Equity in Edmonton Schools

RESEARCH REPORT

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PREPARED BY

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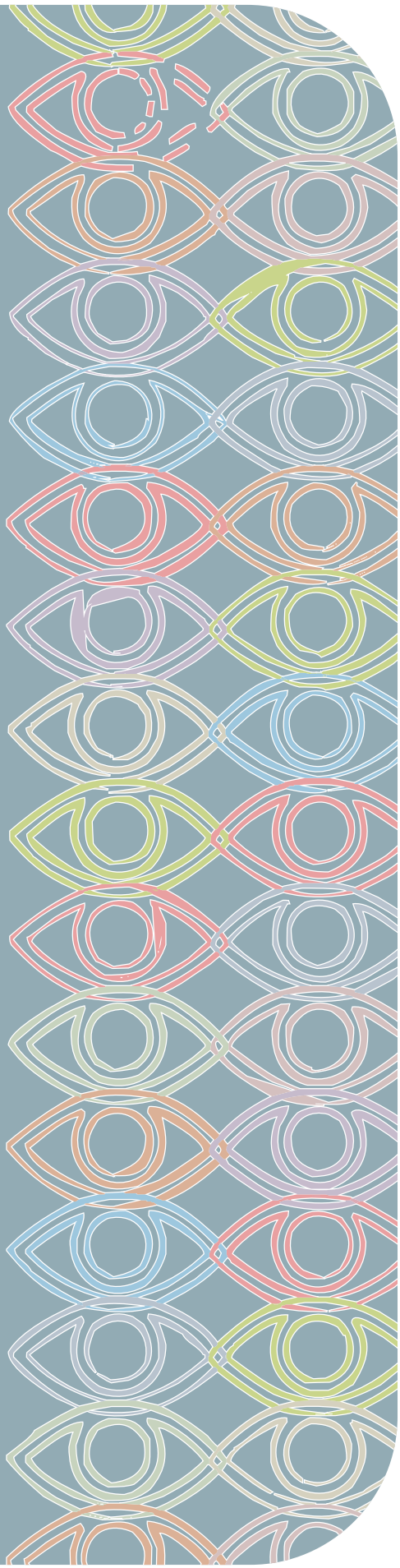

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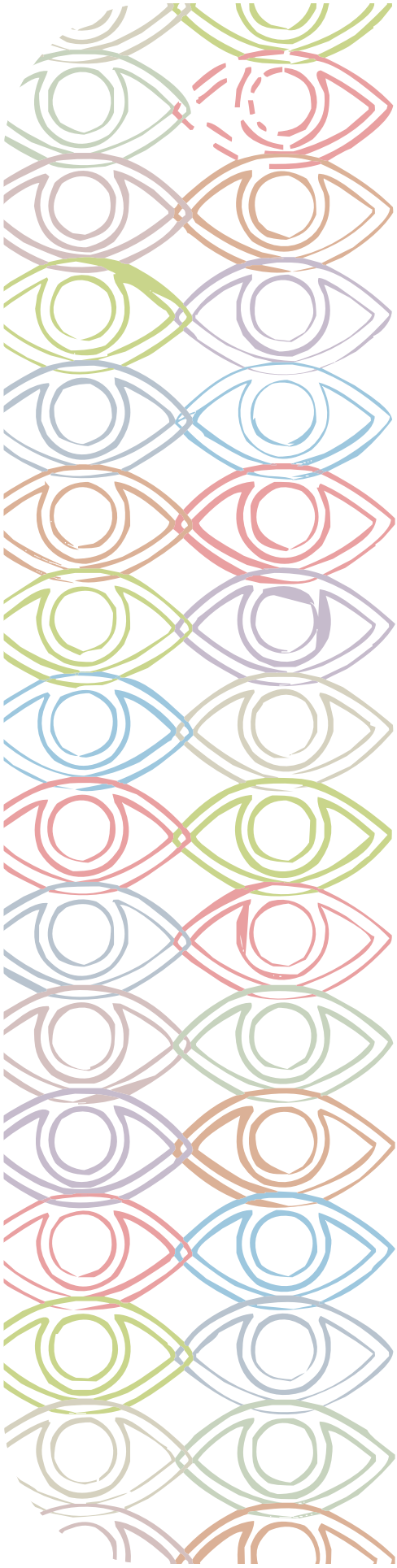


SECTION I:

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations

NAARR believes the following changes need to be made at the system level in each Edmonton school district and that this should be done through policy change and through adequate resources being applied to ensure practical change.

EDMONTON SCHOOL DISTRICTS	
1	Provide consistent, **system-wide training** of all school personnel on cultural awareness and racism.
2	Recognize the powerful nature of subtle racism and **promote inclusion** of all minority and aboriginal students in all activites and all subjects. Develop proactive ways of having students communicate with others who are different and of enhancing self-esteem for all students.
3	Work toward creation of an environment where **parents and teachers** of all groups are welcome and respected. Parent concerns with inequity must be received openly.
4	Reports of **overt racism** must be dealt with immediately and effectively - action must include support to the recipient and consequences to the aggressor. Establish clear system-wide procedures.
5	**Safety** of visible minority and Aboriginal youth must be a priority.
6	Teachers need to be alert for typical symptoms of a student who is being racially harassed: withdrawal, change in achievement, change in attendance.
7	Examine the **equity of hiring** policies across racial groups, and include recruiting and retention of minority and Aboriginal teaching staff.
8	Develop **curriculum resources** to assist teachers with cultural sensitivity and positive race relations.
9	**Keep statistics** on educational experiences of Aboriginal and visible minority students. Ask them to self-identify with racial and ethnic background. Track achievement, special labels assigned, movement between schools, disciplinary measures, and drop-out rates. Include questions on any system-wide surveys on observed or experienced racism.
10	Encourage more **comprehensive assessment** of racism across a wider range of Edmonton Public Schools and other school districts.
11	Develop **comprehensive policy** to direct procedures in system identified in this report.

Increased support:

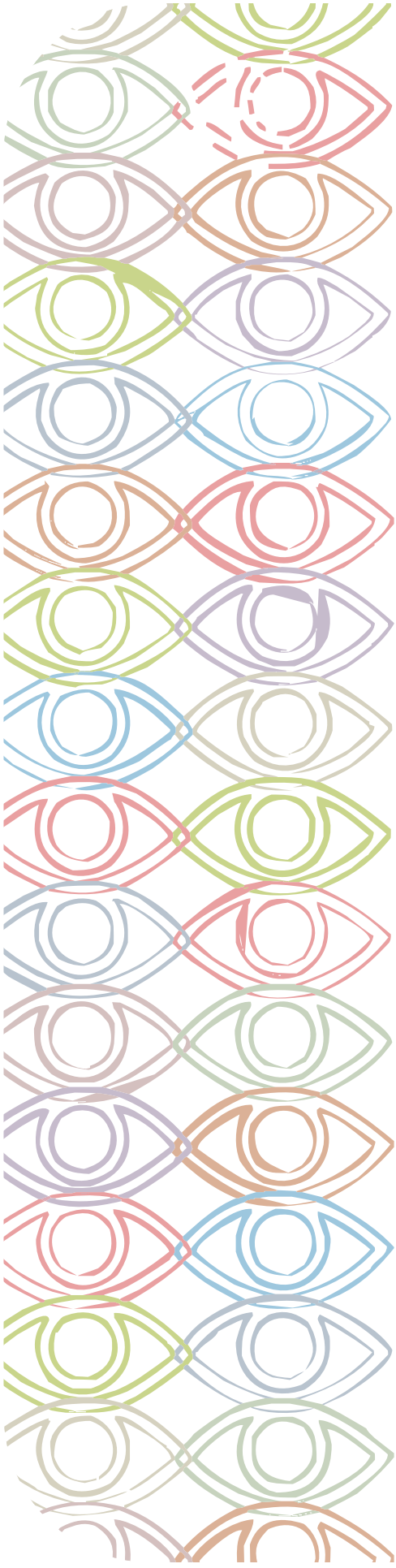
ABORIGINAL STUDENTS	
1	Implement **system-wide programs** to enhance academic success, especially when students fall behind.
2	Place particular emphasis on support for transition from elementary to junior high and from junior high to high school.

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE	
1	Increase support to ESL students in classes other than English.
2	Reexamine policy of age-cohort placement for ESL students.
3	Consider transition program for new ESL students to include learning about Canadian schools and mainstream culture.
4	All teachers must understand cognitive benefits of maintaining mother tongue.

REFUGEE STUDENTS
Refugee students need resources to assist them with social needs and cognitive skills when they have not had access to adequate schooling in their home country.

RESOURCES
Allocate resources to ensure equity and **enhance communication** with all minority and Aboriginal students and their families. Provision of cultural and community liaison workers is one effective means, independent of school administration to ensure openness. Adequate and culturally appropriate counseling is another.

ALBERTA LEARNING	
1	Relax age cap of 20 for ESL students.
2	All **curricula** and curriculum resources need to be **continually revised** to ensure they are inclusive of all cultures and belief systems. English and Language Arts must include compulsory reading of literature set in non-mainstream cultures. Social studies must include accurate and comprehensive study of the Aboriginal culture and history. Social studies must include the study of countries of Africa and other countries that are not economically powerful.



SECTION 2:

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

This summary will triangulate qualitative and quantitative data gathered in this research project. Before doing so, it is imperative to recognize its strengths and limitations. This is exploratory research, given that comprehensive research on racial equity has not been done in the city of Edmonton. The ethnographic research of Jennifer Kelly and Ernest Khalema and community consultations carried out by NAARR and other community groups have identified issues but there is not a significant body of research on which to build.

The findings derived from focus groups identify a number of areas of concern about racial equity in the schools of three school systems: Edmonton Public, Edmonton Catholic, and the Francophone school district (Conseil Scolaire Centre-Nord). The 133 participants in these groups will not represent the whole parent population, as the parents who did not have concerns would not likely attend these meetings. It must be noted that this is a large number of individuals to include in a qualitative study, these people were keen to have their issues heard, and committed to spending time explaining their concerns. One strength of this type of data is that issues can be explored in depth, with detail, and other parents in the group can add their own experiences to any topic. Parents have knowledge about their children's experiences in school over their entire school career; students were asked questions only about their current academic year. Parents have more understanding of subtle and systemic inequities; students were not asked questions that would solicit this kind of information and would understand the broader issues less. Parents would be more willing to offer criticisms of schools; students would be more hesitant to do so.

Findings from 148 Edmonton Public student surveys do point out some areas of concern. Because all students in grade 10 social studies were invited to participate, the sample is more representative of the entire school population. Large differences in response rates from different academic levels and from different schools will affect the results. There are also limitations due to the unlikelihood of students including more subtle kinds of discrimination in questions asking about their experiences. They tended to speak of situations that were blatant and overt – other research and the qualitative data from this project describe the powerful effect of subtle racism. Students also did not comment on systemic forms of discrimination.

It is also important to note that the qualitative data, as well as recent Census Canada data indicate that both black and Aboriginal people experience more intense racism than do members of other visible minorities and this study involved only 6 black (4%) and 2 Aboriginal (1%) students.

School Culture

There was evidence from both data sets that some individual schools had created positive environments that were accepting of minority and Aboriginal students and that dealt with racial incidents effectively. Surveys showed considerable differences among schools, in areas such as respect for cultural differences, frequency of racial incidents, sense of safety, discrimination because of cultural difference and language proficiency, and comfort level in speaking out against racism.

Individual Racism

Student to Student

Subtle forms of racism were identified in student surveys when minority students felt less safe than mainstream students; and when minority students found other students did not respect cultural differences. Focus group data and survey comments indicated that minority students were frequently excluded from working groups inside the classroom and from social groups outside the classroom. In high schools, this is manifest in the "hallways" that are informally segregated by racial group.

Overt racism between students was identified in student surveys, with racial jokes being fairly common, verbal harassment less common, and racially motivated violence the least frequent. The fact that more than 1/3 of students observed this type of violence monthly indicates the extent of the problem. Emotions are running very high when violence erupts and indicate many issues are under the surface. Focus groups identified verbal harassment like name-calling to be common. This data set described how verbal harassment progressed to violence when it was not dealt with adequately by school authorities. There were a few references to gang violence in both the focus groups and the surveys.

Parents and Teachers as Recipients

Focus groups described exclusion of minority teachers and parents, but surveys were not given to parents or teachers.

Systemic Racism

Shortage of Role Models

Focus groups noted there were few minority teachers in Edmonton schools. Participants felt there must be inequities in hiring practices. The identity of the minority or Aboriginal student is affected with the subtle message that they will not achieve professional positions. Inclusion of non-mainstream teachers would enhance cultural awareness and understanding of racism among other staff. Surveys did not request feedback on this issue from students.

Culture and Teaching

This was highly significant for parents, whose experience was that teachers did not understand non-mainstream cultures and that this was central to creating an inequitable learning environment. The Aboriginal experience carries the heavy shadow of residential schools that taught them their culture had no merit and was inferior. Mainstream values of assertiveness, competition, and academic achievement conflict with many other cultures that value quiet, listening, cooperation, and building self-esteem. Parents believed that educating teachers about cultural difference was crucial, as did students in open-ended questions. Responses in this category were not generated through the closed questions on the student surveys.

Curriculum and Culture

Parents saw the whole curriculum presented within the mainstream context. When their cultures were discussed, they were separated from everyday instruction and dealt with superficially – differences in dress, diet, and dance. The impression is that other cultures are less developed and that poverty is rampant. Aboriginal people felt their history is inadequate and in many cases, inaccurate. Curriculum has its basis in Christianity; other religions are also not recognized or understood adequately. One remedy is to include literature set in other cultures.

