Homeschooling: A Space of Resistance for Black Families in Canada.

Amanda Pereira-Rego's
Canada.

Literature Review

Across Canada, rates of homeschooling have drastically increased, even before COVID19 (Statistics Canada, 2024) In 2006-2007, 18,426 students were homeschooled across Canada (Statistics Canada, 2024).

Whereas, from 2019-2020, the number of homeschoolers more than doubled to 40,611 students (Statistics Canada, 2024). Although there are no official statistics about the racial demographics of Canadian homeschoolers, there is a rise in Black homeschoolers (Daniel, 2020; Quammie, 2018). Comparatively, in America, researchers collect the racial demographics of homeschoolers.

The United States Census Bureau (2021) reported that Black students composed 3.3% of homeschoolers. However, this percentage rose to 16.6%, during COVID-19 (United States Census Bureau, 2021).1 Hence, Black homeschoolers drastically increased across North America, particularly in Canada.

Overall, there has been considerable research about Canadian homeschooling families. Acceptance for homeschooling has increased (Lois, 2021).

Many Canadian parents homeschool because of negative experiences and low academic standards in traditional2 schools (Arai, 2000; Brabant & Dumond, 2021; Bosetti & Van Pelt, 2017). Once homeschooling, many parents describe stronger familial bonds and positive changes in children (Arai, 2000; Brabant & Dumond, 2021).

Hence, Canadians report social and academic benefits from homeschooling.

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1 These percentages only included traditional homeschooling students as opposed to virtual learners (United States Census Bureau, 2021).

2 I use the term traditional schools to describe Canada’s Catholic and public schools as opposed to homeschools.

In Canadian schools, Black students' report negative experiences, specifically stereotyping, anti-Black racism, and policing/surveillance (Afrifah et al., 2021; James, 2012; James, 2019; Jean-Marie & Lopez, 2021). Educators often stream Black students into less academically rigorous classes (James, 2019). Hence, traditional schools' prevalence of antiBlack racism can cause Black families to possess distinct motivations for homeschooling.

Currently, seldom research has investigated the motivations and experiences of Black homeschoolers in Canada. I aim for my research to contribute to filling this gap. In Canada, I argue that some Black families homeschool to resist traditional schooling's perpetuation of stereotypes, anti-Black racism, policing/surveillance, and use of Eurocentric curricula and pedagogies. If researchers understand how Black families homeschool as a form of resistance, they can identify and rectify issues in Canadian schools. Researchers can also pose educational changes, based on Black families perceived advantages of homeschooling.

Epistemologies

In hooks's (2015) narrative Homeplace: A Site of Resistance, hooks conceptualizes the significance of Black families' homes known as homeplace. Fields-Smith & Kisura (2013) argue that homeschooling applies to hooks's conceptualization of homeplace. Black mothers foster knowledge in their homes "There we learned dignity, integrity of being; there we learned to have faith. The folks who made this life possible, who were our primary guides and teachers, were black women" (hooks, 2015, p. 42). Black mothers teach their children values and lessons in their homes. I argue that homeschooling extends the homeplace: Black mothers become the primary educators for their children's academic and cultural growth.

Furthermore, I contend that homeschooling contributes to the homeplace being a safer place for Black children, against anti-black racism. hooks (2015) explains how Black families

homes provide refuge "I remember the fear, being scared to walk to Baba's (our grandmother's house) because we would have to pass ... those white faces on the porches staring us down with hate ... Oh! that feeling of safety, of arrival, of homecoming when we finally reached the edges of her yard ... Such a contrast, that feeling of arrival, of homecoming, this sweetness and the bitterness of that journey, that constant reminder of white power and control" (pp. 2-3). Canadian educators perpetuate anti-Black racism through labelling, stereotyping, and policing/surveillance which causes many Black students to feel unsafe in traditional schools (Afrifah et al., 2021; Howard & James 2019; James, 2012; James, 2019; Jean-Marie & Lopez, 2021). Thus, I assert that some Black parents homeschool to create an educational environment safe from anti-Black racism (Quammie, 2018).

