contributions.³² The Commission’s claim to nationhood, I argue,

²⁹ Vijay Agnew, *Resisting Discrimination: Women from Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean and the Women's Movement in Canada*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 129.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 79, 128.

³¹ Bronwyn Bragg, “Deconstructing ‘Hegemonic Feminism’: The Emergence of ‘Second Wave’ Feminism in Canada (1965-1975),” (PhD Thesis, University of Toronto, 2011), 67.

³² *Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada*, xii.

hinged on their position as middle-class and privileged white women working within government apparatuses; this claim came at the expense of other discourses within the women's movement such as those developed by radical students and racialized women. In addition, because the RCSW was a government commission, mainstream constructions of Canadian civility positioned white women as representatives of the nation-state and liberal democracy remained entrenched through the Commission's recommendations.

To support this idea, Bragg asserts that women who worked with the Commission used the language and position provided by their culture, society, and social group to address the needs of Canadian women. As a result, "the nation and the commission worked in tandem to secure a particular imagery of the benevolent and just nation."³³ While the appeal of recommendations promoted by the RCSW was to change common oppression for *all* women, its failure lay in its inability to acknowledge the differences among women. The Commission's reports and recommendations would inform public policy for years to come and influence various women's groups, including the Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario, in their quest to create programs and legislation ensuring equality for women. The increasing activism of women teachers' unions who spoke for and specifically to Ontario educators, many of whom were black women, then would also reflect similar essentialized categories of (white) womanhood, as many mainstream women's organizations.

'The duality of the damnation for the black woman': The Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario and its Racial Silences

The Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario (FWTAO) included members who were involved in the leadership of various women's organizations such as

³³ Bronwyn Bragg, "Deconstructing 'Hegemonic Feminism,'" 79.

the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, an organization that lobbied for the implementation of the RCSW's recommendations. The FWTAO supported a variety of issues which included pay equity, prevention of violence against women, and the creation of subsidized daycares.³⁴ Founded in 1918, the FWTAO was created to address the interests of female elementary educators in Ontario and would eventually include all female public teachers under mandatory membership with the passage of the Teaching Profession Act of 1944. Conversely, high school teachers belonged to the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF) which was created in 1919.³⁵ By the middle of the twentieth century, the FWTAO was the only affiliate of the Ontario's Teachers' Federation that specifically represented women, and the only one primarily representing classroom educators.³⁶ Its mandates were firmly rooted in the development and increased status of teaching as a profession through professional development, maternity leave, improved pensions, and equal pay. Given that the majority of interview participants included in this project were elementary school educators, I will focus specifically on the FWTAO's platform and how it impacted some black women educators.

As part of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada, the FWTAO submitted a brief addressing their concerns surrounding the status of women educators in May 1968. FWTAO's brief revealed the ways in which women's educational associations prioritized the voice and concerns of white women while

³⁴ Gail Cuthbert Brandt, Naomi Black, Paula Bourne and Magda Fahrni, eds., *Canadian Women, A History*, 530.

³⁵ Mario Spagnuolo and Larry A. Glassford, "Feminism in Transition: The Margaret Tomen Membership Case and the Formation of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario," *Historical Studies in Education*, 20 (2008): 59

³⁶ Mary Labatt, *Always a Journey: A History of the Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario, 1918 – 1993* (Toronto: Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario, 1993), 129.

marginalizing its racialized members, some of whom were black women teachers. Speaking on behalf of 29,000 elementary public school teachers in Ontario, the FWTAO recommended that greater opportunities be made available for women in leadership positions, tax deductions and assistance with childcare be created for working mothers, equal pay for equal work, and the elimination of discrimination against women. In addition, the organization specifically advocated, “that employers be encouraged to recognize that, until social conditions improve, women like other ‘minority groups’ may actually require special consideration and encouragement to assume positions of responsibility.”³⁷ Despite the fact that black women teachers would also benefit from the legislative gains encouraged by the FWTAO’s advocacy work, I argue that the organization emphasized a particular brand of feminism that prioritized white, middle-class gendered concerns in ways that some black women teachers found unappealing.

Similar to the language encouraged by the RCSW, the FWTAO used the discourse of human rights to claim access to fair employment practices. Conveying their status as second rate citizens, the FWTAO argued that “perhaps women are the slaves of the personages which they have invented for themselves or which have been imposed on them by others.”³⁸ For the FWTAO, this secondary status in society, with a particular emphasis on the labour market, caused many women to be exploited. Drawing on the language of other social justice movements, the FWTAO compared their status to minority groups in ways that obscured issues of diversity within their own membership. The submission also explained that equal treatment of women educators would increase the mobility of citizens and encourage a more national identity. Members of the FWTAO

³⁷ *Brief to the Royal Commission of the Status of Women in Canada Submitted by Federation of Women Teachers’ Associations of Ontario*, May 1968, 5.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.

revealed that, “It is not just the women, but our nation itself that would benefit from the wise application of this human recourse.”³⁹ Taking into account that the majority of FWTAO members were from white, Protestant and middle-class homes, the Federation presented the model female educator almost exclusively on these ideals, despite the growing number of racially diverse professionals and students in Ontario.⁴⁰ Recognizing their own growing numerical and social power, the FWTAO represented female teachers as unitary, ignoring race and class biases within the organization and virtually silencing members who did not reflect the ideal woman teacher.

As a result of the ways in which the FWTAO prioritized white women’s issues, some black women teachers felt excluded from the organization; this exclusion was manifested through the ways in which black women felt they could approach the Federation for assistance, reduced participation from black female educators, and the continuation of racial discrimination within individual school settings. Although racialized educators were smaller in number, they did represent a growing and regularly paid membership base in the teaching community. In fact, the organization acknowledged the existence of black female educators in its organization but largely at a

³⁹ *Brief to the Royal Commission of the Status of Women in Canada Submitted by Federation of Women Teachers’ Associations of Ontario*, May 1968, 7.

⁴⁰ Shirley, Stokes. *The Shortest Shadow: A Descriptive Study of the Members of the Federation of Women Teachers’ Associations of Ontario*, (Toronto: Federation of Women Teachers’ Associations of Ontario, 1969), 80; Leone Kirkwood, “Study Finds Ontario’s Women Teachers Are Mostly WASCs (White, Anglo-Saxon and Canadian-born),” *The Globe and Mail* August 13, 1969. In 1972, the Planning and Policy Analysis Unit of the Ontario Department of Education funded a study examining the characteristics of Ontario elementary school teachers in their schools. Acknowledging that there was no single database detailing the entire elementary teacher force in the province, the Unit collected data from various studies, records and reports and discovered that most public elementary school teachers were white, Canadian and Protestant. They reported that most separate school teachers were white, Canadian and Catholic. More specifically, the report found that in the 1967-1968 year, “87% of members of the Federation of Women Teachers’ Association of Ontario were of the Protestant faith and less than 5% came from countries other than Canada, the United States or the United Kingdom.” Cicely Watson, Saeed Quazi and Russ Jones, *The Elementary Teacher: A Study on the Characteristics and Supply/Demand Relations of Ontario Teachers* (Department of Educational Planning, OISE, 1972), 5.

cursory level, where the presence of black women was acknowledged but no distinction was made between their varying experiences within and across schools. In the history of the FWTAO published in 1987, the organization acknowledged the employment of Eunice Hyatt, the second black woman to attend Normal school in Ontario, and Fern Shadd Shreve who completed London Normal school in 1945, but did nothing to speak about the challenges faced by these teachers as black women in one room school houses. In fact, the book's discussion of black women in its organization began and ended with the small vignettes of Hyatt and Shreve.⁴¹

Scholar Dolana Mogadime also supports this argument in her critique of the FWTAO's marginalization of race related issues. In her examination of the ways in which employment equity affected racial minority women teachers before the advent of racially inclusive legislation in 1992,⁴² Mogadime argues that the Federation's commitment to advocating for the advancement of all women teachers was contradictory because of the organization's universalizing vision of all its constituents as white women.⁴³ According to Mogadime, the FWTAO's failure to engage in discussions of race meant that the organization did not make concerted efforts to interrogate the ways in

⁴¹ Pat Staton and Beth Light, *Speak with Their Own Voices: A Documentary History of the Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario and the Women Elementary Public School Teachers of Ontario*. (Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario, 1987), 85, 139.

⁴² In 1992, the Yonge Street Riots, in response to the shooting of black youth in the city of Toronto, resulted in Premier Bob Rae's commission of Stephen Lewis to assess the underlying issues facing black Canadians. The *Stephen Lewis Report on Race Relations* found that there was a strong presence of anti-black racism in Canadian institutions and called for a Cabinet Committee on Race Relations to meet with visible minority communities to implement system-wide racially inclusive policies. In the education sector, the government issued a policy directive titled, "Development and Implementation of School Board Policies on Anti-racism and Ethnocultural Equity" which required school boards to develop race relations policies and outlined ways to implement these policies. This led to an overarching move towards anti-racism initiatives throughout Ontario schools. George J. Sefa Dei, "Challenges for Anti-Racist Educators in Ontario Today," *Orbit* Vol. 33, No.3 (2003): 3; Also see: Roxana Ng, Patricia Anne Staton, Joyce Scane eds., *Anti-Racism, Feminism and Critical Approaches to Education* (Connecticut: Bergin & Garvey, 1995).

⁴³ Dolana Mogadime, "Racial Differential Experiences of Employment Equity for Women Teachers: One Teacher's Narrative of Resistance and Struggle," *Journal of Black Studies* Vol. 39, No. 1 (September 2008): 90.

which racial minority women accessed employment equity. Also acknowledging the larger numbers of white women teachers in Ontario schools and the FWTAO's membership base, Mogadime contends that the inability of the organization to acknowledge its "monolithic White racial representation of its membership as problematic" and the limited attempts in finding precise numbers of how many minority women existed within its membership was telling of structural forces of racism and classism within the organization.⁴⁴

Instead, the FWTAO's conception of issues faced by racialized women was ascribed to broader discussions of global assistance and aid. Inadvertently, the FWTAO continued the broader narrative of Canada as a nation of French and British colonialists that largely erased and trumped the concerns of racialized peoples within Canada. Maintaining the silence of Canada's racially diverse past, the FWTAO modeled broader social conceptions which portrayed the blackness, as something foreign and attached it to larger projects for global education. For example, the FWTAO offered training and support in Africa and the Caribbean as part of their quest for overseas engagement and global awareness. Included in this global initiative, the FWTAO provided scholarship funds to African women students who wished to come to Ontario to study and in 1964, the organization sponsored two African students working with the African Students Foundation to study in Canada. In 1970, the Federation worked with a delegation of educators at a conference in Monrovia, Liberia as part of their mandate, "to promote the cause of education throughout the world." Commenting on the wonderful experience she had at the conference, Ruth Campbell reported, "The problems of women teachers in Africa are similar to those in the early years of F.W.'s history but more serious. In

⁴⁴ Dolana Mogadime, "Racial Differential Experiences of Employment Equity," 93.

addition, they face others eg. living accommodation, transportations. Their salaries are very low but their fringe benefits which are also not good are more numerous.”⁴⁵ In many ways, the Federation identified with the struggles of ‘Third World’ educators but situated this relationship within a global context that maintained hegemonic ideas of white paternalism and colonialism.⁴⁶ Describing the attractive appearance and friendliness of teacher candidates in Liberia, the FWTAO’s report on African teacher associations was riddled with undertones of moral and racial superiority, as well as hopes for cultural exchange and assistance.⁴⁷

In examining the perceived and real challenges facing African educators such as pay equity, professional training, teachers’ unions, and obtaining adequate resources, the FWTAO’s focus on overseas educational programmes shifted the lens of examination away from black teachers and students *within* the Canadian educational system. While the Federation was aware of issues facing women from Africa and the Caribbean, these ideas were part of the larger global intervention promoted by government bodies that ultimately diminished some of the challenges facing racialized women faced within Canadian borders. This further entrenched a dichotomy that situated white womanhood as Canadian and racialized women as outsiders or ‘foreign’.