Other Systemic Issues

Immigrant students who are learning English as a second language are disadvantaged by being placed with their age cohorts without adequate support. They also have inadequate support to help them understand a vastly different school system. Aboriginal students also require support and do not receive much of it.

Aboriginal parents were extremely angry that their children were almost universally labeled with a problem, when most of their children were normal, just frequently behind due to unsuccessful teaching and cultural difference. Parents believed schools were most interested in the extra funding that came after a label was assigned.

Inadequate support, excessive labeling, and lower expectations led to high streaming of immigrant and Aboriginal students into non-academic courses.

Inequity and the Student

Emotional response to all types of racial inequity are sadness, anger, and fear.

Focus group data indicated that students experiencing racial inequity were less able to achieve academically and developed low self-esteem. This could evolve into a reluctance to attend school and a tendency to drop out. In severe cases, students became depressed and parents felt there was a higher risk of suicide in students exposed to racism. These responses reflect behaviours of youth who tend to channel their emotions inward. The survey revealed that visible minority students felt less safe than other students.

Outward-directed emotions manifested in socially inappropriate behaviours and occasionally in violence. Focus groups detailed student experience of intense and overt racism that resulted in the recipient responding with violence when no support was available.

Inequity and the Parent

Parents in focus groups knew racial inequity to be a serious issue that required them to be constantly monitoring their child's experience in school. Barriers to their doing so included not understanding the local school system, working several jobs and not having the time, intimidation due to cultural differences, and overcoming a low respect for themselves from the schools. There was also an element of fear that bringing concerns forward to a school would result in the situation becoming worse. Parents would occasionally move their child to another school hoping to find a better situation

When Schools are Confronted

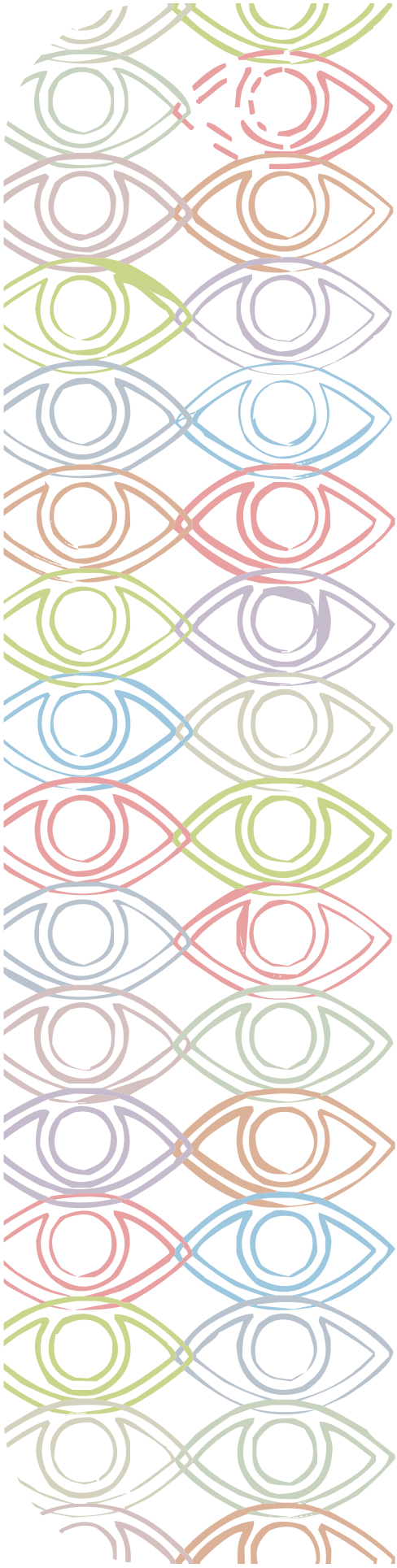
The data from student surveys showed that two-thirds of students felt teachers dealt with bullying and racism adequately. Focus group data outlined problems in this area. Parents described a few schools that had positive and equitable environments. Similarly, surveys highlighted significant differences between schools. When other schools were approached with a racial problem, participants described school response as inappropriate, ineffective, too late, or no reaction at all. Parents found schools unable to recognize or understand racism – either when it was subtle or when it became overt. A frequent school reaction was defensiveness and denial that any problem existed. Part of the reason for inappropriate reaction was lack of knowledge about cultural difference and racism, said the parents.

Focus groups saw schools approaching issues of racism by dealing with the symptoms and not the root causes. With inward focused behaviours like withdrawal and low achievement there was rarely an attempt to find a cause. And when behaviours were directed outward, as with violence, it was only the violence that was dealt with. Parents noted that schools took decisive action when the recipient of racism was a white student.

Parents noted that schools were mostly unable to receive criticism on racial inequity. Lack of understanding, defensiveness, and denial were reasons for this, thought parents, but there also seemed to be a fear of becoming a school that is known for having racial problems.

At the System Level

When issues were taken to the district senior administration level, there was denial that racism was a problem. Black and Aboriginal parents were skeptical that system-wide changes were possible, others agreed change would take a long time.



SECTION 3:

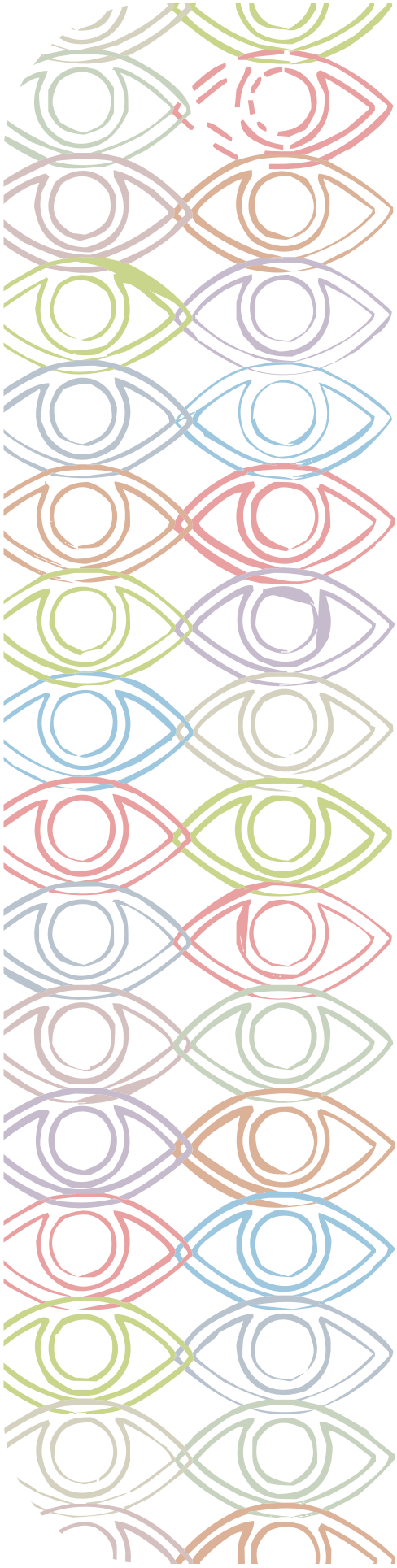
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

EQUITY IN EDMONTON SCHOOLS: ACROSS RACIAL GROUPS	
CANADIAN RESEARCH	■ Education is not equitable across racial groups
FOCUS GROUPS	■ 12 groups ■ 132 participants (mainly parents, some youth & other adults)
SURVEYS	■ Edmonton Public Schools ■ Grade 10 Social Studies ■ 148 participants

FINDINGS	
1	**SCHOOLS ARE OVERWORKED AND UNDERFUNDED.**
2	**SCHOOL CULTURE** SOME SCHOOLS: ■ Accepted minority & Aboriginal students. ■ Dealt with racial incidents effectively.
3	**INDIVIDUAL RACISM** A) STUDENT TO STUDENT (SUBTLE): ■ Exclusion of minorities and Aboriginals ■ Cultural differences not respected ■ Minorites felt less safe B) STUDENT TO STUDENT (OVERT) ■ Racial jokes common ■ Verbal harassment occasional ■ Racially motivated violence occurs
4	**MINORITY PARENTS AND TEACHERS** ALSO FELT EXCLUDED
5	**SYSTEMIC INEQUITY** A) SHORTAGE OF MINORITY AND ABORIGINAL TEACHERS ■ Hiring practices are perceived to be inequitable ■ Implies minorities can't achieve B) CULTURE AND TEACHING ■ Teachers lack cultural knowledge

5 (Cont.)	C) CURRICULUM AND CULTURE ■ Curriculum is mainstream ■ Minority cultures separated and superficial (dress, diet & dance) D) OTHER ■ ESL & Aboriginal – inadequate support ■ Near universal labeling of Aboriginal students ■ Tendency to stream to non-academic ■ Inequitable discipline across racial groups
6	**INEQUITY AND THE STUDENT** EMOTIONS: ■ Sadness ■ Anger ■ Fear INWARD-DIRECTED ■ Low achievement ■ Low self-esteem ■ Reluctant to attend school ■ Tend to drop out OUTWARD-DIRECTED ■ Inappropriate behaviour ■ Violence
7	**INEQUITY AND THE PARENT** PARENTS HAD TO CONSTANTLY MONITOR CHILD'S EXPERIENCE BARRIERS: ■ don't understand our system ■ work several jobs ■ intimidated – cultural difference ■ overcome low respect FEAR – MAKE SITUATION WORSE MOVE CHILD TO ANOTHER SCHOOL

8	**WHEN SCHOOLS ARE CONFRONTED** QUALITATIVE RESULTS: ■ No reaction ■ Ineffective ■ Inappropriate ■ Too late ■ Denial of racism, defensiveness ■ Deal with symptom, not root cause ■ Remove the student (recipient) QUANTITATIVE RESULTS: ■ 2/3 of students were confident teachers would deal with racism effectively



SECTION 4:

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature Review Abstract

The Edmonton school district is comprised of 209 public schools that served more than 80,498 students between 1999-2000 (Edmonton Public Schools, 2000) as well as 84 Catholic schools that served 32,554 students in the same year (Edmonton Catholic Schools, 2000). This section describes the demographic context in which these school systems operate, reviews the existing literature on the concepts of race and racism in general with a focus on Canadian research, reviews the research on racism in elementary and secondary education in Canada, anti-racism and equity in education, and legislation that relates to equity in education. Concluding comments address the rationale for working toward policies, procedures, and practices that address equity in Edmonton schools.

Demographic Context

Introduction

The proportion of visible minorities and Aboriginal people is increasing in Edmonton, as it is across the country, and this proportion will certainly continue to increase (Li, 1997, 2000; Statistics Canada, 1996). The 2001 Canada census reported that 19.7 percent of the population in Edmonton was visible minority (Statistics Canada, 2001). Demographic data also indicate that Edmonton has the second highest number of Aboriginal people of any urban area in the country with approximately 4.7 percent reporting Aboriginal ancestry. The Aboriginal population is younger than the general population and increasing at a faster rate than the general population (Edmonton Community Services, 2000:22, Statistics Canada, 2001). By 2012, in Edmonton, the proportion of Aboriginal students is predicted to rise to 20% (Simons, 2002). Currently, approximately one in four people are either visible minority or Aboriginal.

Quality of Life for Aboriginal and Visible Minority People

Our Aboriginal population lives with multiple hindrances to quality of life, on average. They are currently the least healthy, least educated, and most likely to be unemployed or to earn a very low income of any other population sector (55% poor) (Jackson, 2001). Aboriginal people are more likely to smoke and engage in substance abuse, more likely to be lone parents or homeless, and they make up the majority of the provincial and federal inmate population (Hanselmann, 2001).

Even though Aboriginal people are far less likely to obtain post-secondary level education, when they do achieve at this level, they are less likely than other Canadians with equivalent education to obtain employment, advance in their employment, and to earn an equivalent salary (Canadian Race Relations Foundation, 2000).

Recent immigrants, especially those belonging to visible minorities, face high unemployment and under-employment (Smith & Jackson, 2002). The 1996 Census revealed that the overall poverty rate in Canada was 21% (Jackson, 2001). In 1996, Lee, K. (2000) found that 30.0% of immigrants and 52.1% of recent immigrants (who had arrived after 1991), were poor. Moreover, this disadvantage was extended to all visible minorities, about 70% of whom were foreign born (37.6% poor) (Jackson, 2001).

Education is positively correlated with income; people with less education are more likely to live in poverty (Lee, K., 2000). For Canadians aged 15-64, it was found that those with less than secondary education were more likely to live in poverty (24%) than those with secondary (18%) or a post-secondary certificate (13%) (Lee, K., 2000; Jackson, 2001). Visible minorities are far more likely to be poor whatever their educational level. When employed, they faced difficulties advancing in their jobs and earned less than Canadian counterparts with equivalent qualifications (Canadian Race Relations Foundation, 2000).

Labour Market

Alberta Human Resources & Employment predicts labour shortages in the next decade. Employers must look to the Aboriginal and immigrant population as a source for employees that will be needed. It has been demonstrated that a diverse workforce is valuable to employers. Productivity and competitive advantage increase and better service is provided to diverse clients (Alberta Human Resources, 2002).