Methods

I employed peer-reviewed secondary sources from scholarly databases, like Eric, JSTOR, and the Black Studies Centre. I aggregated qualitative data (interviews, storytelling, and ethnographies) to Black homeschoolers' lived realities.

I collected data from across Canada, particularly Ontario's Greater Toronto Area (GTA), because of the tightknit nature of Black homeschooling communities

Also, I included community-based sources from Black journalists and homeschoolers. In Canada, Black homeschoolers' often form websites and social media groups. They share resources, schedule playdates, and form academic cohorts. Hence, I will incorporate community discourse to highlight Black homeschoolers' resistance efforts.

Analysis

Stereotypes

Parentally Uninvolved

Some Black parents homeschool to combat educators' stereotype of Black families being academically uninvolved. Teachers often assume that Black males lack fathers (James, 2011). They believe that single mothers cannot support their children's academic aspirations (James, 2011). However, single mothers often provide ample academic support. For instance, a Black high school student, Tye3 expressed "Every time I hear about another study telling me that, as a ... fatherless boy, I may be destined to fail in school, it makes me cringe ... [W]e should be working hard to intervene before failing is a done deal. That's what my mother did" (James, 2011, p. 476). Hence, Tye disrupts the stereotype that Black single mothers lack academic involvement; he attributes his academic success to his mother.

Similarly, some educators assume that Black families do not value education. According to James (2011) "The teachers submitted that parents were the 'chief source of the problem' because they cultivated in their children 'cultural mores and values' that were inconsistent with those of their school" (p. 484). In contrast, Black students report parental expectations as an academic motivation (Dei, 1997; Howard & James, 2019). In James's (2011) research of Carribean males in Canada, he affirms "their parents' aspirations and expectations of them having been socialized to have high educational aspirations and to work twice as hard to succeed" (pp. 474 & 475). Hence, Black families promote educational achievement.

Some Black parents resist educators' stereotype of academic un-involvement by homeschooling. For instance, Eve, a Black mother in Toronto, shares "When your child enters the school system, you are no longer just a parent ... You're an advocate, a detective, a cheerleader, so many things. And in some ways, remote learning makes that work easier." (Fernando, 2021). Hence, Eve showcases how remote homeschooling increased her involvement, due to greater accessibility. Likewise, Ari, a Black homeschooling mother in the GTA, explains how homeschooling protects her children from negative stereotypes, like Black families lacking academic involvement (Quammie, 2018). Ari laments "The bottom line is that I don't have faith in the public education system to educate my Black children without inflicting trauma" (Quammie, 2018). Thus, homeschooling allows Black families to resist the parentally uninvolved stereotype perpetuated by Canadian educators.

Lowered Expectations Some Black parents homeschool to combat Canadian teachers' low expectations of Black students. Educators often label Black males as athletes (James, 2011). For instance, a Black grade 11 student Ella admitted "I think Black guys have it worse ... you're pushed to just do sports" (Dei, 1997, p. 98). James (2011) noted "'If they [Black males] are good at sports, the stereotypical assumption dictates that they are also poor students" (p. 477). Hence, educators persuade Black males to only pursue sports which limits their academic achievement and attainment (James, 2011).

Resultingly, many Black parents homeschool due to Canadian educators lowered expectations for Black males. Ivy, a Black homeschooling mother in Ontario, expressed "The school system is not resourced to help young Black boys ... who need to move and be outside to thrive in their learning ... In my opinion they ought to be empowered to be curious, and to imagine their best and brightest future" (Daniel, 2020).

Ivy recognizes how teachers do not support Black males' academics. Educators view Black males, particularly kinesthetic learners,

as athletes as opposed to students (James, 2011). Ivy homeschools to resist these low educational expectations; she employs kinesthetic learning pedagogies to help her son thrive academically.Moreover, teachers' lowered expectations cause Black students to be streamed into less academically rigorous courses, including Special Education Programs (Afrifah et al., 2021; Howard & James, 2019). Some Black parents resist these lowered expectations by homeschooling. For instance, Kim, a Black homeschooling mother in the GTA, explained "Having been through the public education system and knowing what I experienced, I want something different for my kids—a different outcome than the statistics predict for them" (Quammie, 2018). Kim recognizes how Canadian schools perpetuate lower expectations for Black children which limits educational attainment and achievement.