On the rare occasion that issues of race were discussed by the FWTAO, they were treated as token forms of inclusion or conveyed as unimportant to its white majority membership. In his 1972 report about the FWTAO’s annual dinner assembly, writer Edward Lynas described keynote speakers Gloria Steinem and Margaret Sloan, who were

⁴⁵ Ruth Campbell, *Report on the Role of Women in African Teacher Associations*. Submitted to FWTAO, 1970. Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections, FWTAO Fonds.

⁴⁶ Directors Meeting 1963-1964. *Memo to the Directors, June 29, 1964 from Mrs. Shirley Stokes, Executive Assistant to FWTAO*, Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections, FWTAO Fonds.

⁴⁷ Ruth Campbell, *Report on the Role of Women in African Teacher Associations*.

invited to talk about women's liberation at the teachers' event. In his piece titled, "The Night Women's Lib Came to Dinner," Lynas reported that Steinem discussed the historical divisions between men and women in North America, highlighting gender discrimination within Canadian schools as demonstrated through the visibility of men in administrative posts and women as teaching staff. He wrote that Steinem received a resounding applause from the audience when she stated, "Women are beginning to realize that it is not they who are crazy. That it is the system that is crazy. And when they do they get angry. We should use that anger to change our situation and that of our sisters."⁴⁸ According to Lynas, Steinem's push to mobilize the FWTAO's membership, particularly around administrative jobs was well received.

Margaret Sloan's stance, on the other hand, seemed to divide teacher-delegates at the dinner assembly. Lynas reported that Margaret Sloan, a black lesbian feminist and editor at *Ms.* magazine, spoke openly about the plight of black women in mainstream society and was not well received by dinner attendees. While Lynas described Steinem as revolutionary, intellectual and attractive, he described Sloan as "emotional, forceful and 'dead-on.'"⁴⁹ Lynas revealed that Sloan was not afraid to call 'a spade a spade' but that most people found her difficult to follow and she polarized the audience. Lynas explained,

First she chastised the Minister [of Education] for his jokes, then she chastised the women for their dressed-up outfits. She talked of the duality of the damnation for the black woman especially. And as she wound-up one particularly deadly, salvo against men, she let fly with the most familiar old English copulative adjective. That did it.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Edward Lynas, "The Night Women's Lib Came to Dinner," *The Educational Courier* Vol. 43 No. 1 (October 1972): 18.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁵⁰ Edward Lynas, "The Night Women's Lib Came to Dinner," 19.

Sloan's criticism of not only men in the audience but also women can be read in a variety of ways: 1) Her critique of the Minister of Education, Thomas Wells, served to directly confront mainstream schooling institutions which limited black bodies through racial discrimination and reinforced male dominance and power; 2) By chastising women who were 'dressed up', Sloan not only revealed differences between women but also highlighted class based assumptions about respectable womanhood, as exemplified through women's clothing; and 3) Her critique of men remained grounded in feminist arguments about patriarchy and sex difference.

While a few members in the audience yelled in approval of Sloan's points, Lynas reported that the rest of the members either chuckled, left in anger and/or were offended. Reporting that the evening ended with a question period, Lynas noted that few were converted to women's liberation and ultimately the session widened the gap between attendees. While Lynas' account also spoke to some gender bias in his reporting, specifically when he described the physical attractiveness of speakers and racist undertones in his discussion of Sloan's 'vernacular phrases,' his discussion of how Sloan was received by the FWTAO members is particularly telling. Sloan's frank insertion of race, and other forms of oppression including class, sexuality and gender, challenged women's liberation as it was conceived by some Ontario educators. The negative reception of Sloan from some members of the FWTAO may have been a result of her unabashed ability to 'call a spade a spade', but also may have been a direct result of her challenges to white womanhood as promoted by mainstream feminists. Despite this, Sloan's discussion of black women's plight was still marked by her position as an African American woman and therefore, issues she outlined may have been viewed as

‘American’ and outside of Canadian geographical borders. Regardless of Sloan’s association with Steinem, it seems that the FWTAO’s organizational focus was not ready to fully align itself with discourses about race.

By the late 1970s, the FWTAO became even more focused on their platform to increase the pay and authority positions of female employees in Ontario schools. The Federation’s demand for more women in administrative positions at schools identified legitimate concerns that needed to be addressed by education administrators. An Affirmative Action Memo submitted by the FWTAO in 1980 described the stark reality of gender discrimination in the education sector. The FWTAO members cited the Ministry of Education 1978 – 1979 employment statistics which reported that 3262 males were employed as principals in the public and Roman Catholic elementary schools, while only 469 women were employed as principals that year. At the high school level, the differences were even greater; that year saw 560 male principals and only 17 female principals throughout Ontario schools. These hiring practices became even more problematic with respect to the number of regular classroom teachers for that same school year. In the 1978-79 school year, 33,020 women were regular classroom teachers while 12,707 men were regular classroom teachers in Ontario elementary schools. The ratio in high school was skewed differently in that 8728 women were regular classroom teachers while 16,818 men worked as educators in Ontario high schools.⁵¹ This indicated hiring discrepancies in Ontario’s schooling system which saw males dominating upper administration duties and high school positions. As such, women represented 68.1 percent of the total elementary school teachers, but only 2.3 percent of them held

⁵¹ *Teachers in Ontario by Employment Status, Sex and Type of Duty, 1978-1979*. Copied from Table 20-20.01, Ministry of Education, Statistics Department, 26/07/09 in Affirmative Action Memo, September 10, 1980, FWTAO. Toronto, ON.

administrative positions. Men, however, represented 31.9 percent of all elementary school teachers but 25.1 percent of them held positions of additional responsibility.⁵² These additional roles included positions such as principals, vice-principals, chairmen, department heads, assistant department heads, and supervisors. While these figures would explain the FWTAO's focus on gender equity, they are less telling about the organization's focus on its members from racial minority groups.

As discussed in chapter four, studies exploring the classification of minority educators did not occur until the 1980s when the Toronto Board of Education reported that although Toronto had a population of about 25 percent non-whites, its schools only had three black principals, no Asians, South-East Asians or First Nations educators at the principal level. Furthermore, only four women were in positions of power at the time, although their race was not specified. The board report also revealed that out of the 36 highest positions within the Toronto Board, only one was occupied by a black Canadian (again, her/his gender was not reported).⁵³

In a later, larger national study examining the demographic characteristics of teachers in Canada, Jean-Guy Blais and Soundiata Diene Mansa Ouedraogo collected data between the years of 1991 and 2001 and discovered that in Ontario in 1991 only 8 percent of the teaching population identified as visible minorities. By 2001, this number

⁵² *Teachers in Ontario by Employment Status, Sex and Type of Duty, 1978-1979*. Copied from Table 20-20.01, Ministry of Education, Statistics Department, 26/07/09 in Affirmative Action Memo, September 10, 1980, FWTAO. Toronto, ON.

⁵³ Danielle Hyles-Rainford, *Bridging the Opportunity Gap: Leadership, Social Difference, Career and Education* (Bloomington, IN: iUniverse, Inc., 2011), 42-43. Hyles-Rainford also reports that TDSB did not produce gender and race-based statistics coupled together until its 2006 Employment equity report titled, *The Comparison of Representation of Visible Minorities in Job Categories: TDSB 2006*. To further buttress this statistical omission, Toronto Board of Education's 1992 survey titled, *A Survey of the 1989-1990 Teaching Job Applicants* revealed that racial minority applicants had a low success rate in gaining positions within its schools. According to Carr and Klassen, the report identified that teacher hiring favoured white females first and that non-white females had a substantially less-than average chance of successful employment within the board. Paul R. Carr and Thomas R. Klassen, "The Role of Minority Teachers in Anti-racist Education," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* Vol. 28, No. 2 (1996):131-132.

rose to 10 percent. Of the visible minority teacher population numbers collected for all of Canada, Blais and Ouedraogo found that 53 percent of these educators were female, and 43 percent were male visible minority educators in both 1991 and 2001.⁵⁴ While Blais and Ouedraogo's data on racial minority educators stands largely outside of the historical time period for this study, they offer a glimpse into the number of minority educators in the province and also the imbalance of statistical reporting which categorized visible minorities and gender as separate and distinct points of analyses.

Despite these discrepancies, the Federation strengthened its resolve and worked diligently to increase the participation of all women in administrative positions throughout Ontario boards. During its annual meeting in 1980, the FWTAO moved to adopt affirmative action as a major five-year goal within the organization. This led to the expansion of principal's courses and the creation of an incentive fund to encourage school boards to adopt formal affirmation action policies for women employees.⁵⁵ Although the FWTAO's push to have women in higher administrative positions did not specifically restrict black women teachers, it largely focused on closing the gender gap between men and women in positions of greater responsibility. Therefore, some black female educators filled departmental quotas, enrolled in certification programs, and obtained extra qualifications to enter the limited available positions for women in upper administrative work as a result of the Federation's advocacy and provincial affirmative action programs. However, women as a whole still faced challenges in gaining

⁵⁴ Jean-Guy Blais and Soundiata Diene Mansa Ouedraogo, "A Cross-Sectional Sketch of a Few Demographic Characteristics of Teachers in Canada," in Diane Gerin-Lajoie, ed., *Educators' Discourses on Student Diversity in Canada: Context, Policy and Practice* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 2008), 38-41.

⁵⁵ R.D. Gidney, *From Hope to Harris*, 162; Barbara Richter, "It's Elementary: A Brief History of Ontario's Public Elementary Teachers and Their Federations. Part 3: Early 1945 to 1980." *ETFO Voice*, February 2007, 4.

significant participation in administrative positions until the 1980s. Historian Cecilia Reynolds argues that despite the increase in state rules, “school organizations merely adapted to such political pressures and ensured that very little overall change in women’s place in the teacher hierarchy would occur.”⁵⁶ Even though there was an increase in women’s participation in administrative positions, they were limited to a select few who were willing to undergo the training, had mentors to encourage them, and the years of experience necessary for these posts.

Educator Marcia Lambert remembered the struggle and limited access that all women teachers had in obtaining upper administrative positions in various school boards. As a result of the need to hire more female administrators, Lambert recalled that she was able to obtain her position as a principal relatively quickly despite the fact that other women needed a significant number of years and experience to reach this status. She explained, “Because remember I am one of the few persons that got into principalship very quickly, and that’s based in all of my work, but the average took about 15 years before they get there.”⁵⁷ While Lambert alluded to the fact that as a result of a strong push for affirmative action by the FWTAO, and that those who were able to obtain the training were promoted to posts faster, she described this experience as atypical. The FWTAO’s action to change these gender discrepancies meant that some black women were approached to enter upper administration and training in their schools because they were seen as potential *female* administrators. Therefore, black women’s access to these posts was made possible in order to resolve gender inadequacies and there is little evidence to show that their participation served mandates addressing racial inequalities in

⁵⁶ Cecilia Reynolds, “In the Right Place at the Right Time: Rules of Control and Woman’s Place in Ontario Schools, 1940-1980,” *Canadian Journal of Education* Vol. 20, No. 2 (Spring, 1995), 141.

⁵⁷ Marcia Lambert. Interview by author. Audio recording, Markham, On., April 15, 2011.

the education sector. This can also be because these inequalities were not yet fully recognized by the FWTAO; it would take persons/organizations that were race conscious to raise these concerns into the late 1980s. Given that the FWTAO focused less on the hiring practices of racial minorities, the concerns and experiences of women concerning racial *and* gender discrimination were largely suppressed under the guise of pay equity and increased female representation in administration.

‘There were a few women, of course, who saw you as a threat’: Black Women’s Involvement with Teachers’ Unions

The Federation’s focus on pay and gender inequality posed problems for some black women educators who did not see their oppression solely structured by the parameters of gender and class. Working to recruit women into positions of responsibility throughout Ontario schools, the FWTAO began running summer leadership courses for its members in 1969, as well as engaging in a variety of other initiatives to equip and encourage women to apply for promotions. When the provincial government introduced policies to improve the representation of women at senior levels of the civil service in 1973, the result was an increase in the number of women in leadership roles in the Ministry of Education.⁵⁸ By 1979, the Ministry of Education established an employment equity unit that worked to address issues facing all women in education, but focused specifically on women in administration.⁵⁹ Thus, it seemed that Ministry was responding to the advocacy work done by women’s organizations and these legislative gains would improve the status of many female teachers. With the success and progress

⁵⁸ R.D. Gidney, *From Hope to Harris*, 162.