Trends in Local Education

In the mid 1990's there were substantial cuts to Education at the provincial level (Robertson, et.al., 1995). During 2001 and 2002, a dispute arose between the teachers in Alberta and the provincial government. Teachers were striking over class sizes and wages. "Researchers have determined that larger classes might well increase difficulties at the higher grades, particularly for at-risk, *minority*, special needs or *second language* students." (italics added – ATA, 2002). "Smaller class sizes … appear to narrow the achievement gap between Caucasian and *minority* students" (italics added – ATA, 2002). Dei indicates that smaller classes are more likely to meet needs of students "at risk" of dropping out (Dei, 1997).

During the time of this labour dispute, the provincial department of Human Resources and Employment released *Prepared for Growth–Building Alberta's Labour Supply*. The report indicated that a shortage existed in the teaching profession (ATA, 2002).

The Concepts of Race and Racism

The term "race" is no longer accepted as a biological concept. Previously used to describe a hierarchy of humans with "white" or "Caucasian" seen as most highly developed or superior. "Race" is now used as a socially constructed term to examine differences in life quality for people with different colours of skin (Banton, 1998; Klass & Hellman, 1971:18-20; Littlefield, et.al.,1982).

Types of Racism

Racism is the combination of the power of one race to dominate over other races and a value system that assumes that the dominant race is innately superior to all others. Therefore, what has been deemed unacceptable in science has remained a substantive, if hidden, motivation for maintenance of this power. In examining patterns of racism today, researchers have identified several forms of racism that can be expressed either overtly or subtly including: systemic/ institutional, cultural, and individual racism (Canadian Race Relations Foundation, 2002; Henry, et.al., 1995; Satzewich, 1998).

Individual Racism

Individual racism manifests itself in individual attitudes and behaviours, both subtle and overt, conscious and subconscious, that have the effect of asserting the superiority of one race over another (Dodd, et.al., 1994). Racist attitudes find expression in, for example, simple preferences, glances, non-verbal gestures, jokes, racial slurs, and in crimes born of racial hatred. "The measure of racism is the effect on the oppressed, not the intent of the oppressor" (United Church, 2000:14). These effects can be feelings of sadness, inadequacy, and depression; confusion, frustration, and humiliation; and anger. In short, it causes emotional pain and must be considered a form of abuse. Examples of reactions include social withdrawal, lowered levels of performance, and verbal and physical aggression. It takes a strong individual, usually backed by a strong support system, to be able to handle frequent racism in a way that maintains one's own self confidence.

Canadian society has succeeded in rejecting most overt forms of racism in their laws, institutions, and everyday lives, but the more subtle forms are not easily condemned and still remain prevalent in Canadian society. The fact that much individual racism is unconscious presents complex challenges (Henry, et.al., 1995).

Cultural Racism

According to Dodd, et.al. (1994) cultural racism is one root of both individual and systemic forms of racism. Cultural racism substitutes the cultural category "European" for the racial category "white" (see Amin, 1989). This theoretical structure rationalizes continued dominance of communities of colour in the third world and within western societies. Cultural racism therefore, according to Amin (1989), asserts the superiority of European civilization and thus the supposedly more mature, evolved, rational character of Europeans and their descendants.

Institutional or Systemic Racism

Racism also manifests itself in systemic forms. According to Henry, et.al. (1995), systemic racism consists of the policies and practices of organizations, which directly or indirectly operate to sustain the advantages of peoples of certain "social races". Visible minorities are disadvantaged in a way that makes it difficult to identify any individual act of discrimination (Levine-Rasky, 2001; McIntosh, 1990). System-wide racism is the accumulated effect of centuries of racism (Kivel, 1996:160).

In Canada, racism is found in most institutions: education, politics, legal systems, small and large businesses, religious organizations, courts, police systems, professional associations, unions, access to health and social services, in sports teams, and in the arts. When racism is endemic in all institutions, it perpetuates a cycle for Aboriginal people and those of visible minority. When people of colour achieve a certain level of education, they are less likely to acquire the same quality of job and achieve the same level of income as a white person with the same education. They therefore live in lower cost housing, their children end up going to poorer quality schools, which help determine whether they go to university to get jobs that are harder to get anyway (Satzewich, 1998: 274). This is the cycle of racism.

Racism in Housing

Research indicates that visible minorities and Aboriginal peoples have difficulty renting apartments and getting bank loans to purchase homes. These problems are exacerbated when the individuals are new to Canada, when they are poor, and when their skin is very dark (Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation). When they do find housing, they are often not fully accepted into the community.

Racism in Justice

Institutional racism is also found in the justice system, in policing, in the imprisonment and in the administration of the law for Aboriginal people and people of colour in Canada. York (1990) reported that there is a disproportionate number of Aboriginal, African Canadians, and Asian-Canadians in Canada's correctional system.

Kivel indicates that white people actually commit the most crime in the United States. It is often corporate crime and tax evasion. These crimes are rarely reported in the media; the public does not perceive white people as tending to be criminal. Kivel also notes that when guilty of identical crimes, white people get lighter sentences (Kivel, 1996).

Racism in the Media

The mainstream media in this country is complicit in reproducing "racism in a number of ways – negative stereotyping, ethnocentric judgements, the marginalization of people of colour, and the racialization of issues such as crime and immigration" (Henry, et.al., 1995: 232). Aboriginal people and people of colour are most notable by their absence in general news and general interest stories. There are very few media images of resilience and strength among non-white people; their portrayal most often fits the stereotype of their group. News coverage about criminal activity, however, paints a picture of a high level of crime within these population groups (Kivel, 1996:193). Immigrant criminal rates are in fact lower than rates for those born in Canada (Henry, et.al., 1995).

During the past few years in Edmonton, issues that have received biased coverage are the "Asian Gang" coverage of violence in 1999, reports on illegal Chinese immigrants in 1999, coverage of September 11, 2001 and its aftermath, the continuing bias in coverage of events in Palestine and Israel, and the recent media reports of conflict between the U.S. and Iraq.

"(M)any white people rely almost entirely on the media for their information about minorities and the issues that concern their communities" (Henry, et.al.,1995: 232). Broadcast media is subject to regulation by the Canadian Radio and Television Commission (CRTC) but there is no such body governing print media. There are press councils in each province that deal with issues of bias, but editorial comment does not fall under their jurisdiction and this is where much of the bias appears.

White Supremacy

It must be acknowledged that in spite of the white supremacist movement being on the fringes of society, it is an insidious force with frightening potential. Beginning with the birth of the Ku Klux Klan in post-civil war southern United States, White Supremacist (hate) groups are now found throughout the western world. The names and the targets of the groups have changed over the years. Target populations have changed over time; in the early part of the 20th century, Irish, Catholic, and Ukrainian people, along with people of colour were targets of hate activity. Current targets are gay and lesbian people and anyone with skin that is not white.

During the 1970s and 1980s, the Ku Klux Klan and the Aryan Nations were formally operating in Alberta. Both Jim Keegstra and his lawyer Doug Christie were involved in local politics in this time period (Kinsella, 1995: 30-65).

In the 1990's the movement seems to have gone underground, using the internet as its main source of spreading hate propaganda. Warren Kinsella, author of the Web of Hate, notes that the number of hate sites had risen to 3000 in the year 2003. Some of the sites are "hard core", and some are subtle, manipulative, and aimed at children and alienated white youth. Musical groups spread hatred through their lyrics.

Although White Supremacist groups may only directly affect a small proportion of our population, their aggressive targeting of youth and their history of involvement in politics means we must be acutely aware of their potential to impact society in powerfully negative ways. We must never forget the speed and ease with which Hitler came to power in Germany.

Racism and the Education System

Significant research analyzes the experiences of visible minority and Aboriginal people through the attitudes and behaviours of other students and adults within the system, and due to the systemic nature of the inequalities in educational institutions (Calliste, et.al., 1995; Codjoe, 1999; Edmonton Immigrant Services Association, 2001; Mennonite Centre for Newcomers, 1994: 30-31; Ng, et.al., 1995). "There is a large body of research that suggests educators need not hold any particular malice for systemically inequitable outcomes to be realized. However, a critical investigation of this polemic reveals that we cannot escape the reality that 'schooling' is geared toward engaging some students while disengaging others" (Dei, 2000: 119). "By the same token, teachers can become social reconstructionists, reversing instead of reproducing the norms and values that dictate attitudes and behaviours. They can transform society by deliberately forming a new consciousness in its people. Such a social formation of consciousness can potentially impact the ideologies and behaviours that have oppressed and marginalized minorities for generations" (Solomon, 2001: 1).

It is imperative that educators, administrators, and elected officials be given an opportunity to critically evaluate their own attitudes and behaviours while system-wide analysis seeks for opportunities to ensure that the learning experience for all students is equitable.

Each individual who is involved in the education system must acknowledge the very recent history of Aboriginal cultural genocide, carried out and condoned by church and state in our nation. Severe restrictions on and abuse of Aboriginal people both inside and external to the education system have deeply affected individual people and entire societies. Indigenous people, struggling to regain dignity and respect, continue to face individual and systemic racism in this society. Their problems in education are complicated by family breakdown, lack of cultural relevance in teaching style, few Aboriginal teachers and a high turnover of white teachers on reserves, and an almost total absence of topics that deal with their lives and their culture. Rate of graduation from high school is 20% nationally (Henry, et.al.,1995).

Several studies have examined interlocking systems of power and multiple forms of oppression in the school context including racial, linguistic, ethnic, social class, and gender (Calliste, et.al., 1995; Codjoe, 1997; Dei, et.al., 1997; Dei, 1997; Endicott & Mukhuerjee, 1999). When individuals are recipients of more than one form of subjugation, for example, persons of colour[1] who are poor and female, their lives are subject to discrimination in so many ways that routes to success are severely limited.

The Effect of Racism on Students

On Students of Colour

Each experience of racial discrimination produces emotional pain. We wish to note that the experiences may be qualitatively different for new immigrants, for people of colour who have lived in Canada for several years or more, and for Aboriginal people. In the case of new immigrants, racism is usually not

1 It is most appropriate to refer to visible minority people and Aboriginal people distinctly, because of the many differences with their circumstances. To make reading easier, in this document, *People of Colour*, will refer to both groups. Our apologies if this is offensive to the reader.

something they had expected to be dealing with when they left their homes to come to Canada. And it is often something they have never experienced in their lives. For the newcomer, racism can be confusing, frustrating, shameful, and shocking. For people of colour who are not new to Canada, their reactions vary but there is often a resignation and an ongoing feeling of anger. Many Aboriginal people experience racism all of their lives, and their emotions are often complicated by the issues outlined above.

Of course when the recipient of racism is a child, the sadness and anger are harsh. "Racism can be so unexpected and painful for small children but they may not speak about it to anyone. When children are abused, whether by individuals or by a social system, they may find it hard to understand why it is happening, and may not know how to get help, even from their parents" (Canadian Ethnocultural Council, 1997: 3). In many cases these emotions lead to decreased academic performance and/or behaviour problems. If alienation is left unassisted, it may eventually lead to dropping out of school, depression, violent behaviour, or inappropriate use of drugs or alcohol.

Jennifer Kelly (1998), in her study of black students in Edmonton schools, found that young people who were alienated and alone in elementary schools, found comfort and protection in groups of youth from the same racial background when they reached secondary school. She found conflict between racial groups, especially in high school. Her study, like another done by the Edmonton Social Planning Council (1992), discovered that physical conflict between racial groups was common.

On White Students

White students hold a position of privilege in our public education systems. "Their parents understand the workings of the system, having succeeded in the same or similar system. Teachers who are almost entirely from the dominant group, understand and validate their culture, as normal and invisible." White children get more attention and teachers have higher expectations for them. "In short, the requirements of success for these students, or their *success needs* are consistently being met, in nearly every aspect of home, school and community life" (Dei, 2000:147).

Henry, et.al. (1995: 177) note that children between ages four and seven first form racial preferences. From ages eight to twelve, they develop a deeper understanding of status and difference between racial groups. "At this stage, overtly prejudicial behaviors may emerge". White students need to become aware of their privileged position. Many of these students need guidance from teachers on ways to be critical of their attitudes and behaviours and in developing values for equity. They also need practice in appropriate ways to speak out against racism or ways to take other appropriate action.

Barriers Created by Racism

Barriers: School Response to Racial Incidents

As commonly found in western research, students of schools in Edmonton and area reported during several consultations that the way teachers and administrators deal with racial incidents is often inappropriate and in many cases these incidents are not dealt with at all (*Canada's Regional Consultations*, 2000; Edmonton Social Planning Council, 1992; Kelly, 1998; Northern Alberta Alliance on Race Relations, 2001). Research participants believed that many teachers and administrators perhaps did not understand the situation clearly and may not have been aware of appropriate ways to deal with these situations. In *Because of the Color* (Edmonton Social Planning Council, 1992), teachers showed

awareness of the problems but felt there were few programs to assist them in dealing with racism in the schools. The effect on the student when nothing is done is to make them feel even more powerless and lonely. We must point out that even when parents make formal complaints to school authorities, complaints are often dismissed. We also suggest that with racism being a highly sensitive issue in contemporary society, that as Henry, et.al. (1995: 185) point out, school officials and teachers may be hesitant to report racial incidents because this would make the school or the teacher 'look bad'.

Young people and their parents have also indicated that because of the frequent inaction from school authorities toward racial incidents, students are forced to deal with demeaning treatment from other students on their own. When these instances happen repeatedly, it is natural for feelings of sadness, frustration, and anger to build up to the point where they erupt in violence. Participants in local research send a strong message that when this happens, it is usually the student of colour or the Aboriginal student who is dealt with harshly. Yet, when violent acts are committed by a white student toward a student of colour, the situations tend to be either dismissed or not handled with the same severity. NAARR has data indicating that parents become so frustrated with the abuse their children are suffering in the school setting, that they are left with no choice but to recommend violence to their children (*Canada's Regional Consultations*, 2001; Edmonton Social Planning Council, 1992; Kelly, 1998; Northern Alberta Alliance on Race Relations, 2001).