She resists teachers' low academic expectations through homeschooling. Homeschooling can bolster students' academic achievement "Thirty years of research in the United States, Canada, and other nations consistently shows that, on average, home-educated children perform above average in terms of academic achievement" (Ray, 2017, p. 97). Hence, some Black parents homeschool to resist teachers' low academic expectations and enhance their children's academic achievement.

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3 All names are pseudonyms.

Anti-Black Racism Moreover, some Black parents homeschool to resist anti-Black racism in schools. Some Black parents unenroll their children from traditional schools, due to anti-Black racism. For example, Joy, a Black mother, homeschooled after a classmate told her daughter "Black people are dirty and smelly" (Quammie, 2018). Joy expresses "We [Joy and her husband] know that in spite of Canada's proclamations that it's a fully multicultural and just society, anti-Black racism has long existed within its educational institutions" (Quammie, 2018). Joy dismantles Canada's claims of multicultural inclusivity. She recognizes how Canadian schools perpetuate anti-Black racism which she resists through homeschooling.

Likewise, Ava is a White, homeschooling Canadian with a biracial daughter. Ava reveals "For us personally [Ava and her husband], public school was never even on the table… we thought that that was protecting them [her children] from racism" (Gaiter, 2021, p. 50). Ava homeschooled, after her daughter experienced bullying in an Islamic school "Amira was experiencing a lot of bullying … because she wasn't Somalian enough and … My husband was like, khalas [Arabic word for: that's it], just take her out today" (Gaiter, 2021, p. 50). Ava enrolled Amira in an Islamic school to protect her from anti-Black racism, yet Ava homeschooled sooner than expected because of bullying. Therefore, many parents homeschool to resist anti-Black racism in Canadian schools.

Policing and Surveillance

Some Black parents homeschool to prevent educational policing and surveillance in Canadian schools. The Canadian education system surveils Black boys through racial profiling (Afrifah et al, 2021) as well as the penalization of dress and speech related to hip hop (Gosine & Tabi, 2016; Ibrahim, 2012). Black students experience higher suspensions and expulsions for lesser offenses compared to their white counterparts (Howard & James, 2019). Thus, many Black students feel unsafe in traditional schools (Howard & James, 2021).

Consequently, some Black parents homeschool to protect their children from policing and surveillance. Bea, a Black mother in Canada, considers homeschooling due to educational policing "For my son, it started around age seven, like clockwork—just as the studies said it would. That was the year I received a phone call from my son's grade two teacher, claiming that the scissors he was using during art class made him a threat to himself and others around him" (Daniel, 2020). Therefore, Bea desires to homeschool, after her son's teacher labelled him as 'threatening.' Labelling serves as a stigmatizing form of policing, against Black students.

Likewise, Ivy, a Black homeschooling mother in Ontario, expresses "In my opinion they [Black boys] ought to be empowered to be curious, and to imagine their best and brightest future—instead of the pressure of having to police themselves in their formative years" (Daniel, 2020). Ivy recognizes how teachers' policing of Black boys limits their academic interests and aspirations.

Similarly, Lou, a Canadian homeschooling mother who immigrated from Jamaica, sighs “He still suffered because of the stereotypical ideas of Black boyhood that were the lenses through which he was seen through ... He became an expert in stitching himself up into a personality demanded by his surroundings, and it broke my heart to watch him transform into a smaller, lackluster version of himself” (Daniel, 2020). Lou homeschooled her son, after witnessing the negative emotional impacts of educational policing. Thus, many Black mothers acknowledge the academic and emotional harms of educational policing and surveillance. Some mothers resist policing/surveillance by homeschooling.

Culturally Responsive and Accurate Curricula and Pedagogies

Many Black families feel dissatisfied with traditional Canadian schools' emphasis on Eurocentric curricula and pedagogies (Howard & James, 2019). Black parents and educators report a lack of Black representation in schools, including Africentric learning (Howard & James, 2019). Some educators try to implement culturally responsive curricula, yet they often receive criticism from staff and parents (Howard & James, 2019). Hence, Black communities dislike traditional schools lack of culturally diverse and accurate curricula.