⁵⁹ Alison Taylor, “Employment Equity for Women: Toward a Revolution from the Ground Up” in Cecilia Reynolds and Beth Young, eds., *Women and Leadership in Canadian Education* (Calgary, AB: Detselig Enterprises Ltd., 1995), 83.

of various equity programs such as the Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Unit at the Ministry of Education, the “equal pay for equal work” platform became especially important to the FWTAO, who used it to advocate for promotions and increased salaries for women educators.⁶⁰

For some black women, this push for increased women’s participation in administrative positions created some space for interracial and cross gender collaboration, fortified relationships with other female educators, and elevated their social and economic status. Educator Marcia Lambert remembered the North York school board as a growing board where she built positive relationships with several female teachers. The board allowed her to work with diverse groups of women and while she did not consider herself a feminist at the time, her fight for women’s equal treatment in the workforce was reflective of a woman shaped by the growing feminist consciousness arising in the late twentieth century. Lambert believed that as all young women worked towards equal pay and status in educational institutions, avenues for support and collaboration were solidified through women’s advocacy in the teachers’ unions. When describing her experience with the North York school board, Lambert describes,

Mostly women, it was women who were coming into their own. Because at the time the feminist movement was very powerful and so there was a large group of women who considered themselves feminist in thought, if not necessarily in action, they were feminists in their thought. And so the women supported each other actually, and encouraged each other.⁶¹

According to Lambert, even though women of all races were not actively involved with specific activist organizations, her consciousness as well as those of other women were

⁶⁰ Cecilia Reynolds, “In the Right Place at the Right Time: Rules of Control and Woman’s Place in Ontario Schools, 1940-1980,” 141; Hanne B. Mawhinney, “Institutionalizing Women’s Voices, Not Their Echoes, Through Feminist Policy Analysis of Difference,” in Catherine Marshall, ed., *Feminist Critical Policy Analysis I: A Perspective from Primary and Secondary Schooling* (London: The Falmer Press, 1997), 224.

⁶¹ Marcia Lambert. Interview by author.

changed by the awareness of women's rights and liberation. Furthermore, Lambert extended her discussion to describe the ways in which growing female consciousness encouraged by women's liberation facilitated partnerships across racial lines to promote gender, and on occasions, racial equality. While working to build a black educators' group within the North York school board, Lambert remembered being supported by the school director and other women who were fighting for equal representation. She recalled,

And then the women in the system, all women, not just black women, also were pushing to have themselves represented within the system's hierarchy, so women supported other women. [It] didn't matter if you were black, white, blue or yellow. They supported each other. And so the two [race and gendered critiques of board limitations] were happening at the same time.⁶²

As noted in chapter four, mobilization occurring in black Canadian communities and the growing activism in the women's movement created some, albeit limited, avenues of mutual understanding and support among women who were advocating for equality within the education system. The increasing language of human rights promoted by both women's and black cultural organizations may have also contributed to these spaces of collaboration and support. Although Lambert did not remember black men being actively unsupportive at the time, she also made it clear that they were not particularly supportive of women's advocacy, alluding to possible tensions based on gender among black educators.

Her inclusion of black men during this discussion also points to a distinctive marker of difference in black feminist politics which did not separate black men and

⁶² Marcia Lambert. Interview by author.

community uplift from notions of black female equality.⁶³ In Lambert's case, she occupied a middle ground where she built alliances not solely on the basis of race and gender, but rather, on the basis of relationships that encouraged the best access to professional status and social advancement. It is important to note that while Lambert's relationship with women's organizations was largely positive, she was one of the only respondents who discussed a collaborative relationship with FWTAO and other feminist organizations in the 1970s.

Other research participants recollected this process occurring much later in the 1980s as growing schisms within the women's organizations challenged white female representation and leadership. For example, as part of the Federation's push to promote women, June Brand took a course called the 'Leaders of Tomorrow' in the late 1980s where various women from diverse backgrounds were encouraged to take up positions of responsibility within various school boards. Brand recollected,

There [were] about 20 of us, I think that was the max. We met six times down in Toronto at the union headquarters. They [were] prepping women from diverse groups to become leaders in the union. Because, we all know that it is about power; who holds the power and to change who holds the power and to give voice to those who have not had a voice. So, some of the women had gone on and are on the exec[utive] now for ETFO [Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario] or the executive of the Toronto board. And some, like myself, did things at different levels...So, it taught women to become more assertive in how to deal with people [and] how to deal with confrontation. It was really an excellent course.⁶⁴

⁶³ The Combahee River Collective, a black socialist feminist organization in the United States, best exemplifies the insertion of black men within the black feminist agenda. While the Collective spoke to a variety of issues which included abortion rights, healthcare and racism within the women's movement, their "Black Feminist Statement", served as a manifesto which described intersecting experiences of race, gender and class oppressions for African American women. In their statement, the Collective acknowledged the overarching negative reaction that some black men had to feminism but also recognized that black women struggled with black men against broader systems of racism and sexism. Ultimately, the Collective believed that the liberation of all black community members, including women and lesbians, was necessary for true equality to occur. The Combahee River Collective, "Black Feminist Statement," April 1977; Gerald D. Jaynes ed., *Encyclopedia of African American Society Vol. 1* (California: Sage Publications Inc., 2005), 323-324; Also see: Patricia Hill Collins, "What's in a Name? Womanism, Black Feminism and Beyond," *The Black Scholar* Vol. 26, No. 1 (Winter/Spring 1996): 11.

⁶⁴ June Brand. Interview by author.

For Brand, this course created by teacher associations gave her the impetus to voice her concerns and mobilize around equity issues throughout her teaching career. It also encouraged her and her colleagues to work in other institutions and help with the construction of inclusive board policies. More importantly, the advocacy work promoted by teachers' unions allowed some black women teachers the ability to focus on broader systems of power and to fight for changes from within educational institutions.

Despite the fact that by the 1980s black women still remained in the minority of women who occupied administrative positions throughout Ontario schools, the complicated nature of their position within white dominated institutions meant that intersections of race and gender connected in subtle and insidious ways. In some instances, because so few made it into positions of responsibility, these black women educators were highly regarded and moved through the system relatively quickly. Marcia Lambert subtly alluded to this in her discussion about relationships with other white female educators earlier in this chapter. However, Lambert extended her discussion to explain that some black female educators who entered positions of additional responsibility were perceived as threatening because of their ability to be promoted on the basis of their race *and* gender. She explained, "I don't think that it was particularly because I was a black woman, but I think it would have been all women in that position. But because I think the board then, there was within the system support for visible minorities going further. I was also then an added threat."⁶⁵

While Lambert thought that all women would be seen as threatening by assuming male dominated positions, her revelation about the school board's need to hire

⁶⁵ Marcia Lambert. Interview by author.

both visible minorities and women, not only made her threatening to other white educators, but also more valuable to the board. As some school boards came under increased scrutiny from the public and social activist groups concerning equity, Lambert's entry into an administrative position in a shorter length of time may have helped to secure the image that board administrators were adhering to affirmative action legislation and policies. As such, while affirmative action policies were meant to act as a broad approach to increase access to employment and job positions in under-represented communities, namely women, Indigenous populations, visible minorities and those with disabilities, the reliance upon increasing numbers as an indicator of institutional progress may have facilitated the perception of 'quota filling' and tokenistic representations of individuals who could speak to multiple categories of 'disadvantage'.⁶⁶ It also highlighted systemic barriers that created competing interests vying for the limited 'equitable' positions within school boards. More importantly, what this focus on increasing numbers did not do was speak to work place practices and cultures that may have viewed and/or treated these women as unqualified.

To highlight the tensions between perception and practice, Lambert continued to explain that the bonds of 'sisterhood' as advocated by women's organizations, were not always practiced within school settings. Lambert believed that as she worked to move outside of the classroom and into administration, she received negative backlash from her white counterparts. She explained,

There were a few women, of course, who saw you, if you were aspiring to go beyond the classroom or aspiring to be a consultant or a vice principal or principal,

⁶⁶ Carol Agocs, "Affirmative Action, Canadian Style: A Reconnaissance," *Canadian Public Policy* Vol. 12, No. 1 (March 1986): 149-150. Also see: John Hucker, "Affirmative Action Canadian Style: Reflections on Canada's Employment Equity Law," in Titia Loenen & Peter R. Rodrigues, eds., *Non-Discrimination Law: Comparative Perspectives* (The Hague: Kluwer Law International, 1999), 272.

who saw you as a threat. And I think they certainly [did]. I know there were some who saw me as a threat...But I know that once I began to see other opportunities outside of the classroom, there were some white women who were very mean and very negative.⁶⁷

Hinting at the difficulties in building alliances based exclusively on gender, Lambert revealed that some white women perceived black women's chance at promotion and status with hostility and anger. Although it is possible that the limited access women had to administrative posts increased competition among eligible candidates, Lambert's recollection divulged that she was not perceived as a threat on the basis of blackness or gender, but rather because of her positionality embodying both these identifying markers. Consequently, promotions under employment equity initiatives could also be used to delegitimize the credentials and expertise of some black women educators, some of whom had already suffered criticism through the questioning of the legitimacy of their training, as was discussed in chapter one.

On the other hand, the advocacy work of the FWTAO also increased the economic status of the privileged few educators, some of whom were black, who gained administrative positions within their respective boards. In terms of economic stability and professional status, gaining an administrative position meant increased pay and authority within the school boards and their respective communities. For example, the Ontario School Trustees' Council recorded that in 1973-74, secondary school principals in the Metropolitan Toronto school board earned between of \$23,750 and \$25,250; vice principals earned between \$20,500 and \$22,000. In smaller school districts such as the Windsor Board of Education, secondary school principals earned between \$23,000 and \$25,000 if they worked in schools with over 600 pupils; vice principals earned between

⁶⁷ Marcia Lambert. Interview by author.

\$20,750 and \$22,000. In the 1975-76 school year, elementary school principals saw their salaries increase slightly. The Metro Toronto school board principals earned between \$26,100 and \$29,300, while vice principals earned between a minimum of 22,400 and maximum of \$24,000. These rates would fluctuate depending on the level of education, years of service and gender.⁶⁸ The pay increase for administrative positions was a significant difference from the annual salaries of female teachers in 1976 who earned an average of \$15,165.⁶⁹

Colette Bruckner was aware of economic and professional benefits union lobbying facilitated and as a result remained connected to union activity as a school administrator. When asked about her union participation with the FWTAO, Bruckner recalled,

Well I was very conscious of the fact that we were members of the union. So I went to meetings with [sic] salary discussion taking place, voting, accepting or not accepting offers. I think 1985 or 86, there was a big teacher's strike. I was an administrator at the time. I was principal at the time. So I had to come and open the school. I wasn't happy because I didn't like crossing picket lines... But there were lots of meetings, bargaining, voting, representation, lots of activity when you knew. Especially being with the Catholic Board you always had a lot of back and forth because we felt we were poorly paid in comparison to public school.⁷⁰

Bruckner's unhappiness about crossing picket lines acknowledged the alliances that she held with the Federation and her recognition of the benefits the organization offered in terms of maintaining salaries and professional status. By the 1970s, the FWTAO held considerable financial clout and a large enough membership base that allowed the organization to extend training and curriculum programs across the province. In addition,

⁶⁸ Ontario School Trustees' Council, *Secondary School Principals & Vice Principals Salaries, 1973-74*; Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, *Salary Schedules in Ontario Secondary Schools in Effect September 1, 1961*; The Ontario School Trustees Council, *1975-1976 Salary Schedules Addendum*.

⁶⁹ Barbara Richter, "It's Elementary: A Brief History of Ontario's Public Elementary Teachers and Their Federations. Part 3: Early 1945 to 1980," *ETFO Voice*, February 2007.