Barriers: Identity Formation

The Safe and Caring Schools project of the Alberta Teachers' Association notes that "(c)hildren are vulnerable targets of prejudiced or discriminatory behaviors because they are just beginning to form a sense of their own identity – who they are and the groups to which they belong. "When this identity is challenged, they are at risk of internalizing and accepting the unfair treatment as truth" (ATA, 1999:5). Some children develop 'own-group hatred' (Coreblum & Annis, 1993:10). NAARR has seen evidence of this when parents report that children request to change their last name or their religion (Northern Alberta Alliance on Race Relations, 2002b) and when children wish they were white. One consequence of developing a positive racial or cultural self-image can be a feeling of being more comfortable being with one's own racial or ethnic group. This is often seen by school officials as a negative phenomenon and a kind of 'reverse-racism'. It can make good relations between racial groups even more challenging and may contribute to inter-group conflict (Edmonton Social Planning Council, 1992; Kelly, 1998).

White children come to school with attitudes they have learned at home, in society outside the home, through their literature, and via the media. Some come from homes that have taught respect for all people and have been able to counteract other forces in their children's lives. They may take steps to work with and form friendships with children of colour, but may themselves be criticized for associating with the 'other' and may not be able to deal with this. "Alia Miel (1976) also found that White children learn to be hypocritical about differences at a very early age. The prejudices of their society were still very much with them, but they had it drilled into them that it was 'not nice' to express such feelings" (Derman-Sparks, 1989:3). These children, like many adults, will tend to be very subtle and polite about expressing their discriminatory attitudes.

When of teachers of colour are few, it is more difficult for children of colour to develop positive identities. The dearth of role models who are like them will feed into existing doubts about their self worth. For white children this situation reinforces a sense of superiority.

Barriers: Expectations, Achievement, and Dropping Out

Specific findings in the area indicate that such barriers have been detrimental to minority students' academic progress (Calliste, et.al., 1995; Bascia, 1996; Kelly,1998; Khalema, 2001a). In particular, research reveals that minority and Aboriginal students are often disengaged from schooling not because they are not interested in learning, but because of what Codjoe (1999) and others describe as a "hostile" school environment. Thus, students who find school boring, or believe that teachers do not value or care about them, or that learning is irrelevant to their lives, are at a high risk of dropping out of school (Dei, et.al., 1997; and Skutnabb-Kangas & Cummins, 1988).

The Ministry of Learning in Alberta has released a report wherein they identify issues such as negative teacher-student interaction and low teacher expectations as strong factors contributing to students dropping out of school. In this study, the issue of racism is not mentioned, but all of the barriers to completion of school identified in the study are barriers that can be created by racism.

Negative interaction between students of colour and their teachers is not universal, but has been identified by researchers, parents, and the students themselves as forming a barrier to success in school. Some of this has been discussed above in the section dealing with the ways teachers and administrators handle racial incidents. The issue is, however, broader than this. Here we move into attitudes and behaviours that teachers are most commonly unconscious of and aspects of systemic disadvantage to students of colour.

Empirical examinations of classroom practices reveal that the kinds of questions asked of learners in the school setting, and the limited range of responses for which these allow, provide minority, immigrant, and Aboriginal students with little opportunity to become active participants in classroom dialogue, and this often leads to negative evaluation of students abilities (Dei, et.al., 2000; and Gossetti & Rusch, 1995; Michaels, 1986). It is clearly demonstrated in the literature, that teachers tend to expect a lower level of achievement from Aboriginal and visible minority students (Dei, 2000; Edmonton Immigrant Services Association, 2001; Edmonton Social Planning Council, 1992:v). Students who feel that school personnel are not interested in them and do not care much about them, find themselves in what Dei refers to as a 'network of disinterest' (Dei, 1997:72). Effects on the student are therefore emotional and cognitive.

One consequence of this downward pressure on achievement is a tendency to direct too many visible minority and Aboriginal students into special education and non-academic streams as noted in a report by the Canadian School Boards' Association (Endicott & Mukhuerjee,1992:11) and by Henry, et.al. (1995).

Student success is also strongly affected by their familiarity with English. A significant proportion of students of colour are English as a Second Language (ESL) students, including many Aboriginal students. When school and school district policies fail to provide for the specific needs of ESL students, they are not providing equal opportunity for these young people. New immigrants are frequently placed with their age cohort with no extra assistance with English. In secondary school, they often end up in non-academic streams, not necessarily because of their ability but because of their skills with English. They are then extremely unlikely to pursue post-secondary education. This is a particularly significant issue for refugee children who come from situations where they may have little or no formal education. Flexibility needs to be exercised with these youth, for example with the Alberta policy that ends funding for public schooling at age 20.

Researchers have attributed inadequate intercultural related instruction to low teacher expectations of minority students (Calliste, et.al., 1995; Codjoe, 1999; Dei, et.al., 1997; Henry, 1992; Rist, 1970). Different values and modes of communication, including the non-verbal type, affect the ability of newcomers as well as Aboriginal students to succeed in school and of their parents to communicate with school officials.

When problems exist with student achievement, and the same students also feel alienated, uncared for, and unwelcome in school, and may experience a hostile environment, emotionally and sometimes physically, it is not surprising to realize that Aboriginal students and visible minority students tend to have higher rates of dropping out of school. Dei notes the "recent recognition that early school leaving is a process – not an event – typically a long process of gradual disengagement" (Dei, 1997:3). Dei reports that these students would often skip school and then get suspended for skipping, without school authorities being aware of the reasons they felt uncomfortable there. Dei's conclusion is that the students were 'helped out the door' or 'pushed out' (Dei, 1997). The Alberta Learning Report finds that negative teacher-student interaction and low teacher expectation for students are associated with dropping out of school. The same report indicates that dropouts feel at risk, unsafe, and victims when they are in school (Alberta Learning, 2001).

When students have difficulty achieving in school, teachers often blame the student themselves and their family or their culture for not supporting educational success (Dei, 1997; Dei, 2000:146). There is certainly much in families and in society that affects student learning and these factors are more prevalent in families of colour, but education systems must acknowledge the complexity of the issues and that racism does exist within their own systems before these students can begin to reach their full academic potential. White teachers, administrators, and elected officials must also be able to acknowledge their own relative privilege in society (Dei, 2000:146).

Alberta Learning's list of recommendations for ways to create schooling that is more responsive to students prone to dropping out is an excellent set of goals. Schools and school systems that move in the directions proposed in this list would be working to decrease racism.

- listen to and support students – to overcome barriers
- manage student alienation
- increase students' knowledge of self and the effects of labeling
- develop cross-cultural sensitivities for teachers

"Alberta Learning is committed to ensuring Albertans have the knowledge & skills they need to be successful and to learn quickly and flexibly throughout their lives." "As such, the ability of every student to successfully complete high school is fundamental to continued success and quality of life" (Alberta Learning, 2000:i).

We applaud this commitment.

There are many schools and classrooms in Edmonton that recognize the racism that affects their students and that engage in initiatives to ameliorate its consequences. Young participants in this study "noted that within respectful and supportive schools and social environments, their learning and adjustment experiences improved immensely" (Edmonton Social Planning Council, 1992:iii).

Curriculum

When examining the success of curriculum in integrating issues related to the oppression of minority groups in Canada, we need to look at curriculum from two perspectives: first, the content areas, and second, the manner in which curriculum is delivered. "Gosetti and Rusch (1995) suggest that the conversations, the writings, and the professional activities that construct our understanding of teaching arise from a privileged perspective that has largely ignored issues of status, ethnicity, race, and gender. Thus, the history of exploitation and oppression of minority and Aboriginal groups within the Canadian context has not been clearly integrated into the curriculum.

It is necessary that students become aware of hate literature, its proliferation on the internet and in music, and hate crimes. All students need to be equipped with tools for assessing literature and incidents critically. This was a specific recommendation from the consultations held in Edmonton prior to the World Conference Against Racism in 2000 (Canada's Regional Consultations, 2000).

If teachers are given the opportunity to develop awareness of the oppression of racial minorities in Canada and in our education system, they will be better equipped to approach all of their teaching in a manner that attempts to address the existing imbalances. Blades believes that "for most of secondary school curriculum it is the approach to the curriculum that needs to change, not the existing set of topics" and that "advice on how to approach topics from a culturally responsive perspective" would take teachers a long way in meeting the needs of all students" (Blades, et.al., 2000:47).

Teachers

The following section is taken entirely from an article written by one of the authors of this report, Khalema (2001b).

According to Calliste (1982), teachers of visible minority background serve as role models and mentors for visible minority students. Furthermore, researchers have indicated that the absence of visible minority teachers as role models or mentors is crucial in explaining why minority students do not excel in school (Bascia, 1996; Codjoe, 1999; Cummins 1986; Huberman, 1989; James, 1990). Other researchers have demonstrated that visible minority teachers serve as symbols of success, and are ideally positioned to enrich the curriculum with cultural and cognitive strategies. This, in turn, has led to greater success in schools by minority students (Blesse, 1997; Brown et al, 2000; Callender, 1997; Cummins, 1986; Desjardins, 1996).

In addition to the role model effect, researchers indicate that exposure to minorities as professionals may benefit dominant-group students, by helping them to modify any stereotypes and negative beliefs they may have about minorities in general (Callender, 1997). The survey of Brown, Cevero, and Johnson-Bailey (2000) of how racial identity affected the teaching philosophies and styles of seven African-American female teachers in technical schools, indicated that their social position as visible minority teachers helped them develop a teaching philosophy that was integrated and based on a history of marginalization. This history of marginalization became central for these teachers as their own credibility was repeatedly questioned by students and colleagues. These experiences had a strong impact on their classroom interactions and teaching strategies.

Anti-Racism and Equity

As the western world has opened its doors to immigrants from non-western countries, multicultural societies have formed. Canada, the United States, and Australia are former colonies with indigenous populations and have never been as monocultural as the nations of Europe. Western countries profess to be liberal democracies where all members of society are granted equal opportunity. The reality, as outlined in the previous section, is that access to services, housing, education, and adequate employment and income are distributed in an unequal manner and stratified according to race. Critical response to these inequalities advocates for work toward "anti-racism" and "equity".

Multiculturalism

Canada formulated the concept of 'multiculturalism' and implemented a national multiculturalism policy in 1971. This became legislation in 1988. The intent of the policy was to move from racial stratification toward racial equality. A series of changes were made to federal legislation after World War II watched Nazi Germany kill six million Jewish people in Europe. The newly formed United Nations took immediate steps to protect the world from a recurrence of this kind of abomination by drafting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). Before World War II, Canada had legislation, policies, and practices that were discriminatory against Aboriginal people and visible minorities. Several changes were made to the Immigration Act, changes that attempted to remove racial bias. The country was not universally segregated at that time, but there were pockets of segregation in living areas, schooling, rights to vote, and admission to certain professions, for example. These changes were necessary but were not enough to erase the legacy of four centuries of racism in Canada. Governments, with civil society, continue to work toward creating equal rights and equal opportunities for all Canadians; the process is ongoing and will require many more decades of searching for answers.

Evident in the name, the primary goal of multicultural education is to develop understanding of and respect for different cultures. Schools were encouraged to teach students about many cultures: their differences and their similarities. It assumed that the increased understanding would counter prejudice and promote inter-group harmony. Activities tended to focus on cultural celebrations and often remained at the superficial level of food, dance, and music (the sari, samosa syndrome). There was not an inherent understanding of the systemic nature of racism in this perspective and there was even a reluctance to discuss racism of any kind (Dei:183; Ontario Ministry of Education, 1992). Multicultural education was therefore limited in its possibilities (Solomon, 2001:3).

Anti-Racism

Multicultural education was prominent during the 1970s and 1980s. It was in Britain and the United States that "anti-racism" was formulated, arriving in Canada in the late 1980s (Henry, 1995:188). This perspective speaks of the causes of racism and its manifestations in contemporary society. It aims to increase cross-cultural understanding and an appreciation for cultural diversity, and works to eliminate discrimination.

Anti-racism recognizes the dominance of white people and euro-centric knowledge over people of colour and non-European values and knowledge. It addresses the imbalance of power and the inequality of opportunity (Dei, 2000; Henry, 1995; Kivel, 1996; Ontario Ministry of Education, 1992; Saskatchewan Education, 1997:27; Solomon, 2001).

Anti-racist education strives to identify and change educational practices, policies, and procedures that promote racism, as well as the racist attitudes and behaviour that underlie and reinforce such policies and practices. Anti-racist education provides knowledge, skills, and strategies for educators to examine racism critically in order to understand its origin and to recognize and challenge it (Vancouver Policy, in Thomas, 1984:22)

> For the teacher, this means several things: creating a climate in the classroom where stereotypes and racist ideas can be exposed and argued out; where sources of information can be examined; where children can be equipped to critically examine the accuracy of the information they receive; where alternative and missing information can be provided and where the historical and current reasons for the continued unequal social status of different groupings can be explored (Thomas, 1984:22).