Consequently, some Black parents homeschool to provide their children with culturally competent resources and knowledge. Black parents form online homeschooling groups where they share Africentric resources (Black Ontario Homeschool Support and Resource, 2024;

Toronto/GTA Black Homeschoolers, 2024). Also, Black parents share historically accurate resources that combat colonial narratives (Black Ontario Homeschool Support and Resource, 2024; Toronto/GTA Black Homeschoolers, 2024). Ava, a white mother, homeschools her biracial daughter of Somali and European heritage (Gaiter, 2021). Ava explains “I wasn’t happy with the… curriculum that the [Islamic] school was using ... I felt it was really surface and kind of like a very sugar-coated explanation of colonialism and… Indigenous people” (p. 49). Therefore, parents of Black children homeschool as a form of resistance against curricula and resources that do not portray truth accurately nor do they reflect the racial diversity of Canada.

Conclusion

Discussion

Hence, I argue that some Black families homeschool to resist Canadian schools’ promulgation of stereotypes, anti-Black racism, policing/surveillance, and culturally inaccurate curricula and pedagogies. Primarily, educators label Black parents as lacking academic involvement (Dei, 1997; Howard & James, 2019; James, 2011;). Some Black parents combat this stereotype through homeschooling which supports greater educational involvement. Also, some Black parents homeschool to resist educators’ low expectations of Black students, particularly Black males as being athletic not academic and class streaming.

Parents support their children's educational attainment and achievement through increased expectations and the implementation of their children's preferred learning styles and interests (Daniel, 2020; Quammie, 2018). As well, some parents homeschool to protect their children from anti-Black racism and educational

policing/surveillance (Gaiter, 2020; Quammie, 2018). Also, some Black parents homeschool to resist educators' use of inaccurate curricula and resources that invizibilize Black people. Therefore, some Black families homeschool in Canada homeschool as a form of resistance.

I strongly believe that this research can be beneficial in understanding current issues in Canadian schools that harm Black students academically and emotionally. Black homeschooling is rising in Canada, if this trend continues to persist especially given the prevelance of techology, many of Canada's traditional schools may see a decrease in Black students who choose to homeschool or attend Africentric schools. While these Black students can benefit from alternative educational enviornements, it is curcial that schools rectify issues in traditional schools in order to accommodate and benefit their current populations. Similarly, alternative schools, like homeschooling, should be an option for Black parents as opposed to a last resort of resistance against traditional schools.

Moreover, I believe that much more research should be conducted in order to understand the lived realities of Black homeschoolers. Research must be conducted to determine the barriers and challenges of homeschooling for Black students in order to provide them with adequate supports to continue their homeschooling hourneys. Similarly, much of the research on Black homeschoolers in Canada focuses on the parental perspective. While the insights of parents is very benefical I believe that greater research must be conducted to uncover Black students persepctives and experiences of homeschooling. Simialrly, much more research should focus on the types of culturally responsive resources and curricula that Black families hwo hmeschool use. Tjis research can be benefical in providing guidance to traditional schools to enhance their current curcciula.

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Biography

Amanda Pereira-Rego's interdisciplinary work merges the fields of Sociology and Education Studies to uncover how homeschooling can serve as a source of resistance for Black homeschooling families. Amanda's passion for Social Justice Education propels her to uncover pervasive issues within traditional education systems worldwide. Through critical analyses, Amanda contributes to the disruption of the status quo in order to achieve greater educational equity for all students.

Amanda's recent scholarship highlights her passion for equity, including "Black Dialects Matter: Ditchin' CodeSwitchin' Teachin'," (2023) "Consensual Indigenous Education: A Catalyst for Cultural Resurgence," (2024) and "The Politics of Performativity: A Call to Revitalize ReconciliACTION." (2024). Through her research, Amanda prioritizes genuine and long-lasting allyship with the communities of study. Allyship can manifest itself through various forms, including dialogue, educational initiatives, and community-based projects. Amanda aspires to continue this allyship in future research.