⁷⁰ Colette Bruckner. Interview by author. Audio recording. Toronto, On., July 6, 2011

the organization helped to fund collaborative programs with the Ministry of Education that introduced professional development activities and supportive resources for classroom educators. The Ministry's resource guide titled, *Sex-Role Stereotyping and Women's Studies*, released in 1977 included study units, resources and teaching suggestions, stood as one of these examples.⁷¹

Bruckner's understanding of the FWTAO's pay and salary benefits situated her experiences alongside those of many other women educators of the twentieth century. According to education historian Rebecca Coulter, women teachers joined the FWTAO activities for a variety of reasons. Some became active participants within the organization because it provided a space for them to build social relationships. Others were encouraged to participate in the union by colleagues and friends. In some instances, women teachers engaged with the organization as a way of "giving back" to the Federation.⁷² Even so, Coulter contends that many women joined the Federation because of its programming and their need to engage in political responsibility. Similarly, it is possible that Bruckner's engagement with the Federation emphasized her recognition that the Federation helped her develop leadership skills and improved her working conditions as an educator. Ultimately, Bruckner may also have been aware that the FWTAO exerted

⁷¹ Rebecca Prigert Coulter, "Gender Equity and Schooling: Linking Research and Policy," *Canadian Journal of Education* Vol. 21, No. 4 (Fall 1996): 435; Also see: Hanne B. Mawhinney, "Institutionalizing Women's Voices, Not Their Echoes, Through Feminist Policy Analysis of Difference," in Catherine Marshall, ed., *Feminist Critical Policy Analysis I: A Perspective from Primary and Secondary Schooling* (London: The Falmer Press, 1997), 203-224.

⁷² Rebecca Prigert Coulter, "'Looking After Ourselves': Women Elementary Teachers and Their Federation," *Oral History Forum/Forum d'histoire Orale*, 24 (2004): 71.

a considerable amount of influence in shaping provincial education policies and made it a point to remain knowledgeable and active in union activities.⁷³

While Bruckner remembered the benefits she received through the Federation's gender equity programs, very few interviewees recollected positive relationships with the Federation and their local teachers' union groups.⁷⁴ In fact, for some interviewees, the push for women in administrative leadership roles moved them out of the classroom where they had some control and expertise and into positions where they had added responsibility, increased constraints and surveillance under Ministry mandates. Educator Clara Topkin felt that moving into administration meant that she had to deal with resistance and hostility from white men who dominated higher positions in the profession. Fearful of additional burdens to her teaching load, Topkin opted to stay in the classroom. She explained,

At the time there was some controversy with some black women thinking that you should be involved with the women's liberation [movement]. But the oppression of women was historical before the oppression of blacks. You can't separate them. They go hand in hand. Like, I never wanted to be the head of a department. Because I knew you would have to deal with white men and there might [be] passive aggressive resistance... So I said thank you, but no thank you.⁷⁵

For Topkin, while the increased surveillance and pressure of entering an administrative position was unappealing, her recognition of the ways in which race, gender and class were constantly intertwined and informed by one another was telling of how she existed in between spaces of knowledge and empowerment, informed by various social movements of the time. The supposed naturalization of separate ideologies,

⁷³ Ibid., 72. Coulter also contends that while many women teachers often discussed described the Federation as a professional organization rather than a union, its work to improve salaries, working conditions, and pensions for its members reflected its activities as a union.

⁷⁴ Out of the 26 women interviewed, 16 reported little to no union activity and only 3 reported being actively involved in the FWTAO, an organization into which they were all automatically included. However, 13 of the women interviewed reported participating in black cultural community activities.

⁷⁵ Clara Topkin. Interview by author.

promoted by distinctive racial and gender movements in North America beginning in the 1950s, did not hold true for Topkin who saw each of those categories as inter-connected. Her hesitation to move into administration may have been her way of resisting broader gendered expectations within the women's movement that encouraged women's move into positions of added responsibility without addressing how racial microaggressions informed these spaces.

Marcia Lambert underlined Topkin's point about male dominance in administrative posts in her description about the support and encouragement she received from male colleagues. In Lambert's case, the predominance of men in the administrative sector, despite union efforts, meant that the few women in these positions often mentored and supported one another. Lambert revealed,

Well at that time, women were not in administration. But there was a strong group of women, who when they got there [board administrative positions], saw that they had to be mentors to other women. Most of them [the early women] were mentored by men. So it was men that mentored them. But I was just not interested, to tell you the truth, in being in administration. I was very happy teaching and I loved teaching and wanted to be there...Anyways, the vice principal there was a woman and the principal was a man and she and I got to be friends...So she was the one who really pushed me into applying for a position outside of the classroom as a consultant within the board.⁷⁶

As evidenced by Lambert's recollection, the FWTAO's advocacy encouraged some black women educators to push for administrative positions that they had never considered before. In many ways it helped propel their careers but also left them disillusioned by the lack of genuine support they had from the FWTAO. Lambert's and Topkin's recollections also represented clear inconsistencies occurring across Ontario schools. Where Marcia Lambert at North York had support from female vice-principals promoting equal access and pay, Clara Topkin in Windsor remained apprehensive about

⁷⁶ Marcia Lambert. Interview by author.

white male dominated spaces that did not offer equal pay for her additional services. For these black women educators, the work done by teachers' unions was potentially paradoxical because it allowed some of them to enter administrative positions, gain increased pay and equal benefits, but it did little to acknowledge and address their specific challenges as minority educators.

'You must know that some ugly things happen[ed]': Black Women in Search of Other Women's Organizations

The silencing of issues of race within some women's organizations and teachers' unions forced black women to seek out and create their own organizations that spoke to their challenges as racialized women. As emphasized earlier in this chapter, despite the advocacy and employment equity stance by the Ministry, racial minorities were still largely under-represented in all administrative positions at school boards throughout Ontario. Given its larger population of minority students and teachers, the Toronto Board of Education exemplifies the limits of representation in Ontario schools. For example, in its comprehensive survey of teaching staff, the Toronto Board of Education found that in 1987, there were only 2 (6 percent) visible minority principals, 6 (11 percent) vice-principals and 214 (9.2 percent) teachers at the secondary level reflecting the imbalance in hiring practices in Ontario schools that still favored white educators.⁷⁷ As discussed in earlier sections of this chapter, little data before 1987 charts racial minority educators within the school system, making it difficult to examine how many black teachers and administrators served in the education system, in relation to minority populations. Since

⁷⁷ Paul R. Carr, "Employment Equity for Racial Minorities in the Teaching Profession," *Multicultural Education Journal* Vol.13, No.1 (Spring 1995): 35.

the board's review of visible minority educators included all racial minorities, the number of black educators within its schools was likely even smaller than the survey suggested.

The ways in which black women negotiated their positionality by disassociating themselves from various liberation movements remained an important component of their identity construction, political advocacy and decision to maintain professional careers as educators. For some educators, the contradictions of the women's movement were offensive and aggravating. For Tamara Migrant, the women's movement and feminism for that matter was a waste of time. Migrant asserted,

We've [black women] made them [white women] our girlfriends, our buddies. We share our ideas. And they [white women] come together? Never. They'll be your friend, but when it comes to this whole other business of job sharing, it ain't going to happen. And if it does, it's the exception. So I wasted a lot of time in feminism because I do believe in the idea. I do believe that doors should be open to women, I do believe that. And I was criticized by black men. Black men hated the whole fact that black women were involved in feminism because they said it subordinates that whole business of race. Well I thought that was stupid because I can hold two ideas in my head at the same time. That was just ridiculous. So I see myself having wasted that time for other reasons.⁷⁸

Migrant's 'in-between' space as a racialized woman meant that she did not solely align with race or gender politics. For her, building bonds around gender did not change the fact that women educators competed for the same jobs and limited administrative positions within school boards. The idea of unity based on a common gendered oppression became a superficial exchange rather than a tangible move towards collaborative change. Instead, Migrant's recollection emphasized the uphill battle that black women teachers faced in trying to gain equal footing within mainstream institutions; it also came at the risk of isolating themselves from black men. Migrant's resistance to containing her gendered politics under the umbrella of racial activism, was

⁷⁸ Tamara Migrant, Interview by author. Audio recording.

an important indicator of her black feminist perspective. Refusing to choose one category of difference, her reflection of time wasted spoke to a longer and difficult battle balancing mainstream institutions and community expectations.

Despite the fact that Migrant also wanted and benefited from the legislative gains that the Federation advocated for (particularly surrounding equal pay and access to positions of power), it seems that the Federation's focus did not meet the priorities of several black female educators at the time, which included immigration, drop-out rates among black pupils, and access to professional jobs.⁷⁹ In fact, Migrant only increased her involvement in the FWTAO in the late 1980s as a result of the organization's shift towards multicultural education and the creation of FWTAO's Equal Opportunity Committee, which focused on the development of anti-racist education.⁸⁰

Migrant's position also reflected the ideals of smaller female consciousness raising groups that included women from diverse racial, ethnic, and sexual orientations. For example, the Black Women's Collective (BWC), mobilized and expressed increasing concern over the priority given to white, middle-class ideas within national women's organizations. Highlighting the struggle of both sexism and racism that they faced in their own communities and wider society, Black Women's Collective was unwilling to abandon their community and culture for the sake of feminist interests; they viewed these concerns as connected to one another and extended this to include black diasporic communities in areas such as South Africa.⁸¹ Scholar and activist Dionne Brand, a

⁷⁹ Lydia Foster, "Unemployed Teachers," *The Globe and Mail*, September 8, 1970; "National Congress Held in Toronto: Women's lib Aids Black Struggle, NDPer says," *The Globe and Mail* April 9, 1973; Lotta Dempsy, "First Congress of Black Women Coming in April," *Toronto Star*, 1973.

⁸⁰ Mary Labatt, *Always a Journey: A History of the Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario, 1918 – 1993*, 169.

⁸¹ Angela Miles, *Integrative Feminisms: Building Global Visions, 1960s – 1990s* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 17.

member of the Black Women's Collective as early as 1983, recalled that while the Collective was working within Toronto's black communities, its members wanted to participate in the women's movement in a way that encouraged change and inclusion. Believing that the women's movement itself should have a broader scope on women's issues, the BWC used International Women's Day in 1986 to promote anti-racism within the women's movement and came into conflict with white women's organizations. Brand explained, "We thought if white women could see racism as structuring their lives too, and not always to their benefit, as limiting their lives, though not the same way it does for women of colour, then that's the moment in which they could embrace the experiences of women of colour. And that is the moment at which they could challenge some of those things."⁸² Noting that while the BWC's challenged women's organizing structures and priorities in the 1980s, Brand remembered that these issues of race and racism were not a priority within mainstream women's organizations.

Much like the members of the BWC, educator Enid Rubin was a strong supporter of black women's issues and joined the Congress of Black Women of Canada as a result of the distance she felt existed between white and black women's organizing philosophies. Initially encouraged to mobilize around issues of gender by the women's movement, Rubin read books and attended meetings to try to understand the challenges women faced as a whole. Living in Calgary before migrating to Toronto, Rubin attended the United Nations World Conference on Women (1985) held in Nairobi, Kenya and went back to Calgary invigorated and recollected the impact that collaborative working had on various women, both black and white, in the city. However, Rubin soon found

⁸² Judy Rebick, *Ten Thousand Roses: The Making of a Feminist Revolution* (Toronto: Penguin Group, 2005), 123.

that attempts at interracial collaboration failed to adequately address her intersectional experiences.