Equity

Equity encompasses anti-racism and aims to also address disadvantages of gender, class, sexuality, ability, language, culture, and religion. Dei describes equity as the "qualitative value of justice" (Dei, 2000:24). "Equity in education is the fair and equal treatment of all members of our society who are entitled to participate in and enjoy the benefits of an education. All students and adults have the opportunity to participate fully and to experience success and human dignity while developing the skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary to contribute meaningfully to society" (Saskatchewan Education, 1997:4,6,7). But equity is more than treating all students equally, because "equity does not always mean equal treatment, since equal treatment presupposes that everyone is starting from the same place" (Endicott & Mukhuerjee, 1992). Equitable education takes action to ameliorate disadvantages in order to bring students onto a more level playing field.

Our Children, Our Communities, and Our Future is a document that was produced in Saskatchewan jointly by the provincial department of education, the provincial school boards' association, the teachers' association, and the teacher training institution. This document explains equity very well (from p.5):

WHAT EQUITY IS	WHAT EQUITY IS NOT
Ensuring equitable opportunity and benefit, recognizing that to be treated equitably some people may need more of different supports	Treating everyone the same
Broad in scope to include all differences	Limited in scope or to a single target population
Employment practices that ensure equity and fairness	Hiring token representatives
Curriculum, instructional, and evaluation materials and practices, as well as learning	An instructional unit on equity or a particular target group
Recognizing the value of different ways of learning and views of knowledge	A single approach to learning and imparting knowledge
Everyone having the opportunity to achieve	Lowering standards

For the purposes of this research, we will focus on the anti-racism aspect of equity, acknowledging that racism often intersects with class and gender discrimination.

Creating Equitable Education

Suggestions, taken from the literature, will be presented in a format used for business and organizations other than education. This format is used in a document entitled *AMSSA, 2000: Gaining a Competitive Advantage* produced by the Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies of British Columbia (2000). The format, while guiding this discussion, will also demonstrate that all organizations will need to take steps to become more equitable and not just because it is morally correct, but because organizations that operate for profit must become equitable to maintain that profit. Integrated into this format will be discussion of the role of education in enhancing equity by taking steps to overcome all of the barriers outlined above in the *Racism and the Education System* section. Finally, the legal argument for equity will be presented.

The globalization of trade and the increasing ethnocultural diversity of Canadian markets requires the tapping of diverse skills in a diverse workplace. Diverse people have greater cultural competency than the traditional workforce. "Leaders who fail to value diversity now will cease being leaders in the future. What's more, organizations that refuse to accept this change will also be at great risk." (Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies of BC, 2000:3). "To move from a monocultural to a multicultural organization requires a paradigm shift. It is not a straight linear process that involves adding a few minority staff and translating some materials. It requires creating a culture that values diversity. Furthermore, organizations will not value and manage cultural diversity unless top management fully support and engage in the change process" (Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies of BC, 2000:6). The Alberta government has recognized the importance of businesses moving in this direction (Alberta Human Resources, 2002).

The Canadian School Boards' Association has put together a document entitled *Employment Equity for Racially Visible and Aboriginal Peoples: An Antiracist Framework and An Antiracist Manual for School Boards* (1992). This document states that boards must acknowledge systemic racism and change policies and practices that perpetuate it (p.6). "In dealing with a sensitive community issue like racism, policy direction must visibly and forcibly come from the board, and the board must oversee its implementation" (p. 8). "A board member who becomes an advocate for anti-racist change moves from a limited view of constituents as including only those familiar to him or her, to a larger view which includes the racially visible and aboriginal peoples …" (p.7,8). The document acknowledges that the process of change will produce conflict: in the board, with some administrators and teachers, and with some parents, especially if they assume they are being called racist.

Researchers have recommended several interventionist strategies for empowering minority students, including the implementation of an inclusive curriculum that incorporates the diverse student's knowledge, cross-cultural training for teachers, and vibrant recruitment strategies of visible minority teachers in order to enrich racial minority students and produce better learning outcomes for all students (Calliste, et.al., 1995; Cummins, 1986; Khalema, 2001b; Perez, 1998; Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, 1997).

Step One: Tie Equity to Organizational Mission

In order to create equitable education, the school board must restate its priorities, incorporating equity into the mission statement or mandate. The mission must be accompanied by targets and timetables to ensure the goals are met. Organizations and businesses that set a priority for equity without integrating it into the central mandate or key business strategy, will be liable to cutting the initiative at some point in the future. Equity will never succeed if it is seen as 'nice' but not important. Many examples of this have occurred across the country as programs of multiculturalism, diversity, and English as a second language programs have been subject to severe cuts or total elimination during the past decade (Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies of BC, 2000; Canadian Council on Social Development; Endicott & Mukhuerjee, 1992).

Step Two: Implement Equitable Policies, Procedures, and Practices

Organizations show commitment to equity with a strong client focus, where all can access services. The organizational culture becomes welcoming of diversity. Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies of BC, 2000 notes that "(e)mployees rarely produce their best work when they have to fit into someone else's mold".

Policies

Appropriate policies need to be developed to clearly outline the ways in which the organization will work toward becoming equitable. Policies should encompass the following procedures and practices.[2] For example, to ensure that all racial incidents are dealt with appropriately, policy should clearly outline what would qualify an incident as a racial incident and then proscribe methods for teachers, counselors,

2 Map of Policies in Canadian School Systems attached as Appendix III.

and administrators to react. These policies need to be developed at a system-wide level and not left to individual schools.

Advocates of feminist teaching, critical pedagogy, and critical multicultural education have recognized a need to amplify and validate marginalized educational experiences by increasing sensitivity to the needs and experiences of diverse communities to foster inclusive learning opportunities. These critical studies have stressed the need to examine ways to create "substantive structural and social transformation" within the education system in order to meet the needs of all learners (Dei, et.al., 2000).

Practices

Pedagogy

Movement toward equitable education acknowledges the current barriers to success and takes steps to slowly break the barriers down with the goal of eliminating them entirely. We acknowledge that this process takes serious commitment and will require many years. Gossetti and Rusch (1995) have found that the writings, and the professional activities that construct our understanding of teaching comes from a privileged perspective that has largely ignored issues of status, ethnicity, race, and gender.

Developing the ability of educational systems and individual teachers to offer equity will require quality in-service training of all teachers on an ongoing basis (Endicott & Mukhuerjee, 1992). Cooperation of teacher training institutions will be essential, as these discussions must become an integral part of all teacher education. School systems cannot be expected to hold sole responsibility for resolving issues of racism in society, but there is a "moral and legal expectation that they will act as a model for other public and private institutions" (Endicott & Mukhuerjee, 1992:3). When all teachers have the opportunity to ponder the sources of racism and its current realities, and when they have access to resources to help them integrate anti-racism into their teaching, equity will become possible. The training opportunities for teachers will be essential, acknowledging that "(t)eaching is a demanding profession and each year teachers are asked to take on additional responsibilities previously the providence of the home. Adding to these demands without adequate support systems will only frustrate an already exhausted profession (Blades, et.al., 2000:47). The extra resources needed to work effectively toward more equitable education will certainly require allocation of funding to this area.

Resistance to anti-racism training can be expected from some teachers. The Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies of BC identifies denial of the problem as common and that initial steps are often ineffective, as has been the experience with multicultural education. A study done by Solomon (2001) found three reasons that education students were resistant to studying racism. They had difficulty acknowledging their own prejudices, were uncomfortable discussing a "taboo" subject, and they believed that equality of opportunity existed in education (p.3,4). The same study found that less than 10% of teacher candidates had substantial knowledge about diverse backgrounds and cultures and that 1/3 of them had problems interacting with people who were "different" from them (p.15).

Pedagogy: Culture

Intercultural communication is one important facet of anti-racism and equity. It must be emphasized, however, that equitable race relations involve much more than understanding of different cultures. Inequities in Canadian society include disadvantages for people of colour whose families have lived in

Canada for generations and who have adopted the values and lifestyles of the mainstream. Many of these people are not different in culture, they are only different in colour.

In our multicultural society, all Canadians need to develop awareness of cultural differences and build their skills at cross-cultural communication. The following is a useful framework to describe cultural differences.

- different communication styles – eg. nonverbal, acceptable assertiveness
- different attitudes toward conflict – face-to-face or quiet and behind the scenes
- different approaches to completing tasks – others develop relationship first, we get to the task first
- different decision making styles – delegating, deciding oneself, majority, consensus
- different attitudes toward disclosure – openness about feelings very different

Without the ability to communicate in different styles, incorrect assumptions occur frequently. An increase in cross-cultural communication skills will enhance teaching, learning, and working with parents. These skills are beneficial in general, as there is great diversity of communication styles within our own culture (Thomas, 1984).

People easily form judgments of others who are different, and often 'different' is seen as 'less than'. One does not need to cross cultures to find this kind of judgment, and young people frequently label others as 'abnormal' or 'weird'. Students need to be able to see others as different but not less than themselves (Study Circles Resource Center, 1998).

School systems also need to "(e)xtend support systems and special programmes to students who are learning English as a Second Language." These students need extra assistance, flexible programs, longer exam writing times, and more one-on-one tutoring (Blades, et.al., 2000: 47,48).

Teachers need "suitable teaching resources that incorporate a diversity of ethnocultural perspectives" (Blades, et.al., 2000: 49). Most existing texts are eurocentric. Parents and other ethnocultural community members are an excellent source of cultural information.

Pedagogy: Identity and Expectations

When teachers are able to see that racism penetrates our society, has grown out of our history, and that we all have developed prejudices by living in this society, they will become more able to teach all students with equity. And because equity is not the same as equality, they will be able to assist students who come to school with a set of disadvantages. Teaching the whole child allows teachers to look for signs of low self-worth that children may have developed. Many children of colour will need extra encouragement to develop a strong belief in their own abilities, particularly those students who do not come from a strongly supportive environment. Acknowledgement of the cycle of racism in families of colour and all of the possible ways of dealing with this racism will help teachers look beyond behaviour to search for the motivation. When children are given the message that they are valued and capable, they will achieve much better in school (Lee, E., 8).

Students need to develop skills to stand up for themselves and others in the face of injustice, part of being responsible citizens. White students need help developing a positive identity without ethnocentrism and superiority (Derman-Sparks, 1989:ix).

Curriculum

Curriculum consists of content, texts and supporting materials, and methods of delivery. In Alberta, the content of curricula is set by the provincial Ministry of Learning. School districts do not have direct control over these documents. They do have the ability to develop supporting materials and encourage particular modes of curriculum delivery. Curriculum content remains mainly eurocentric, although there have been steps taken to incorporate more diversity. "Canada and many other countries have deep links with 19th century Europe, and, consequently, reflect the world-view of that time and place in our social, cultural, and political structures. Educators committed to the goals of equity and equality must recognize that history and deal with it, without guilt or defensiveness" (Endicott & Mukhuerjee, 1992:11). For the most part, North American students are taught that white heroes, government, literature, and science are above all the rest. Kivel suggests that students can not respect other cultures if they believe their culture is superior (Kivel:208). When teachers develop the ability to provide a balance in their classrooms by doing things like using literature from other cultures, discussing important people who are people of colour, and giving credit to Islamic culture for early advancements in math and science, students will learn that each culture has contributed to knowledge (Dei, 176; Khalema, 2000b). If the curriculum leaves out the ways that colonialism has oppressed peoples of colour in the world, teachers must introduce these topics.

Classrooms need to try to counteract the racial biases that exist in the media by helping students think and read critically. The colours of faces on posters and pictures in the classroom must be diverse. Books and audio-visual resources should represent people of all cultures and colours. School districts can help by providing resources. Many excellent resources have been produced and are available for use. It is necessary, also, to delve into different types of knowledge. In western societies, cognitive knowledge has the most recognition, while other cultures place more value in knowledge acquired by experience, for example. "Education in North American contexts has always proceeded with a perspective that privileges Western ways of knowing as neutral and / or legitimate (Dei, 2000:83).

"(A)ssessment materials that consider the diversity of students' ethnocultural backgrounds" need to be developed (Blades, et.al., 2000:50). When this is the responsibility of the provincial government, as it is in Alberta, discussions on this matter need to be held with the appropriate authorities.

Step Three: Equitable Hiring Practices

Policy and procedure changes must include an examination of current hiring practices for all school system staff and implementation of a process that will eventually have the racial composition of the staff reflect the racial composition of the population. School systems, like all other employers, have inherited a system that has been part of a society that excluded non-white people. Less than 50 years ago, there were racially segregated schools in this country. The last residential school for Aboriginal people in Edmonton closed in the 1970s. There does not need to be intentional discrimination happening in human resources offices for inequitable hiring to be the end result. We must look at the reality, however, that the vast majority of teachers in both Edmonton school systems are white. The Aboriginal student population is predicted to be 20% within the next ten years and the visible minority population is already 20%. We therefore will be looking at a situation where approximately 2/5 of the student population will be white and nearly all of the teachers are white.

Policies, practices and curriculum changes must be accompanied by recruitment and hiring of teachers of colour. They will "…not only provide role models for minority youth, but bring diverse teaching styles,

modes of communication and knowledge into schools for the benefit of all students" (Dei, 2000:176). "A representative staff can, provide role-models for students, contribute a variety of worldviews to the school culture, and validate difference for students." If teaching and administrative staff are totally or primarily white every student infers that colour is inferior (Endicott & Mukhuerjee, 1992).

The Canadian School Boards Association lists four studies indicating that currently, access to employment is not equitable within school divisions in Canada (Endicott & Mukhuerjee, 1992:13). Discussion groups in Edmonton have recommended that there should be more hiring based on diversity (*Canada's Regional Consultations*, 2000: Northern Alberta Alliance on Race Relations, 2002b). Businesses and organizations throughout the western world are taking action to open up their workplaces to all racial groups. The government of Canada has been working with "employment equity" since 1986 when legislation was passed that all federal civil service and any large company contracted to the federal government must take positive steps to ensure their hiring is equitable. Many provincial governments and school districts across the country have taken the same steps, as have many corporations on their own initiative. Discrimination in hiring violates human rights legislation and, it is bad for business. With Alberta's growing economy and predicted labour shortages in the near future, hiring within non-traditional groups will become a necessity (Alberta Human Resources, 2002).

In (Endicott & Mukhuerjee, 1992), employment equity is defined as a process which takes a systematic approach to changing practices which have adversely affected racially visible and aboriginal people" (p.4). School systems are large employers and there is a "moral and legal expectation that they will act as a model for other public and private institutions." (Endicott & Mukhuerjee, 1992:3). "Employment Equity is defined as: Racially visible and aboriginal peoples have historically been denied equal access to employment opportunities, school boards must go further than treating people 'in the same way', and actively institute special measures. These may include numerical goals, targets, mentoring, and any other special measures that the school board deems necessary to achieve its objective." (Endicott & Mukhuerjee, 1992:46). "(P)roactive personnel policies are absolutely essential. Potential biases inherent in job applications and screening tests need to be carefully analyzed and dealt with (Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies of BC, 2000: 9). The process will involve outreach recruitment and ideally working with teacher training institutions to encourage people of colour and Aboriginal people to enter the teaching profession. After they are hired, the system needs to ensure there is a working environment that is welcoming. This will be demonstrated by successful retention of these teachers.

Conventions, Legislation, and Existing Policies

"In a democracy, all people have a right to equality. The education system is central to Canada's democratic process, and the Canadian school boards are responsible for delivering this education to the public" (Endicott & Mukhuerjee , 1992:10). There are international conventions, federal and provincial legislation, and policies within the ATA and the two Edmonton school districts that make the obligation to provide equitable education a legal responsibility and a moral one. Litigation suits are a real possibility for Edmonton school districts without adequate policy and procedural guidelines to meet legislative requirements.

International Conventions

Internationally, Canada has signed and ratified several international treaties that speak to equality in education. Ratifying an international treaty means that we have agreed to be bound by that treaty. The

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) is the foundation for all other international human rights treaties. The Declaration says:

- Everyone has the right to education. …
- Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups...

Since 1976, Canada has been bound by the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Canada has also signed the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

Federal Legislation

In addition to international statutes and legal obligations, the Constitution of Canada guarantees equality to all Canadians. Section 15(1) of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* guarantees equality and states that:

> "Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, color, religion, …".

Section 3(1) of the *Multiculturalism Act* (1988), recognizes:

- The existence of communities whose members share a common origin and their historic contribution to Canadian society, and enhance their development;
- The social, cultural, economic and political institutions of Canada to be both respectful and inclusive of Canada's multicultural character;
- All individuals receive equal treatment and equal protection under the law, while respecting and valuing their diversity; and
- The full and equitable participation of individuals and communities of all origins in the continuing evolution and shaping of all aspects of Canadian society and assist them in the elimination of any barrier to that participation.

Before the constitution was patriated in 1982, there was no explicit prohibition of racial discrimination. The Bill of Rights, in effect before this time, did prohibit racism, but it had no constitutional status.

In 1986, the Canadian government adopted the *Employment Equity Act* as an attempt to change structures and procedures that reproduce and reinforce discrimination, in federal civil service and within all large federal contractors. The Employment Equity Act ruled that visible minorities, women, Aboriginal peoples, and persons with disabilities are to be represented in the workplace in numbers proportionate to their presence in the local population and are not to be denied employment opportunities for reasons unrelated to ability or merit. This legislation goes further "…than treating persons in the same way but also requires special measures and the accommodation of differences."

Provincial Legislation

In Alberta, several policies and laws have been adopted as a way to enhance diversity and equity in the province. The *Alberta Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Act* of 1980, for instance, promotes the protection of Albertans from discrimination in employment, exclusion from organizations, and education. Alberta's *Individual's Rights Protection Act* also prohibits discrimination in employment.

The *Alberta School Act*, stipulates that the Alberta education system has an obligation to meet the needs of all students.

In general, these laws recognize the "mosaic" of multiculturalism in Canada, and focus on protecting individuals from racial discrimination in many spheres of life including employment and education.

Alberta Teachers' Association (2002) *Code of Professional Conduct* states that "the teacher must teach in a manner that respects the dignity and rights of all persons without prejudice as to race, ...".

Equity Initiatives in Alberta's Education

As a result of changing demographics much of Alberta's initiatives towards equity has focused on ESL programs, interpretation services, and integration assistance to newly immigrated families. In 1984 Alberta Education adopted specific *Guidelines for Tolerance and Understanding* to ensure that programs and educational material foster tolerance, understanding of, and respect for all.

In addition, in 1988, the Alberta government adopted a *Language Education Policy* that recognizes the cultural and linguistic diversity of Albertans.

Edmonton Public School Board

In addition to government and the ATA, the Edmonton Public School Board has shown some interest in dealing with diversity issues. For instance, Edmonton Public Schools (2001) *Multiculturalism Policy Statement* states that "the board believes in the promotion of individual and group relations in which ethnic, racial, religious and linguistic similarities and differences are valued, respected and exchanged".

In addition, the Edmonton Public Schools (2001) *Discrimination and Harassment* statement recognizes discrimination as an "adverse treatment based on race, …" [Section, C(1)]. In this statement, discrimination between employees is prohibited at all times [Section E(1)]. The district priorities for Edmonton Public School Board (EPSB) for 2002-2005 state that they are committed to "… providing an appropriate learning experience for each student in a caring & safe environment …."

The *Student Behaviour & Conduct Policy* for (EPSB) indicates a "Zero tolerance approach to inappropriate behaviour or conduct".

Student Rights & Responsibilities for EPSB state that:

- Students shall be treated with dignity, respect, and fairness by other students and staff
- Students shall be provided with a learning environment that is free from physical, emotional, and social abuse

- Students shall show respect for ethnic, religious, and gender differences

Edmonton Catholic School Board

The Edmonton Catholic School Board has policies that ensure each student will be treated with respect. *Administrative Policy* 109 states that all schools will "provide a safe, nurturing learning environment that recognizes … the goodness, dignity, and worth of all …". The same policy recognizes that learning environment must be "non threatening" and that "logical consequences" will be the outcome of any behaviour contrary to that stated in this policy.

Harassment is defined as any "unwelcome verbal or physical conduct because of race, …." and further states that "(u)nwanted physical contact, attention, demands, jokes or insults are harassment when they negatively affect the learning environment.".

The Need for Equity Policies in Edmonton School Systems

Canadian research and studies done in Alberta and Edmonton demonstrate that people of colour and Aboriginal people live in a disadvantaged position in every sphere of our society: housing, justice, employment, and education. Racism operates on both individual and institutional levels and as Dei (2000) indicates, institutional racism often occurs "without any particular malice. Edmonton, within the next few decades, will likely consist of 50% white and 50% people of colour, like the Toronto and Vancouver of today.

Schooling has a tremendous potential for working toward a more equitable society, and all systems must take steps to ensure their education becomes more equitable. When we are able to provide a good education for everyone, as is the goal of Alberta Learning and both Edmonton school boards, the quality of life of those who are disadvantaged by their skin colour, will increase. It is also the responsibility of school systems to prepare young people for the labour market that will need every young person. Young people of colour who have been respected as equals and young white students who are open to differences will provide needed skills for the world of work.

Racism does exist in Edmonton schools, a fact that each system must acknowledge (Edmonton Immigrant Services Association, 2001; Edmonton Social Planning Council, 1992; Kelly, 1998; Khalema, 2000a, 2001a, 2001b; The Mennonite Centre for Newcomers, 1994; Northern Alberta Alliance on Race Relations, 2001, 2002a, 2002b.) All school personnel need to develop the skills to deal with racial incidents in ways that recognize the injustice and take appropriate action. Students need to develop the responsibility to speak out against overt racism and will benefit by developing the appropriate skills.

Children are vulnerable and need to be assured of a "safe and caring" environment as indicated in the Alberta School Act. Behaviour of students of colour that exhibits withdrawal or aggression may indicate experiences of racism, as may a below average achievement level. A discussion and analysis of streaming and the potential bias in student assessment can bring these issues to the fore. The process of disengagement that may lead to students dropping out of school must be monitored. School personnel need the opportunity to discuss this dynamic, to enable them to develop skills to avoid it happening as much as is possible.

School systems must acknowledge the unique circumstances of Aboriginal people. Specific attention needs to be paid to English as a Second Language students and the particular situations that refugee

children have come from. Open communication must be developed with parents – some material will need to be translated into other languages and parent/teacher interviews may need translators to facilitate this. Parents can also be resources for learning about culture.

School personnel need to be aware of the eurocentric nature of many texts and resources and to provide a balanced discussion of the contribution of other cultures to history and ensure they are visually present in classroom materials on display. Teachers must be aware of the hate movement and develop the ability to equip young people with skills to deal with hate propaganda, especially on the internet. Teachers and students need to develop the ability to be highly critical of mass media as it demonstrates a high degree of racial bias.

Equitable hiring practices are necessary for teaching staff. This will likely need to include vibrant recruitment strategies and working closely with teacher training institutions. Teachers from visible minorities have a deep understanding of racism and often of other cultures, and types of knowledge, allowing them to help students and other teachers. Children of colour must have role models who are like them and white children must see people of colour in authority. There will be no reduction in qualifications involved in this process, as can be demonstrated by the federal civil service and many provinces and cities across the country in their experiences implementing employment equity.

To ensure that equity is eventually applied in all classrooms and in the entire school system, the procedures and practices must be driven by policy. School boards have the responsibility to ensure that these policies are created, and then provided with resources to allow their success. This is a moral issue and a legal issue. The process to equitable education will be a lengthy one and it is imperative that school boards in Edmonton take the first step.

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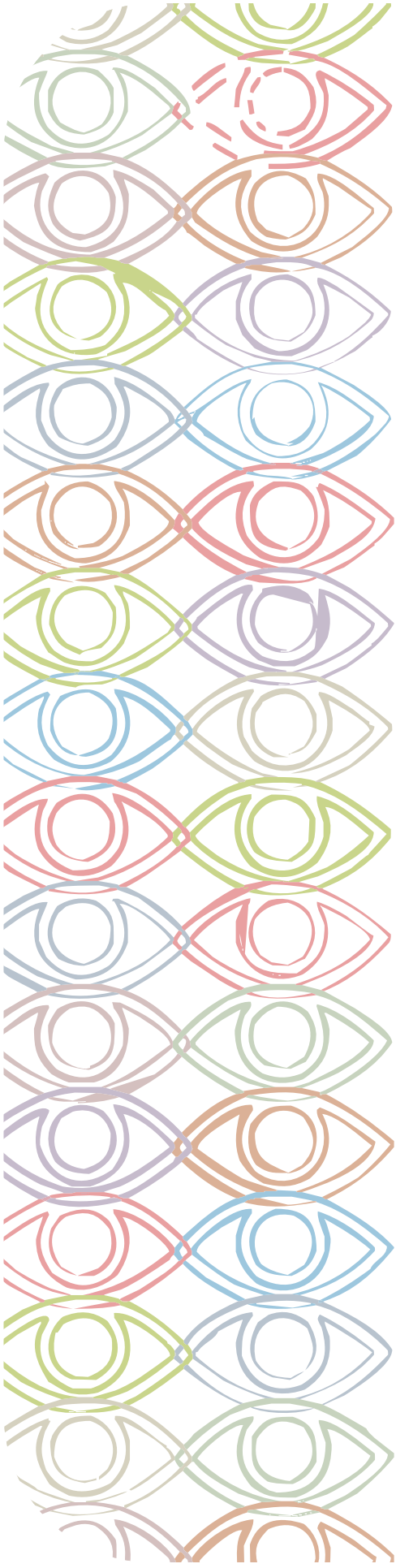

SECTION 5:

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study required required a mixed research design in order to examine how equitable the Edmonton Public and Catholic school systems were in the area of race relations. The research team recognized that data from one, or even two sources, would not be adequate for a study of this nature. We therefore adopted a research design recognized as 'triangulation'. According to Denzin (1978) triangulation of quantitative and qualitative methods ensures the use of different sets of data, different types of analyses, and/or different theoretical perspectives to study a specific phenomenon. According to Denzin (1998), triangulation is based upon the fact that:

> no single method ever adequately solves the problem of rival causal factors… because each method reveals different aspects of empirical reality, multiple methods must be employed… multiple methods should be used in every investigation (Denzin, 1978).

These different points of view, according to Marshall & Rossman (1994), are then studied so as to situate the phenomenon and locate it for the researcher. For the purpose of this study both methods were used to provide quantitative data to supplement descriptive qualitative data, thus giving a holistic understanding of the equity of education across racial groups in Edmonton. A key advantage to adopting the quantitative approach was used to give what Powell *et al* (1996) frames as a "numerical and relational" understanding of the concepts being investigated. The qualitative approach, on the other hand, was used to derive what Berg (1995) refers to as 'meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols and descriptions of things" (p.6). It was assumed that qualitative and quantitative approaches would complement each other and that both the numerical and narrative data would provide ways of discerning, comparing and contrasting, and interpreting ideas given by the participants.

Sample Design

Participants

The goal of this study was to examine the state of race relations in Edmonton Public and Catholic school systems. Data were collected on Catholic Schools only in the qualitative section. The criterion for selecting the sample was based on two factors: (a) that potential participants were connected somehow to one school system, and (b) they were available at the time of the data collection. For the quantitative sample, the research team decided to use non-random sampling procedures.