As racialized women and anti-racist discourse gained traction in the late 1970s, some women's organizations attempted to connect with women experiencing multiple layers of marginalization. In the hopes of highlighting the experiences of all racialized women, both mainstream feminist organizations and racial minorities adopted the term 'woman of colour' to speak to interlocking systems of oppression that racial minority women faced. However, this inclusion had its limitations and some black female educators continued to feel disassociated from mainstream women's organizations. As part of her participation in mainstream women's organizations, Rubin found herself constantly having to explain to her white counterparts the legacy of slavery and how racism impacted her life on a daily basis. Rubin soon grew tired of always having to explain the scars of her lived experience and recalled,

But it's like if you're black and you're with some people, you always have to say, oh well this happened to me. And after a while, you have to say: 'Have you heard about racism? You must know that some ugly things happen[ed]. I don't have to give you everything that happened... Come on, go read a book about slavery, read a book about racism and find out that people do hurt! And that nobody is blaming you, but we're saying it's a fact of life, so wake up and understand when I'm saying that there was hurt, that there was hurt.'⁸³

By the 1980s, the mainstream women's movement in Canada was experiencing multiple schisms: socialist feminists criticized the movement for not focusing enough on capitalism and patriarchy as systems which oppressed women, radical feminists wanted to eradicate prescribed gender roles in society and focused on sex stereotyping in literature and teaching materials, and Quebecois women worked to connect their feminist

⁸³ Enid Rubin. Interview by author.

demands with nationalist ideas.⁸⁴ Racial minorities chastised the movement for the exclusion of discussions of racism and created organizations like the Immigrant and Visible Minority Women of Canada, which included immigrant, Indigenous, South Asian and black women to develop anti-racist discourse within the movement. Anti-racist discourse worked to discuss the multiple political and social constructions of race that systematically left visible minorities disadvantaged.⁸⁵ Forcing the women's movement to examine definitions of universal sisterhood, anti-racist organizers demanded inclusion and the examination of the challenges they faced as visible minorities.

Speaking to the growing anti-racist discourse happening in the 1980s, Enid Rubin challenged women's organizations that tried to tackle issues of racism by constantly questioning the few marginalized black women within its membership. While her white colleagues expressed that they understood her struggle, Rubin remained adamant about their inability to truly understand life as a black woman. Rubin's position as an "outsider within" meant that she was constantly being judged by her white feminist counterparts and forced to relive painful experiences for the sake of possible interracial collaboration rather than systemic change. Scholar Vijay Agnew describes this as tokenism, where racial minorities were accommodated within mainstream institutions in order to give the appearance of inclusion and to avert accusations of discrimination. Agnew contends that while racialized women were placed within organizations, their identities and concerns were largely left unacknowledged, leaving many to feel as if they were part of

⁸⁴ Gail Cuthbert Brant, et al., *Canadian Women: A History*, Third edition, 532-545; Roberta Hamilton, *Gendering the Vertical Mosaic*, 94-114.

⁸⁵ Calliste, Agnes, George J. Sefa Dei, eds., *Anti-Racist Feminism: Critical Race and Gender Studies*. (Halifax, Nova Scotia: Fernwood Publishing, 2000), 21.

somebody's private zoo.⁸⁶ As such, when Rubin was included in (white) women's organizations, she felt as if her participation stood not as an integral part of the movement, but rather that she served as a storyteller of wrongs done to black women. Rubin's constant reliving and retelling of issues of racism served as a form of oppression in which her experiences were an object of display rather than a catalyst to force structural changes within the organization. This type of 'inclusion' became characteristic of some mainstream women's organizations throughout the twentieth century.

In her discussion of women's anti-racist organizing in the 1980s, Sarita Srivastava describes what she calls the *'let's talk' approach* which produced a controlled space for the expression and suppression of knowledge and feelings about racism. According to Srivastava, the 'let's talk' approach allowed for social movement activists to discuss anti-racism without making organizational changes in response to these testimonies. Similar to the sentiments expressed by Rubin, Srivastava argues that, "Typically, non-whites are expected to disclose stories of racism, while whites share their feelings of being shocked, affronted, racists or non-racist, and so on."⁸⁷ Therefore, when Rubin was asked to tell her story, mainstream women's organizations shifted the dialogue from institutional change to talking and listening, essentially limiting the potential for material change. As such, even in moments of so-called inclusion, some black female educators still felt disconnected from and perhaps even exploited by various parts of the women's movement.

This sentiment of disconnection from larger women's organizations extended to teachers' unions as well. Some black women educators not only felt disconnected from

⁸⁶ Vijay Agnew, *Resisting Discrimination*, 76.

⁸⁷ Sarita Srivastava, "Tears, Fears and Careers; Anti-racism and Emotion in Social Movement Organizations," *The Canadian Journal of Sociology* Vol. 31, No. 1, (Winter 2006): 66.

women's union activity because of ideological differences but they also felt largely unsupported by the FWTAO. Donna Lockette tried to be active in the union but felt that the union did not support her and hinted to racial discrimination as the reason for this.

Lockette explained,

I remember when I was at B--[school], there was a guy who really gave me some real issues and I felt the union supported him and not me. I talked to the union about it and I wasn't happy with the union's response. I got more support from my superintendent than from the Federation. It was not a nice situation. Then, after he and I had a conflict, he went after the principal who was a visible minority woman. He was horrible to her. He was awful. He would get his little cronies together and have secret meetings. They tried to get her kicked out of the school. It was absolutely ridiculous. I remember when I didn't feel like I was being supported I told the union. I said: 'you know that white dude who is harassing me. You are supporting him. Black woman, you are not supporting me. We have a problem here.' I remember that H-- was the V[ice]P[rincipal] of the Federation at the time and she is my cousin. She took me seriously. She listened to what I said. I don't think she could do anything about it, but she listened to what I said.⁸⁸

Lockette's critique of the Federation's lack of support specifically positions the multiple ways black women teachers experienced discrimination within schools. While she felt that the FWTAO was supposed to protect her from all forms of harassment in the workplace, her connection to the principal who was also a racial minority woman reveals the limitations of the FWTAO's ability to create equitable spaces for all women.

Lockette would eventually participate in volunteer activities for the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario once she saw that the union was conducting more anti-racist initiatives. Lockette's discussion highlighted the ways she believed that the Federation did not hold her intersectional experiences as priority, or did not adequately know how to address them. Despite the fact that the initial conflict was with Lockette, her recollection that her male colleague also attacked the principal, who was also a racialized woman, indicated her awareness of racial discrimination within schooling institutions that did not

⁸⁸ Donna Lockette, Interview by author.

privilege workplace hierarchies. The fact that Lockette remembered that the union did not support her as a black woman is important for identifying the ways in which she felt (dis)connected to the organization. In her final thoughts about the union, Lockette explained,

Even though their [FWTAO] main statement has to do with, you know, at the beginning of all their meetings, they have a statement where no one will be allowed to be discriminated against. I didn't find that to be the case...it wasn't something that I got a lot of strength from.⁸⁹

Lockette's very personal sentiments expressed the contradictory ways the Federation addressed some black women teachers. Lockette expressed clear feelings of disillusionment towards the Federation, an organization she felt both created policies and platforms where she felt supported through anti-racist initiatives, but also ignored experiences of discrimination by not addressing her experiences as a black woman.

Lockette was not alone in her belief that the union did not support its racialized members; Cecily Tremaine also recollected that she heard of cases where the union did not represent its black teachers as they did white teachers.⁹⁰ Even through workplace conversations, Tremaine alludes to an underlying perception and feeling among some black female educators that despite being part of the FWTAO, the organization did not equally support its racialized members. Automatic membership did not necessarily mean automatic inclusion and representation for black female educators. One of the ways in which black women reacted to these experiences was to create their own separate organizations.

'Black women do fit into the Women's Liberation Movement': The Congress of Black Women of Canada and Educational Initiatives

⁸⁹ Donna Lockette, Interview by author.

⁹⁰ Cecily Tremaine, Interview by author.

As a result of this disconnect with the mainstream women's movement, some black female educators used their unique constructions of womanhood and blackness, based on their intersectional experiences of oppression and knowledge of power relations within mainstream institutions, to advocate and support organizations that spoke to their specific needs. In her unpublished dissertation, Marcia Maria Wharton-Zaretsky supports this idea of black female activism as distinct and informed by the various liberation movements at the end of the twentieth century. In her discussion of black women activists in Toronto, Wharton-Zaretsky argues that "Black women became familiar with the language of the oppressor and adopted and adapted it for their survival, while simultaneously they created their own self-defined standpoint unfamiliar to the dominant discourse."⁹¹ Situated in their experience as black professional women, educators used the discourse of human rights and state sponsored programs found in the black and women's liberation movements, and employed those most applicable to their specific ideals and concerns. They used diverse ideas from these movements and their personal experiences to rally around concerns that supported their minority communities as well as their professional careers. The organizations that sprang out of this adaptation, and grew stronger with increased membership, were neither solely feminist in nature nor completely racially motivated. These organizations were built upon an amalgamation of several social issues and causes specific to leadership, the challenges facing the black community, as well as personal and social concerns of the time.

⁹¹ Marcia Maria Wharton-Zaretsky, "Black Women Activists in Toronto from 1950 to 1990," (PhD Thesis: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1999), 29. Also see: Jennifer Mills, "Conferencing as a Site for the Mobilization of Black Feminist Identities in the Congress of Black Women of Canada, 1973-1983," *Journal of Black Studies* Vol. 46, No. 4 (May 2015): 1-27.

As stated in previous chapters, black women educators not only addressed concerns of inequality within classroom boundaries, but often extended these discussions to their communities through a variety of activities. The issues concerning gender inequality were approached in a similar fashion; speaking to the silences and gaps present in organizations like the FWTAO, black women formed their own feminist organizations to address educational, political, economic and social concerns that were relevant to them. Black feminist ideals emerged out of black women's growing dissatisfaction with the mainstream women's movement and insisted that race be included in the feminist framework of the women's liberation. This agenda then accounted for black women's need for both self and community empowerment and provided them with the opportunity to define themselves amidst a dominant culture that ignored their experiences.⁹²

In her discussion of black Canadian feminist thought, Njoki Nathani Wane argues that black women developed this ideology to account for their personal experiences at school, work, home and on the streets. She defines black Canadian feminist thought as, "a theoretical tool meant to elucidate and analyze the historical, social, cultural and economic relationships of women of African descent as the basis for development of a liberatory praxis. It is a paradigm grounded in the historical as well as the contemporary experiences of black women as mothers, activists, academics and community leaders."⁹³ Therefore, black feminism operated differently from mainstream (white) feminist agendas in its amalgamation of black women's experiences as racialized women, cultural and community leaders, and professional workers. Black women

⁹² Dolana Mogadime. "Black Girls/Black Women-Centred Texts and Black Teachers as Othermothers," *Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering* Vol. 2, No. 2 (2000): 223.

⁹³ Njoki Nathani Wane, Katerina Deliovsky, and Erica Lawson, eds., *Back to the Drawing Board: African Canadian Feminisms* (Toronto: Sumach Press, 2002), 147.

expressed this black feminist agenda in a variety of ways, but often in reaction to the exclusion of their voices in mainstream institutions.

Women like Dorothy Wills, a graduate of McGill University's Masters in the Social Work program and the national Chairperson of the National Black Coalition of Canada (1972) exemplified the ways in which black women connected their activist ideas with education. Informed by black power rhetoric, Wills' philosophy remained grounded in black feminist ideals of motherhood and racial uplift. In a speech intended to discuss the problems facing black women in Canadian society, Wills explained that black women must work diligently to teach their children about the social ills they will face in mainstream society. She encouraged projects that discussed black cultural heritage and positively promoted black communities in order to offset flaws within the education system. Wills concluded that, "The frank discussion of problems which Black women face in Canadian society is neither a cry of outrage nor a cry of helplessness –it is a realistic view of the world from our perspective."⁹⁴

Informed by her work with the NBCC and the philosophies influencing black power activism amongst black Canadians, Wills intended her argument to empower black women so that they could discuss the challenges they faced and could begin combating these issues the best way they knew how, beginning with their families and communities. Wills encouraged the development of a black value system, which emphasized self-determination, unity and collective responsibility. Her speech was drastically different from the mandates of the FWTAO and broader white women's organizations in that it did not necessarily exclude men from the discussion, nor did it ignore black women's responsibility to their community. In fact, her speech acknowledged black women's long

⁹⁴ Dorothy Wills, "Think In" on *Black Culture*, August 26-31, 1974.

tradition of caring for their children and broader communities as well as highlighting their need to maintain the cultural heritage of their respective communities. Therefore, while some black educators were debating issues of inequality within the school system, a similar discussion about black women's presence in the feminist movement was also taking place. Despite extending debates of black womanhood outside of the classroom, some black women's organizational philosophies remained deeply connected to education. Given that some of the leaders and members of these black women's organizations were educators and the long-standing belief that education was the best way to social advancement for the black community, ideas of education and black womanhood remained interconnected and informed one another.