The survey employed a mixed purposeful sampling procedure, which combined quota and convenience sampling, was adopted. For the focus groups, snowballing, convenience, and judgmental sampling techniques were used to solicit parent participation and to represent the majority of ethno-cultural groups in Edmonton. Snowballing is a technique used in marketing research in which an initial group of respondents are selected at random with subsequent respondents selected based on referrals by the initial respondents (Marshall & Rossman, 1994). The judgmental aspect of sampling was implemented when varied ethnic groups were contacted directly and invited to participate.

The sampling procedures corresponded satisfactorily with the purpose of the study, the resources available, the questions being asked, and the context in which this study was conducted. This helped in triangulation and allowed for flexibility. It should be noted that using these sampling procedures do not present "statistical generalizability" and the information generated cannot be generalized to the entire

population of parents and students in both school systems. It merely gives a glimpse of the opinions of a selected number of students and parents.

Sample Size

According to Miles and Huberman (1994), in non-random sampling, the sample should be judged on the basis of the purpose and rationale for each study and the sampling strategy used to achieve the study's purpose. Thus, the sample size depends on the nature of the analysis to be performed, the desired precision of the estimates one wishes to achieve, the kind and number of comparisons that will be made. In this study, the qualitative sample included parents with children in either school system, a few concerned adults who were not parents, and several high school age youth. We talked to 133 parents in 12 focus groups. In addition, the quantitative sample included 148 grade 10 students. Both Edmonton Public and Edmonton Catholic Schools were invited to participate in the surveys but permission was received only from Edmonton Public.

Research Instruments

Instrument Design

The research instruments for this study consisted of a student survey and focus group questions. The research team used feedback from the advisory committee and a review of literature to develop all research instruments. After both instruments were developed, meetings were held with the project researchers and the advisory committee to refine the instruments.

Next, a cover letter was developed which explained the purpose of the study and ensured that responses would be kept confidential. Permission forms were developed for students and their parents for the quantitative study and for participants of the focus groups.

General Research Questions

The general research questions were patterned after previous research in the field and were further refined based on a review of literature. It was the goal of this study to investigate:

- Is education equitable across racial groups?
- Do students from all racial groups feel equally safe in schools?

Focus Group Questions

Focus groups in this study were used to solicit the participants' in-depth knowledge and concerns about equity in education. The focus groups were organized in such a way as to expand on questions covered in the student survey. For the parents, questions included a general discussion about their own experiences with the schools, questions about what their children's experiences were, what barriers they thought their children faced, and their opinions about how the issue of racism was dealt with in the schools.

Survey Items

The questionnaire was designed to obtain both quantitative and qualitative data. The research team developed the survey, which was piloted in March, 2003. To minimize class-time disruption the survey was kept short, with primarily closed-ended questions. (Survey attached as Appendix I.)

The survey questionnaire was four pages long and took a maximum of 30 minutes to complete. The questions in the survey sought not only to determine the experiences of students in schools, but also general diversity questions that included level of social inclusion, satisfaction questions, and direct questions about racism.

Demographic information was placed at the beginning of the survey. More specific questions regarding satisfaction and social inclusion were placed in the latter portions of the instrument. In the demographic section, respondents recorded their gender and ethnic or racial background. This demographic information was used to validate that an attempt was made to obtain a representative sample.

Data Collection Methods

Parent Focus Groups

The first part of the data for this study was collected through a series of focus groups with parents. (Focus group questions attached as Appendix II.) These conversations were semi-structured, in-depth, and open-ended in nature.

800 invitations to participate in a focus group were mailed out to a list of 400 individuals and organizations. Invitations were also spread widely through e-mail list-serves, media public service announcements, and paid radio advertisements on ethnic and Aboriginal radio. Five focus groups open to the public were included in this invitation. The remaining eight groups were arranged by contacting parent groups who responded positively to a call for participation and groups the researchers knew to be interested in the issue. The researchers took extensive content notes throughout the interviews, as well as field notes following each interview to record impressions on key themes. All focus group sessions except one were audio-recorded and transcripts were typed by members of the research team.

Survey Pre-test

The survey instrument was pre-tested with 31 students at a large gathering commemorating the International Day for the Elimination of Racism that took place at one Edmonton school. A booth was set up there and the research team administered the survey following the event. The survey tested whether the questions measured what they claimed to measure (were reliable).

The survey instrument was also pre-tested to ensure that the survey was asking the right questions, that the questions made sense, and the instrument was working correctly. This allowed final checks on the logical branching of questions, and ensured that respondents understood the directions and instructions of the survey.

Survey Administration

Students in Grade 10 were surveyed for several reasons.

- Focussing on one grade keeps experiences, knowledge base, and literacy levels relatively constant.
- Grade 10 includes a unit in the social studies curriculum on Human Rights.
- There are no provincial exams in Grade 10, which frees students and teachers to allow extracurricular projects.

Permission was sought and received from the Edmonton Public School Board (EPSB). NAARR requested eight schools, under a mixed sampling procedure combining criterion and representative sampling. The requested schools included a diverse mix of EPSB high schools. Permission was granted for five schools, two of which were not requested, and was received only in time for a June launch. The late date in the school year, and the limited number of schools granting permission, were barriers to survey delivery. This resulted in only three schools being surveyed. Data from the survey needs to be interpreted with caution as the sample cannot be considered representative of Grade 10 students.

Data Analysis

Analysis of the Qualitative Data

Data collection and analysis occured simultaneously. Tentative understandings were continually tested against the rest of the data and verified, modified, or discarded. When data from the survey was collected, it was coded and compared with data collected from the focus groups. As this process continued, themes and patterns emerged. The data was coded, clustered, and or broken down, into manageable categories on a variety of levels including frequency of concepts, phrases, and word occurrences, the relationships among the concepts, and common themes that emerged.

A master list of categories from focus group data was then generated and read comparatively against each transcript in turn. After these categories and sub categories were refined, the next readings of whole manuscripts sought to identify deeper themes across the transcripts. Notes taken during and after the interviews were analyzed at this stage, and their themes compared to the emerging template of patterns. The data was then coded using standard content analysis procedures.

Analysis of the Student Survey

Descriptive statistics were completed on all the data in order to determine the frequency counts and percentage of item responses. Descriptive statistics were also used to help check for errors that might have occurred when inputting data into the statistical software package. The questions consisted of open-ended questions, Likert response scales, and "yes" or "no" questions. The data were tabulated using the Excel program. A Pearson value of .05 ($p = .5$) or less was considered significant. This was accomplished to help identify any group of students that might have had an unusually higher or lower than average level of response for any specific question.

In the final stage of analysis, themes from the transcripts were compared with results from the quantitative analysis to locate general patterns of similarity, points of clarification or intensification offered by the transcripts to the questionnaire responses, and points of contradiction.

Validity and Reliability

In both qualitative and quantitative research, the validity and reliability of research is concerned primarily with the extent to which results can be generalized as well as the extent to which results can be attributed to a particular phenomenon (Le Compte and Goetz, 1982). Depending on the type and purpose of a data collection, validity and reliability can be examined from one or more of several perspectives. One of the fundamental questions asked and addressed in any study according to Nau (1995) is 'how valid and reliable are the study and the data collected'? Validity in most studies is measured with regards to the evidence of content relevance and technical quality of the instruments (Parkes, 2000).

In contrast, reliability of research essentially refers to the "ability to replicate the original study using the same research instrument and to get the same results" (Orum et al, 1991: 17). In other words, it is the extent to which a measure, procedure, or instrument yields the same results on repeated trials. The reliability of the research and data is assessed qualitatively by scrutinizing the design and methodology employed in the research as well as the instrument used to quantify the data (Maxwell, 1992; Marshall & Rossman, 1994; and Miles and Huberman, 1994). In other words, reliability is concerned with the consistency and dependability of measuring instruments (i.e. the degree to which it gives the same answers over time).

Researchers have also discussed several types of validity that are commonly used as criteria for judging the quality of research designs including external, content, internal, and construct validity (Maxwell, 1992; Miles and Huberman, 1994; and Yin, 1989). According to Maxwell (1992), external validity is examined quantitatively by scrutinizing the sampling scheme employed to determine sample generalizability or representativeness. In other words, how the results of a study are generalizable or transferable to the population. Construct validity examines the degree to which a research instrument measures a theoretical concept. It seeks an agreement between a theoretical concept and a specific research methodology.

Content validity assesses the "extent to which a measurement reflects the specific intended domain of content" (Carmines and Zeller, 1991:20). Thus, whether the researcher clearly defines what they are measuring, stating all procedures used to gather measures, and by having "experts" assess whether or not the researcher is measuring what they want to measure. Internal validity examines the rigor with which the study was conducted (e.g. the study's design, data collection procedures, and sampling design).

In this study, validity and reliability were examined with regards to the evidence of content relevance and technical quality of the instruments. Validity was enhanced by the triangulation of multiple data sources. The instruments used to quantify were examined for their ability to truly measure what they were supposed to measure. The instrument went through several reviews by experts in the field. An advisory committee composed of researchers and educators assessed the content of the research instrument and the overall research process. The members analyzed items and judged whether the items applied sufficiently to each research question. The reviews simplified the language of the survey, corrected errors, and strengthened the connections between the research question and survey items.

Additionally, the survey was pre-tested with a group of students to test whether the instrument was performing well in terms of the content covered by the test items. In summary, the methodology utilized in this study emphasized the application of research techniques that were explicit, systematic,

and replicable. The use of both qualitative and quantitative methods increased internal validity. This study has also defined what was being measured and the procedures of data collection undertaken certainly sought to ascertain whether replication had occurred, by the use of common keywords to describe the thrust of comments made by the participants, thus increasing construct validity.

Ethical Considerations

This study was governed by the ethical guidelines for research stipulated by the University of Alberta's Ethics and Guidelines for Research Involving Human Participants. In this guide it is stipulated that participants be guaranteed a right to privacy and that they are in a safe environment that is conducive to answering even the most sensitive questions honestly. Additionally, no deception was used and the researchers have endeavored to ensure that no harm has come to the respondents as a result of their involvement in this research. For the student survey phase, questionnaires were distributed by the researchers and returned to them in hard copy immediately afterward. All respondents and their parents gave written and oral informed consent for their participation. The Consent to Participate in Focus Groups guaranteed respect, anonymity, strict confidentiality, and a signed disclaimer by the participants gave the researchers permission to audio-tape the conversation. Participants were also informed that their participation was voluntary and were given the right to withdraw from the study at any time for any purpose. All raw data (survey data, transcripts, and notes) connected with the study were kept secure throughout and following data collection.

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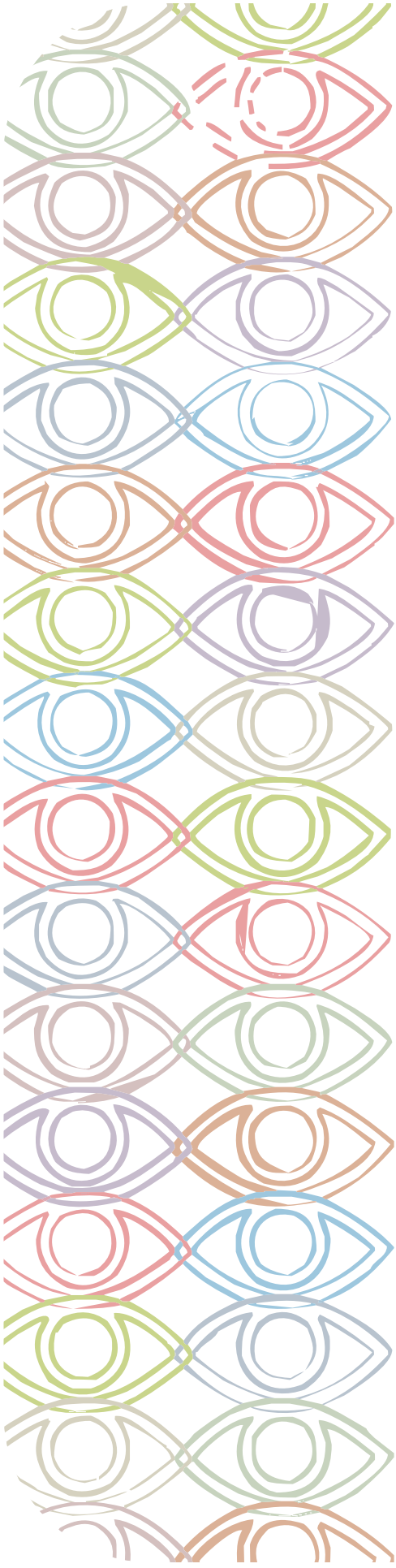


SECTION 6:

FOCUS GROUP DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

Data generated through the focus groups described inequities in educational experience for Aboriginal and visible minority students. There was an underlying recognition that schools were inadequately resourced and expected to accomplish too much. Many references were made to government funding cuts and large class sizes. Parents understood that teachers were occupied with teaching the curriculum to large numbers of children and that finding the time to ensure each student was taught equitably and treated respectfully by other students is difficult. Acknowledgement of the difficulties came with the sentiment that schools were still responsible for ensuring education was equitable and that their children were emotionally and physically safe.

Also, in many focus groups, certain schools were mentioned that were doing a good job of teaching minority students and of handling overt racism from other students in an effective manner. "Good schools" were described from each of the three school systems in Edmonton (including the Franophone school system.)