For those black women who felt alienated from the mainstream women's organizations, the National Congress of Black Women of Canada provided a place in which black women from various socio-economic, cultural and educational backgrounds could gather and network with one another. The Congress' ability to encourage black women to recognize their position in Canadian society and search for ways to combat the oppression they faced from various mainstream sources exemplified how black women used various avenues of expression and organizing to challenge oppression. Changing its name in 1962, the National Congress of Black Women originated from the Canadian Negro Women's Association (CANEWA), which began in 1951 as a social club for middle-class black women.⁹⁵ The organization later changed to focus on social issues facing blacks particularly in late 1950s Toronto. Spearheaded by Canadian born professional television and radio actor, Kay Livingstone, CANEWA worked to promote

⁹⁵ Lawrence Hill, *Women of Vision: The Story of the Canadian Negro Women's Association* (Toronto: Umbrella Press, 1996), 22.

the “merits of the Canadian Negro” and educate black Canadian students through scholarships, organizing balls and festivals, and develop written texts about black historical achievements.⁹⁶ By the 1970s, CANEWA felt that black women needed a national voice and organized the First National Congress of Black Women in 1973. The increased politicization of the Congress developed as a result of the reality that male dominated organizations like the National Black Coalition did not address black women’s concerns, white feminist groups largely ignored issues of racism within the women’s movement, and black women increasing desire for a stronger political voice.⁹⁷

In a speech delivered at the first convention of the National Congress of Black Women, Rosemary Brown, the first Black woman elected to the British Columbia legislature in 1972, explained black women’s role within the women’s liberation movement. Brown argued,

I believe that Black women do fit into the Women’s Liberation Movement – I believe that through the Movement we can fight for Black women as well as for women of all other races – even as when we fight for Black people, we fight for Black men as well as for Black children and Black women.⁹⁸

For Brown, there was a distinct consciousness informed by the women’s liberation movement as well as their experiences as racialized people. Ultimately, Brown concluded that she could not simply embrace singular constructions of sisterhood encouraged by the mainstream women’s movement, which made no room for the other ways in which black women attempted to understand themselves. In many ways, the development of the Congress’ stronger political stance paralleled the mainstream

⁹⁶ Marcia Wharton-Zaretsky, “Foremothers of Black Women’s Community Organizing in Toronto,” *Atlantis* Vol. 24 No. 2 (Spring/Summer 2000): 68.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁹⁸ *Transcript of Speech by Rosemary Brown, MLA, Vancouver-Burrard on the Occasion of the National Congress for Black Women in Canada*, Convened by the Canadian Negro Women’s Association, Saturday April 7, 1973.

women's movement, especially for black women who believed there was a place for them within the women's liberation movement. However, the Congress held strong opinions about the Royal Commission on the Status of Women for its inability to include the "peculiar and unique needs of Black women."⁹⁹ Instead, the organization asked that the federal government conduct an inquiry into the status of black women and demanded that this be undertaken by qualified and responsible black women who were sensitive and accountable to the black community.¹⁰⁰ Speaking to the exclusionary practices of the Commission, members of the Congress inserted themselves into nation-state apparatus by demanding their presence and offering their own definitions of black womanhood.

Therefore, when educators like Camille Mead, Enid Rubin and Sheryl Harre joined the Congress, it was not because it was a black organization, for several of these groups were already in existence, but rather they joined this organization because it was a *black women's* organization.¹⁰¹ Although this may have been an extension of the work these women were doing in their communities long before the creation of the Congress, its status as a women's organization was particularly appealing. In fact, the Congress separated itself from other national organizations such as the NBCC because of the organization's 'race first' approach.

In their October 7, 1973 Annual General Meeting, the NBCC highlighted a section titled "Liberation of Black Women within the Liberation Movement." Meeting minutes recorded that NBCC emphasized that black people must first get themselves together and their minds on a national level, before they could embark on an international

⁹⁹ *Report of the Second National Congress of Black Women*, November 8-10, Montreal, Quebec.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ National Congress of Black Women of Canada and Joella Gipson, ed., *Proceedings of the Fourth National Congress of Black Women of Canada - "Impetus- the Black Woman."* Windsor, ON, 1978, 4, 5.

mission. The organization later invited a spokeswoman from the United States by the name of Queen Mother Moore to speak about black women's liberation. Moore declared that black women did not need liberating because they were always free. It was reported that she received a standing ovation for her address.¹⁰² Author Erik McDuffie describes Louisiana-born Moore as an international icon among black nationalist circles for her support of Pan-Africanism and black unity. McDuffie argues that Queen Mother Moore was influenced by communism and was vocal about her hostility towards mainstream feminism and believed it to be an 'alien ideology.' While she believed women should fully participate in black movements, McDuffie argues that "she also opposed women-centred agendas and called for women's subordination to men."¹⁰³

Despite the fact that Moore's call for female subordination to the race question as was encouraged by NBCC, it is precisely because of the silencing of women's issues within black cultural organizations that some black women sought to create distinctive women's groups. Some black women then not only criticized the mainstream women's movement but they also became increasingly aware of black community groups that did not address their experiences. In 1976, for example, Sylvia E. Searles warned black Canadian women against the danger of occupying stereotypical roles within the black liberation movements and argued that black women should not become involved in one movement to the exclusion of another. In her article titled, "Feminism Liberation: How Relevant is it to the Black Woman?" Searles cautioned black women against choosing *either* blackness or womanhood in their fight for the elimination of oppression. Searles

¹⁰² *Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the National Black Coalition of Canada Held at Toronto Ontario, October 5-7, 1973.*

¹⁰³ Erik S. McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom: Black Women, American Communism and the Making of the Black Left Feminism.* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011), 210.

wrote, “However, Black women must guard against allowing this secondary, supportive role from becoming a submissive inferior role. In other words, the Black woman must not sacrifice her Womanhood for the Black man to achieve his Manhood.”¹⁰⁴

Recognizing the male dominated black national organizations, Searles believed that while black women were still trying to support and stabilize their families and men, black women needed to define their own purposes, roles and goals.¹⁰⁵ It was the choice of self-definition that made the Congress of Black Women so appealing to black women, some of whom were educators.

While, the NBCC’s decision to invite an address from a female African American speaker not only highlighted the organization’s connection to black liberation in the United States, it also reflected their inability to acknowledge that the experiences that informed black women’s oppression in Canada were different. In addition, Moore espoused a view that some African American women would have found to be problematic creating further disconnect from its black female membership. While black women’s organizations recognized the transnational oppression of African descended peoples, they also recognized the challenges facing black women in Canada as distinctly different from their American counterparts. When the first convention for the Congress of Black Women met in 1973, their workshops were informed specifically by their experiences in Canada. The *Toronto Star* reported that between 150-200 black women from various organizations across the country gathered to deal with issues of identity, education, the immigrant female, single parenthood, and black history. The *Star* explained that conference workshops hoped to address various questions such as,

¹⁰⁴ Sylvia E. Searles, “Feminine Liberation: How relevant is it to the Black Woman?” *Spear Magazine*, August 1976.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

How does the West Indian parent deal with a new set of standards her children seem to have adopted? How does the immigrant domestic worker find friends, learn how to upgrade her skills? How does the woman from Africa fit into the Canadian way of life? Why aren't more families adopting or becoming foster parents to the ever-increasing number of black children under the care of the Children's Aid? What is being done for the increasing number of older persons who seem to be isolated from the general community? What is being done about teaching family planning to prevent the increase of unwed mothers?"¹⁰⁶

The first meeting of the Congress addressed a variety of topics and issues but they were specifically structured around black Canadian women's concerns. Focusing on the influx of black immigrants from the Caribbean, Africa and the United States, the Congress held several workshops covering issues of Caribbean parents and schools, the need for black history, the transition to the Canadian way of life, and immigrant upgrading of their skills also remained part of this discussion that spoke to a specific Canadian climate. Each of these questions also spoke to an issue with which black female educators may have contended with as women, mothers and professional workers.

The same *Toronto Star* article reported that many of the women in the organization were professional businesswomen involved in education and/or the arts with their husbands.¹⁰⁷ Because some of black women within the Congress tended to be educated and from middle-class backgrounds, it is possible that their class status may have influenced their views on the 'ideal' family structure. The workshop discussion topics on family planning and unwed mothers then spoke to the organization's class based assumptions and biases. While many female educators did not heavily focus on their economic backgrounds during their interviews, it is possible that their ability to obtain an education, sometimes at the graduate level, maintain long standing professional

¹⁰⁶ Lotta Dempsey, "First Congress of Black Women Coming in April," *Toronto Star*, 1973.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

careers and consistent income, reflected similar middle-class black ideas that resonated within the organizational mandates of the Congress.

Four years after its first conference, the Congress continued to examine issues specific to black Canadian women. The statements made by various speakers at the conference attested to this acknowledgement and understanding of how black women negotiated blackness in Canada. At the 4th Conference, educator Dr. Inez Elliston delivered a paper entitled, “The Black Woman, Black Consciousness and the Women’s Movement,” where she highlighted the difficulty black women faced in living in a multicultural world. Canada’s Multicultural policy, officially implemented in 1971, was created to embrace the nation’s racial and cultural diversity but received criticism from racial minorities for creating nationally appropriate cultural communities and containing pressures for social justice and equality for minorities.¹⁰⁸ Elliston explained that the black woman, and the black community at large, was at a crucial crossroad of defining self-hood in the Canadian Multicultural society. She explained,

The danger for us as a people is that the very niceness, the very inoffensiveness and the all inclusiveness of the term may lull us into complacency, and hence, lead to the costly failure of not analyzing the nature and characteristics of multiculturalism, and therefore, of not understanding what are the implications of our survival here as a people.¹⁰⁹

Elliston’s critique of Canada’s 1971 Multiculturalism policy highlighted the contradictions of state actions that encouraged the inclusion of some ethnic and racial groups while still privileging the position of the two founding nations, the British and

¹⁰⁸ Himani Bannerji, *The Dark Side of the Nation: Essays on Multiculturalism, Nationalism and Gender*, 67-79.

¹⁰⁹ Inez N. Elliston, “The Black Woman, Black Consciousness and the Women’s Movement,” *Impetus – The Black Woman, Proceedings of the Fourth National Congress of Black Women of Canada*, Windsor, Ontario, August 19-21, 1977.

French.¹¹⁰ As an educator, Elliston believed that under the under the guise of multiculturalism and racial inclusion, programs that were created to assist black students experienced were now given reduced funding and assistance. She alluded to ideas expressed in earlier chapters of this dissertation that reveal mainstream policies of multiculturalism as strategies of appeasement rather than as sources of real collaboration and systemic change. Himani Bannerji supports this idea that multiculturalism functioned as a response to increase agitation from racialized communities but also served as an extension of state manipulation. Bannerji explains, “More than anything else, multiculturalism preserves the partisan nature of the state by helping to contain pressures exerted by ‘others’ for social justice and equality.”¹¹¹ Elliston’s argument served as an early recognition of the problems within Canada’s multicultural policy and warned black women about the dangers government funded programs posed for black communities.

In the same speech, Elliston then turned her discussion to black women specifically and their role within the black community in order to highlight how black womanhood differed from mainstream white feminist ideologies. Elliston contended that,

Every great nation has demanded of its women to play significantly useful and meaningful roles in its history. Common sense dictates, and the conditions of our times, demand that black women continue to accept this challenge as community builders. This is not to deny the role of wife and mother. The two are by no means exclusive. Instead, I see the fully functioning integrated Black women as strong, vibrant, effective, confident, and because of these attributes, and not in spite of them, she is able to create within and around her that centre of claim, that oasis of peace which for me, in the final analysis, defines her unique identity as Woman.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Vijay Agnew, *Resisting Discrimination*, 97.

¹¹¹ Himani Bannerji, *The Dark Side of the Nation: Essays on Multiculturalism, Nationalism and Gender*, 79.

¹¹² Inez Elliston, “The Black Woman, Black Consciousness and the Women’s Movement,” 1978.

While advocating for the roles that black women must take as community leaders, Elliston's statement spoke to the problems facing black children in the education system, including high failure rates among black students and their increasing presence in vocational and occupational schools, the shortage of reading specialists and speech teachers, and cuts to funding for English as a Second Language programs. For Elliston, the presence of black women, doing the combined work of community and racial uplift as well as their engagement in formal education, could create a receptive environment where black children were nurtured and supported.¹¹³ Her knowledge of challenges facing black pupils within Ontario schools exemplified the ways in which educators used experiences learned in the classroom to inform and address broader social concerns. Even within this discussion of black women's consciousness, ideas of education and the classroom were not far removed. In Elliston's case, her role as an educator informed her knowledge of how Canadian mainstream policies did not necessarily reflect institutional practices in equality. She therefore had the ability to speak about women's rights as well as connect these ideas to communal and racial success.

Despite its strong connections to education, the Congress of Black Women joined other black cultural organizations who were also incredibly concerned with the status of black women in Canada. For example, the Jamaican-Canadian Association organized and sponsored a symposium on the Status of Black Women in Canada. The symposium worked to identify various themes facing black women which included, Caribbean domestic workers in Canadian homes, black women's relationship with women's liberation movements, black women and their families, and the position of working class black women. While the symposium invited women like Inez Elliston, it also included

¹¹³ Inez Elliston, "The Black Woman, Black Consciousness and the Women's Movement," 1978

male speakers such as Don Williams, a lecturer at Ryerson, and Dr. Clifford Taylor, a medical doctor practicing in Canada.¹¹⁴ As such, discussions about the impact women's liberation had on black women were not exclusive to professional educators since some black cultural organizations were also becoming increasingly aware of these issues and set out to acknowledge black women's unique needs and challenges.

Conclusion

Black female educators were conscious of and informed by various social movements occurring in Canada by the end of the twentieth century. When the Royal Commission on the Status of Women set out to assess challenges facing Canadian women, its mandates upheld notions of universal (white) womanhood. Utilizing the language of human rights, mainstream women's organizations advocated for their gender equality while silencing racialized women within the Canadian nation-state. In some instances, mainstream organizations, particularly the Federation of Women Teachers' Association of Ontario, offered avenues by which some black women educators could gain promotions, obtain equal pay for their work and forge alliances with their white counterparts. Some women in fact joined the FWTAO and felt that the collaboration of black and white woman based on gendered concerns remained integral to their careers as professional women. However, similar to some mainstream women's organizations at the time, the FWTAO privileged a homogenous category of womanhood that was often white and middle class.

Through their experiences in mainstream women's organizations and in the classroom, the participants of this research project experienced the reality that some women's organizations ignored the intersectionality of black women's identities.

¹¹⁴ "Black Woman in Canada," *Contrast Newspaper*, September 16, 1970.

Considering organizations that were created as a result of second wave feminism centrally focused on gender, not gender and class, gender and race or the multiple layers of oppression that women faced, this chapter has argued that these organizations instead worked to promote one kind of feminism and created a place where race was an invisible category, which often went unacknowledged and was not interrogated. As a result, some black female educators were ambivalent about participating in mainstream women's organizations and disclosed that they rarely actively participated in women teachers' unions. Their stories then reflected accounts of feminism and difference. While the FWTAO became branded as feminist, the various black women's groups like the Congress of Black Women were understood as different, and separate from the mainstream women's movement.

In order to encompass broader concerns in Canada, black women, including some educators who participated in this project, joined organizations such as the Congress of Black Women of Canada to advocate for notions of equality informed by, but mutually exclusive to, gender issues. Instead of joining the larger women's movement, black women joined and created black women's organizations that spoke specifically to the challenges of black womanhood which remained intricately connected to their communities. Black female educators gravitated to these organizations in order to expand upon the work they were performing within Ontario classrooms. However, it is important to note that not all black educators joined women's or cultural organizations. Several in fact remained outside of large community organizations and instead focused on their professional careers and personal family commitments.

This chapter has worked to reveal the ways in which activism and identity informed how some black female educators related to the women's liberation movement. As racialized peoples, black women could not separate the politics of gender and race from their growing awareness and activism surrounding equality and social justice. As such, these women adapted the ideas of both the black and women's liberation movements in order to actively approach and bridge classroom and community challenges.

Conclusion:

“Things generally being made more difficult than they should be”: Exploring the Changing Same¹

We live in Canada now. We must make it our home. It’s a great country, it’s not a perfect country but it’s one of the best in the world and we have to manage that notion very well...my generation of people didn’t have many networks but I think the young people of today are going to do much better in terms of developing networks of support [and] being engaged in the community.²

When asked about her thoughts on the future of education in Canada, Afiya Oyo believed that it was important for minority educators and students to remember their racial and ethnic roots. According to Oyo, black educators in particular had a collective responsibility to pave the way for other minority educators; to work hard and do their jobs well because of the difficulties she and other black educators faced gaining access to certification and employment decades before. Oyo also urged black Canadians to root themselves within the Canadian nation and to reflect positively on the progress Canadian schooling institutions have made. More importantly, Oyo reflected an optimism about the future of education not only for black students but also for teachers who she believed could maintain strong connections to African Canadian communities while receiving improved institutional support. Oyo also remembered the important contributions that she made through her advisory work both within schools and the Ministry of Education. In doing so, her positive recollection charted not only the struggle for access but also the hope that she had for a better and more equitable educational future.

¹ In his opening speech at the Harriet Tubman Institute’s Black Lives Matter Conference, Dr. Barrington Walker describes the writing and experiences of blacks in Canada as “the changing same.” According to Walker, the black experience in Canada is marked by present moments of the past. Describing the archive of anti-blackness in Canada, Walker contends that black Canadian experiences are characterized by the “historical present” where much has changed historically but the persistent subjectedness of blackness in Canada has remained constant over time. Barrington Walker, “Changing Same: Mapping Canada’s Histories of Blackness,” (Keynote Speech, Toronto, Ontario, May 6, 2016).

² Afiya Oyo, Interview by author.

By May 29, 2015 when the Ontario Alliance of Black School Educators (OASBE) released their report highlighting the experiences and perspectives of black school educators in the province, the institutional and gendered racism that educators like Oyo encountered were still evident throughout many provincial public schools. As the first of its kind in Ontario, the OASBE's report began the tedious work of documenting the "perceptions of systemic and attitudinal anti-Black racism in Ontario's public education system."³ Discovering that black educators comprised 13% of the province's secondary and elementary school educators, OASBE researchers surveyed 148 black educators across 12 school boards to assess what life was like for black teachers in Ontario.⁴ Launching strong criticisms about Ontario's legacy of segregation and anti-black racism in public education, the OASBE's report argued that despite the province's diverse student population, a marked teacher diversity gap existed within Ontario schools.⁵ The report's assessment of school board hiring practices, educator perceptions concerning promotions and support, and black student engagement within schools, suggested that while provincial equity and diversity initiatives were extensively supported through legislation, its practice and implementation within schools left much to be desired.

Utilizing survey responses and one-on-one interviews, the OASBE's analysis of black teachers paralleled the experiences reported by some black women teachers in this study. For instance, survey respondents explained that they constantly faced negative stereotypes from colleagues who believed that African Canadians were not qualified for

³ Ontario Alliance of Black Educators, *Voices of Ontario Black Educators: An Experiential Report*, May 29, 2015, 1.

⁴ "This Is What It's Like to Be a Black Teacher in Ontario," *Huffington Post*, May 19, 2015, accessed June 01, 2016 <http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/byblackscom/black-teachers-ontario_b_7621628.html>; Louise Brown, "Black Teachers Still Face Racism on the Job in Ontario," *Toronto Star* May 29, 2015.

⁵ Ontario Alliance of Black Educators, *Voices of Ontario Black Educators: An Experiential Report*, 12.

teaching positions. According to research participants, racial stereotypes reinforced the perception that when it came to black educators, standards were lowered so that they could be hired to meet school diversity quotas.⁶ Akin to experiences documented in chapter two of this dissertation, respondents from OASBE's study reported that they were often questioned about their skills and qualifications in the same ways that some black women teachers described sixty years prior. Even more discouraging were the reports that black educators continued to face casual racism and microaggressions as common practice throughout their teaching careers. One black female respondent whose experiences were recorded in the OASBE report recalled that, "In the beginning of my tenure I experienced resistance, sabotage, passive aggressive behaviour, gossip, lack of co-operation, distrust, second guessing, insubordination and things generally being made more difficult than they should be."⁷ Corresponding with the experiences of the black female educators discussed in this project, the OASBE's study found alarming instances of black marginalization in Ontario schools that contradicted dominant twenty-first century narratives of inclusivity and employment equity in Canada.

At the same time, similar to the Ministry of Education and school board studies examined in this dissertation, the OASBE's assessment did not account for the intersectional nature of the gendered *and* racialized experiences of educators in Ontario schools. While the report did conclude that more black male educators were needed in Ontario schools, it did not move beyond this observation and contained fairly rigid categories of race and gender in its analysis. By contrast, this dissertation reconsiders the ways in which black women teachers experienced multiple forms of marginalization and

⁶ Ontario Alliance of Black Educators, *Voices of Ontario Black Educators: An Experiential Report*, 24.

⁷ *Ibid.* 35.

access as a result of their positionalities as insider-outsiders. Consequently, by situating the OASBE's provincial review of black educators within a longer, more complex history of institutional gendered racism and discrimination in Ontario, "Girl, You Better Apply to Teachers' College" speaks to the missing gendered and racialized components of teacher experiences in order to document the changes and continuities of black Canadian life. In doing so, this dissertation highlights a series of negotiations and processes of inclusion and exclusion, diversity and discrimination, and ultimately, belonging and difference in the Canadian nation state.

For many blacks in Canada, education was believed to increase access to employment and economic advancement, social mobility and acceptance, and equip them with the skills and knowledge necessary for self and community betterment. On the other hand, inside Ontario school systems existed a hidden educational culture that perpetuated lowered expectations, facilitated black student underachievement, and encouraged negative stereotypes that often created inequitable spaces for minority students.⁸ Yet, despite concerns about the institutional challenges facing racial minority students, education was and continues to be highly valued within black Canadian communities.⁹

Before the creation of separate schools in the nineteenth century, black communities and teachers created grassroots-orientated educational programs to respond to racial exclusion, discrimination and Ontario's Eurocentric curriculum. Black Canadians fought to combat white articulated fears that viewed black children as morally

⁸ Agnes Calliste, "Anti-Racism Organizing and Resistance," 286.

⁹ Carl James and Leanne Taylor, "'Education Will Get You to the Station': Marginalized Students' Experiences and Perceptions of Merit in Accessing University," *Canadian Journal of Education* Vol. 31, No. 3(2008): 570. Also see: Carl James, *Making It: Black Youth, Racism and Career Aspirations in a Big City* (Toronto: Mosaic Press, 1990).

inferior beings who could negatively influence Anglo-Saxon civility.¹⁰ Despite facing challenges of under-funding, low attendance and teacher pay, schools that catered to predominantly black students were open to pupils of all races, promoted integration and diversity, and maintained classical learning in their classrooms.¹¹ Into the twentieth century, the black Canadian community members and educators highlighted in this research project emphasized a continued commitment to social justice and equal access to education by working inside and outside of public schooling institutions to combat the problematic streaming of black students into lower level programming, high dropout rates and student disengagement from Ministry mandated curricula.

Each chapter presented in this dissertation has investigated the relationship between identity formation and educational access in Ontario. Its examination of educational history in Canada between the years 1940 and 1980 can be divided into three major focus areas. 1) The first chapter charts black women teachers' motivations for educational attainment and training that facilitated their (re)certification and employment in Ontario school systems in the 1940s and 1950s. 2) chapters two and three examined the experiences of black women educators once they gained employment within these school systems. This section demonstrates that in response to Eurocentric curriculum mandates, black women teachers created unique pedagogical approaches and micro-resistive strategies to combat the racial discrimination that they and minority students faced and to reinsert black history and knowledge as part of Ontario's teaching curriculum. 3) Finally, this project examined the impact of larger social justice movements in chapters four and five in order to highlight their effects on the personal and

¹⁰ Kristin McLaren, "We Had No Desire to Be Set Apart," 33.

¹¹ Ibid., 41; Richard M. Reid, *Union Blue: Volunteering for the Cause in the Civil War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014), 155.

professional lives of some black women teachers. This dissertation found that Canada's women's and black liberation movements encouraged black women teachers to reassess national constructions of Canadian citizenship as they searched for ways to further their professional careers and assist their immediate communities.

Ultimately, this dissertation quite pointedly argues that there was no singular way of interpreting black women's experiences in Ontario school systems. Some black women teachers described positive relationships and minimal experiences of racism throughout their teaching careers while other educators found themselves benefiting from one-on-one encouragement and promotion from their white administrators and colleagues. In other instances, black women teachers found joy in their professional experiences and recounted stories of pleasure while working with other white female educators to build cooperative work and learning environments. Nonetheless, alongside these valuable and satisfying experiences, some black female educators also found that they were not exempt from the common sense racism and gender discrimination that existed in Ontario schools. More often than not, black women teachers experienced both subtle and overt forms of professional and social exclusion based not only on their race, but also gender, place of birth, and training. These women responded to these exclusionary practices by developing resistive and transformative pedagogies that often amalgamated cultural and community knowledges with black feminist practice.

In addition to these narratives and experiences, the black women discussed within this study maintained their professional identities as trained and qualified educators who were skilled at their jobs. Understanding their positionality as black women, some of these participants recognized the need for individual self-care and resisted both

community expectations and institutional requirements that positioned them as cultural mediators of diverse minority populations. The black women teachers featured in this dissertation embraced their professional identities based on their own constructions of black womanhood. Scholar Kimberley Springer describes this as “interstitial politics”: that is when black women fit their activism into their daily life schedules in ways that accounted for the intersecting nature of black womanhood.¹²

By bringing attention to their oral narratives, this project highlights black women’s knowledge production and power vis-à-vis the myriad of ways they used their positionality to change and adopt categories of identity that best suited their lives and professional agendas. In essence, this dissertation demonstrates that the diverse experiences black women teachers had while working in Ontario schools were all legitimate and valid frameworks considering the institutional and systemic barriers they faced.

Extending the work of educational historians Sheila Cavanagh and Kristina Llewellyn who discuss femininity and womanhood in post-World War II Canada as an important organizing principle within educational systems, this dissertation contributes to this knowledge of educational history by situating black women within this broader gendered system of education. Disrupting early narratives of schooling that coded educators as ‘white’ and female, my research confronts the assumption that all women teachers were the same and therefore reflected Canadian womanhood. Instead, black women’s experiences within Ontario school systems spoke to the more nuanced ways education was imparted in post-WWII Canada. It asks us to review the unwritten and

¹² Erik S. McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom: Black Women, American Communism and the Making of the Black Left Feminism* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011), 16.

unreported experiences of those women teachers who faced a ‘hidden curriculum’ within school systems in order to illuminate to the richness of identities, ideas and activism in twentieth century Canadian schools. Ultimately, this dissertation has articulated that in fact Canadian women teachers were more diverse and expressed a myriad of ideas and pedagogical approaches.

Within the field of migration history, while historians have emphasized the movement of “unskilled” workers across national borders, this dissertation deepens the migration paradigm explored by historian Karen Flynn to emphasize the importance of professional female migrants.¹³ It also reconsiders the definitions of migration to include movements within national and geographic boundaries. Here, this project includes women who not only migrated from different provinces for training and employment, but also considers black women who left their small rural communities in southwestern Ontario to train, live and work in urban Toronto. As an extension of its focus on migration, this project also frames a space for cross-border movements that created and strengthened black women’s professional networks and community relationships.

As part of exploration of black activism in Canada, this work also situates itself within anti-racist history to broaden the spaces of black advocacy and action outside of legislative acts, court systems and national organizations, to include individual classrooms and workplaces. While the participants of this research study also engaged in larger human rights organizations, their activism was also demonstrated through their interactions with individual students, colleagues and school administrators. Although this kind of activism is often overshadowed by larger and more publicized national court

¹³ Karen Flynn, *Moving Beyond Borders: A History of Black Canadian and Caribbean Women in the Diaspora*, 72-76.

cases, the small and consistent actions implemented by black women teachers in this dissertation were nonetheless important in shifting school practices to create more equitable learning spaces and reshaping black activism to include a diverse range of activities.

As part of its focus on the modes of black female activism, this dissertation has worked to engage feminist discourse and action as part of black women's anti-racist activities. The women who participated in this research project *knew* that racism and sexism shaped their professional and personal worlds. While some expressed the limitations feminist circles had in understanding black women's struggles, others envisioned their intersectional experiences as black women as part of their activist work. This project then calls us to pay attention to these articulations as connected rather than as separate frameworks disassociated from one another.

Finally, "Girl You Better Apply to Teachers' College" hopes to open avenues for further research around the history of black teachers and professionals elsewhere in Canada. The lives of black professionals in Canada can provide rich analysis around the constructions of Canadian identity through the lens of labour, class, gender, place of birth, certification requirements, and workplace practices. This project has started to explore some of these categories but hopes to open up historical analysis about the importance of minority professionals within the Canadian historical narrative. As part of its focus on a more expansive view of blackness in Canada, this dissertation also seeks to encourage the examination of other diasporic identities in the study of professional workspaces. Since African born educators were not featured in this work, this dissertation questions how articulations of black belonging in Canada differ or are

reinforced by nationality and place of birth. As such, this work asks future researchers to review the limitations of black solidarity and further complicate the relationships between diasporic black communities often read as unitary and unchanging by the Canadian nation-state.

Anti-Racist Education and Moving Beyond Limited Inclusion

Since the 1980s, the period in which this research study ends, Ontario has made significant gains in restructuring its ideas of inclusive education. By shifting its gaze from a focus on multicultural education in the 1970s and 1980s (which celebrated cultural diversity and identity of students through literature, art, food and dance), the Ministry of Education's attention in the twenty-first century is on anti-racist education. Unlike earlier educational approaches, this focus is intended to remove institutional barriers that seek to limit racial and ethnocultural minorities within its school boards. As part of this goal, the Ministry amended the Education Act of Ontario in 1992 to allow for the development and implementation of these anti-racist and ethnocultural equity policies in response to stated community needs and the local conditions of Canadian society.¹⁴ *The Equity in School Boards: Guidelines for Policy and Implementation* resource guide, which was released in 1993, sought to assist school boards in the implementation of Ministry anti-racist policies. In addition, the guide prioritized greater expenditures for the hiring of racially diverse staff, anti-racism advisers and consultants, and outlined practical ways to implement equitable practices within the classroom.¹⁵ The Ministry

¹⁴ Ministry of Education and Training, *Antiracism and Ethnocultural Equity in School Boards: Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation 1993*, 6.

¹⁵ Goli Rezai-Rashti, Allison Segeren and Wayne Martino, "Race and Racial Justice in Ontario Education: Neoliberalism and Strategies of Racial Invisibility," in Suzanne Majhanovich and Regis Malet., eds., *Building Democracy through Education on Diversity* (The Netherlands: Sense Publishers, 2015), 145; Yolande Davidson, "Equity in Education: Policy and Implementation – Examining Ontario's Anti-Racism

also established an Anti-racism and Equity Division to hold school boards accountable for their work on equity related issues.¹⁶ This was a far cry from the linguistic focus of multicultural education policies discussed in chapter two. Instead, some of the nation's most progressive policies aimed at addressing diversity, equity and social justice came out of the Ministry's emphasis on anti-racist education.¹⁷

While basic tenets of anti-racist education required system-wide change in order to dismantle institutional racism, the thrust of the Ministry's support of anti-racist education in Ontario schools is, as it was in the past, the result of mounting political and community pressures.¹⁸ Scholar David Sealy contends that the shift in anti-racist political activity in Canada was something that was actively resisted by most Canadians. According to Sealy, that "the impetus for Black Canadian anti-racist political activity is always deemed to flow from sources outside the Canadian nation-state, and is therefore not related to any concrete Canadian situations," is an important part of the ways in which Canada has dealt with its racialized populations.¹⁹ Sealy contends that policy makers often looked outside Canadian apparatuses for solutions to racism thereby erasing its longstanding history of anti-black racism within state institutions. Sealy's analysis, much like the arguments made throughout this research project, highlights the impossibility of being both black and Canadian.

By their very nature, Ministry responses to black educators and students indicate a much more complex story of disconnected spaces where administrative intentions

Education Guidelines and Their Application in the Peel District School Board," *Journal of Public Policy, Administration and Law* Vol 1. (November 2009): 3

¹⁶ Yolande Davidson, "Equity in Education: Policy and Implementation," 3.

¹⁷ Ratna Ghosh, Mariusz Galczynski, *Redefining Multicultural Education: Inclusion and the Right to Be Different*, Third Edition (Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, 2014), 34-35.

¹⁸ Tim McCaskell, *Race to Equity: Disrupting Educational Inequality*, 181-183.

¹⁹ David Sealy, "Canadianizing' Blackness: Resisting the Political," in Rinaldo Walcott ed., *Rude: Contemporary Black Canadian Cultural Criticism* (Toronto: Insomniac Press, 2000), 9

contradicted the actual experiences of educators inside Ontario schools. On the basis that schooling institutions reflected broader notions of Canadian nationhood and belonging, that black women teachers remained on the margins of access and exclusion best exemplified the separation between intention and reality in twentieth century Canadian education. Despite the best motives of administrators, school policies and practices did not adequately respond to the needs of black students and racialized educators. Rather, the main focus of provincial agendas was to respond and to pacify, instead of recreating or reshaping schooling systems. As a result, the classroom practices implemented in the twentieth century were largely a reaction to political agitation that included, and at times tolerated, special pedagogical approaches (often taught by black teachers) as an addendum to its existing school systems. In either case, these approaches remained grounded in white-European notions of the Canadian nation.²⁰ Consequently, the approaches intended to meet the needs of black students and educators beyond the Ministry's inconsistent programming and funding, were often community and black educator-led initiatives and reports created as 'band-aid' approaches to racial inclusion and educational diversity.

This dissertation has endeavored to prove that despite the important interventions that white school administrators and Ministry officials made in dealing with black pupils, black women educators often struggled and did their best to respond to policy apathy at the provincial level. The lasting effects of these policies reflected a multilayered form of belonging and citizenship that ignored communities of color until they became 'problems' that needed containment and control.

²⁰Anh Hua, "Homing Desire, Cultural Citizenship and Diasporic Imagining," *Journal of International Women's Studies* Vol. 13, No. 4 (July 2011): 49.

In the process, while education administrators left anti-black racism within their school systems largely unacknowledged and unattended to, this dissertation places a spotlight on the stories of black women teachers who participated in the development of Canada's educational apparatus in the later twentieth century. As a result, this project stands as an important reminder of how black Canadians (re)inserted themselves in Canada's national narrative despite limited resources and impeding barriers. Moreover, while the complex interactions and negotiations between school administrators, pupils, educators, parents and community members represent an under researched area of scholarship, this dissertation demonstrates the ways in which these exchanges are critical to our understanding of how inclusion and diversity was, and in some ways continues to be, practiced in Ontario schooling systems.

This project analyzed the ways black women teachers offered important bridging points for racialized communities and school administrators. By exploring their lives more intimately, this work recognizes black women educators in Ontario were complicated agents of social control and change; they worked within rigid Eurocentric school systems and expectations, modified curriculum where they saw fit, created lasting interracial friendships and disrupted mainstream perceptions of black student performance and capability to envision Canadian blackness as part of the nation. As an important precursor to the contemporary moment, this dissertation acknowledges that until Canada's long history of anti-black racism within its social institutions is fully acknowledged and addressed, there will continue to be challenges facing racialized students and educators within schooling apparatuses of the nation.

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