Firstly, there were references made to positive "school culture". Some schools had high populations of minority students and the schools were doing things to ensure that everyone was welcome in the school. In some cases, the high minority population itself created a school culture that was more accepting of difference. (It must be noted that this was not always the case as other schools with high minority populations had significant problems). The schools did things like including education about different cultures, creating an environment where parents and students could share aspects of their culture so that others in the school would understand and accept them into the school community better. Procedures such as translating parts of newsletters into different languages and allotting a room for Muslim parents and children to pray were cited as specific examples. One reference was made to good counseling available in an Aboriginal program.

One school who received a large number of Eastern European immigrants had done good proactive work where the newcomers were asked to describe the situation they had come from and to share aspects of their culture soon after they arrived. This had helped create a climate where other students would come up and talk to the newcomers. Initial barriers had been removed and the students felt more welcome more quickly than in other situations.

Several descriptions were given of situations where principals were open to suggestions for changes from parent or community groups, even if they were initially reluctant.

Secondly, parents made reference to schools that had effective anti-bullying programs in place. In these schools, any overt racism between students was dealt with immediately and effectively. Interestingly, the phrase "teachers jump" came up in many references to positive and supportive action. Parents indicated that teachers had been trained on how to prevent bullying. When a child had been victimized, parents would be called to inform them on what had occurred, and on the action taken against the aggressor students. Anti-bullying was seen as one part of a good solution but that the issues were broader than this.

Individual Racism

Student to Student

Students experience both subtle and overt racism from other students in all Edmonton school systems.

The subtle form of racism was most often manifest by some kind of exclusion. Immigrant parents described situations where their children were often and in some cases always alone in school. This occured when students sat with and socialized with only members of their own ethnic group. It carried into classes like physical education, where some students did not get the ball passed to them. When group work was required inside the classroom students of colour often worked alone. Exclusion was felt acutely by students in Francophone (Conseil Scolaire Centre-Nord) schools in Edmonton. Immigrant parents indicated their children always worked alone and had no friends. In many Edmonton high schools, a form of exclusion that will be referred to as "student self-segregation" operates whereby students of certain ethnic groups have unofficial "territories" marked by hallways and the doors attached to those hallways. Only students from the appropriate ethnic group felt welcome in these territories.

Overt racism does occur to students of colour and Aboriginal students, and ranged in intensity from verbal harassment to violence. Name-calling was reported by parents to be a common problem, with students using racial or religious slurs. There were also reports of general teasing and harassment. Many referred to the segregated hallways – going down the wrong hallway would bring threats or violence. Many incidents were reported where verbal harassment would progress to threats of violence when the verbal harassment was not dealt with by the school. Violence did occur in several instances, two of which were reported as gang violence. The gangs referred to were identified by racial group.

Parents and Teachers as Recipients

Many parents indicated they also did not feel welcome in the schools, when communicating with teachers, principals, and other parents.

Several participants had been teachers themselves or knew of teachers who also experienced subtle racism from other teachers, principals, parents, and their students. In one case a teacher received a racial slur from a student.

Systemic Racism

Parents described educational systems that included few non-white teachers and teaching and discipline that were inequitable. The most substantial areas of concern were firstly – a lack of understanding of any non-mainstream culture demonstrated both by teacher awareness, and with the curriculum itself. The second major concern was excessive labeling of students with some kind of problem, which relates to streaming and inappropriate placement.

Few Minority and Aboriginal Teachers

A disproportionate number of teachers from the mainstream culture presents a subtle message that people of colour can not achieve these positions. The school systems do not benefit from teachers who belong to non-mainstream cultures and their knowledge of culture and life experiences.

Participants felt confident that there were many qualified minority teachers applying for teaching positions, and believed that hiring practices were inequitable. Some indicated that one part of the issue is not recognizing foreign credentials, but that when minorities were educated locally, even at the Masters and Ph.D. level, they were still being passed over in favour of white Canadian teachers. Parents with children in the Francophone system felt that the problem there was more severe.

Effects on immigrant students were complicated by widespread failure of our society to recognize foreign credentials. Most immigrant children have parents with high levels of education, as Canada's point system in immigration favours these people. After arriving here with expectations of working in their field, many parents are working in jobs far below their skill level. This is clearly expressed by an immigrant youth to her parent:

> Look at you, you're a doctor and you're cleaning up at night. So why should I go to school? I don't need a degree just to clean up! (P1)[1]

One African-Canadian who had worked as a supply teacher in Edmonton described the reaction of students of her own racial group as shocked and/or happy when they saw her enter the classroom. The child of one participant came home from school with her friends so ecstatic that they were dancing around the room because they had a new teacher from their own racial group. When questioned on the reasons this would make them happy, the child said " Mom! You're not listening, she LOOKS like us!… Well that means even people who LOOK (original emphasis) like us can be teachers." The same child said that people who did look like her were in her school cleaning up after lunch and cleaning toilets (P1).

Beyond the presence of role models, having minority and Aboriginal teachers in the schools would include teaching staff with knowledge of other cultures and life experiences that could be shared with other teachers to help increase their understanding.

> This discussion of culture and language is all very important but none of it will mean much without equitable hiring practices for teachers (P5).

Teaching and Discipline

Parents described situations where their children's teachers interacted with them less often and expected less of them than they did with mainstream students. Children were called on to answer questions less frequently and chosen for things like the "special person" or for a part in a school play, less often. One kindergarten class was described where differential treatment drew the white children to sit close to the teacher and minority children were always "at the back" (P1). In some cases the differential treatment by the teacher was overt.

Aboriginal parents saw their children "ignored" consistently over the years and felt the teachers and the system held no compassion for their children at all. These parents described ineffective instruction resulting in low levels of achievement, cumulating over the years. They described situations where behaviour resulting from being behind their classmates often led to removal of the student from the

1 (P_) refers to the focus group.

classroom or from the school (suspension). With both methods of discipline, the students fell even further behind as they were not required to make up for the work they had missed.

Culture

An awareness of and respect for cultures outside of the mainstream is inadequate in Edmonton schools. This is reflected a) in the curriculum – topics covered and resources used to cover those topics and b) in the way that teachers deliver the curriculum and communicate with students.

Teacher Awareness of Culture

Edmonton teachers interact with students and deliver the curriculum within the context of mainstream culture and with the backdrop of its value system. Focus group participants felt that a major contributing factor was a lack of awareness of other cultures by teachers. Without this knowledge, teachers were unable to understand the lives of minority and Aboriginal students and had trouble teaching them effectively and with respect.

> I think the number one thing (way to increase equity) would be knowledge …. For teachers or anybody to be knowledgeable and to have an understanding. And it is hard to say don't prejudge because we are all only human, but to try and accept somebody for who they are …. Get to know them …. But even if we had the knowledge … that these people aren't here to destroy us, they are not trying to hurt you, they are only trying to live … no human being is illegal …. Treat them with respect (P7).

Culture is complex and no teacher can be expected to completely understand all of the cultures in contemporary society, but it seems that the door of openness to difference is nearly closed in Edmonton schools.

Student behaviour is governed by many things, but an important determinant is the values and expectations of adults around them. Students from Aboriginal and other cultures experience different expectations in the home and in the school.

> And somewhere in between, they're going to get into trouble …. So there has to be some openness – for everybody. But I don't think you can take someone's culture out of them. There are some behaviours that are important and the parents want their children to grow up with these values – and we have to respect that (P1).

Aboriginal experience of culture is complicated by the legacy of residential schools, where people were told their culture was worthless. Mainstream attitudes to Aboriginal culture have evolved through history, with the result that most mainstream teachers not only lack understanding of these cultures, but view them as inferior, as does our larger society.

> Behaviour problems (in Aboriginal children) are mostly cultural, it is culturally driven. And they are driven by the attitudes of authority figures not knowing how to relate to a different culture, a different set of values, a whole different world. And then you compound it with poverty and all these other things (P12).

One aspect of acceptable behaviour that is frequently different depending on culture is the level of assertiveness. Most minority cultures, including Aboriginal culture, do not encourage assertiveness.

Respect is shown to others more by listening than by speaking. Alternatively, some minority cultures encourage a higher level of assertiveness than is acceptable to mainstream Canadians.

Another illustration of cultural difference, expressed by Aboriginal parents, was their definition of success. Their view of the world does not include the concepts of good and evil, but rather focuses on balance and chaos. "… success to us is walking in balance … (there is) no other word for success in our language" (P2). In a western system where success in school is defined with high grades, the Aboriginal child has tremendous difficulty. One Aboriginal participant described commonalities in indigenous cultures around the world: building a sense of belonging and mastery of some things, leading to a sense of independence and generosity. Using these principles, the young person develops a sense of self-worth and only then strives for excellence.

For Muslim people, who also generally come from different cultures, there is the expectation that people pray five times a day, and three of these times fall within the school day. These children need a place to go and pray and an acceptance by students and teachers that this is normal and acceptable.

Caribbean parents expressed extreme frustration with one important aspect of culture that is shared with mainstream Canada – the use of English. These parents were seen as visibly different and frequently the assumption was made that their children spoke something other than English as a native tongue. One of these parents told of finding her daughter placed in an ESL class.

The ways in which culturally driven attitudes get expressed in the school are many – here is one illustration. A parent shared an experience at his son's graduation ceremony where photos of all students were projected. One of the students was dressed as a stereotypical native person with his face painted and wearing feathers. The student was in a tree and acting like an animal. Everyone in the audience laughed. This parent was horrified that the photo had been approved by school authorities and saw it as an indication of general attitudes toward Aboriginal people (P2).

Curriculum and Culture

This section will refer to curriculum as the set of topics delivered and the accompanying print material used to teach it. In general, parents felt that the curriculum was set in mainstream Canadian culture, did not present the acceptance of difference in its topics, and that it was indeed deficient in some ways.

When discussing culture, parents usually expressed disdain at the way other cultures were presented in school. It was commonly a topic that was separated out from the main curriculum, either in separate social studies topics or in separate celebrations. One parent thought that this was a good way to start; all felt it must go further. Parents believed that discussion of their cultures was also superficial and rarely went deeper than "bannock, moccasins, and teepees" (P12) or "dance, dress, and diet" (P9). Cultures tended to be presented as "exotic" and a deeper understanding of them did not take place.

When reflecting on the social studies curriculum, there were highly charged comments from African and Aboriginal parents.

Parents of African descent noted that their continent was not in the curriculum at all and that the level of teacher awareness of life in Africa followed the biased media portrayal of Africans as poor, starving,

and living in huts. They saw social studies as dealing almost exclusively with economically powerful countries.

One participant from the Caribbean, when presenting his culture to a group of students was disturbed by their questions:

> … at least half of the questions had to do with the fact that regardless of what I said about the broad experience,… a Caribbean country … was just extremely impoverished and if I had the GLORY (original emphasis) to come and live here in Canada, then I must be packing food and sending it to my family … (P9).

This participant felt the questions asked by students indicated the way that other cultures are addressed at school is very minimal.

Parents said that the literature used in English language classes and that available in school libraries needed to include a good selection of books set in other cultures.

When social studies was mentioned in focus groups with Aboriginal participants there were literally gasps of horror. In addition to their world view not being understood, the curriculum was guilty of "short-changing" their history in this land. Oral history, very important in their culture, was not included or understood by schools. There was bitterness about the general perception that North America was "discovered" by Western Europeans and that Aboriginal culture was far less advanced. One particular sore point for Aboriginal people was the absence, both in teacher awareness and in curriculum, of the dissent led by Louis Riel toward European settlement. They felt that Riel and other Aboriginal leaders needed to be included in discussions and assignments about famous people, and also in social studies.

A final note on the curriculum is its strong grounding in the Christian religion, to the point where other religions are excluded. References to Christianity are subtle in public schools but this example will illustrate its pervasiveness. A participant described the study of a particular English classic in literature and the way that biblical references were integral to its teaching. The problem arises firstly when these types of novels dominate the study of literature; and secondly when study of another novel where reference to the Koran would be equally appropriate, and the references are not made or expected. The participant noted "It is seen as good enough that you just understand the literary context from the mainstream perspective" (P9).

English as a Second Language

Within the above general discussion, came several references to language instruction and acquisition. Parents felt that ESL provision was not adequate to ensure that immigrant children could achieve to their level. It was not provided in enough schools, so wasn't universally accessible. The separation of ESL and the lack of integration of it within other subjects created complex problems for students. This will be discussed in more detail in the section below that discusses streaming and placement. Simply put, placing new immigrants with their age cohort without supports to help them catch up in language acquisition and building an understanding of the new school system is an extreme disadvantage to immigrant students.

Tied to this issue is a general lack of respect for people who do speak languages other than English. And further, parents and some teachers indicated that the importance of maintaining one's mother tongue, including cognitive benefits, was not well understood by the schools.

Support for Immigrant and Aboriginal Students

In order for education to be equitable, immigrant and Aboriginal parents noted that it was crucial to have support available for their particular needs.

The immigrant child experiences a total change in school environment on coming to Canada. Coping with these changes set them far behind their Canadian classmates. This need is much greater when learning a new language and when the student is a refugee. Parents made it very clear that in their home countries, discrimination had not been an issue and they and their children were struggling to cope with this unexpected phenomenon.

> … I can say locally for the immigrants, they can not have that equity. There is no resources in place for the immigrant in order to catch up with other students who have been here for a long time and know the environment (P4).

Aboriginal parents experienced similar situations. Their children are disadvantaged in the schools and support for them is crucial if they are to succeed. These parents were unequivocal that unless there is an advocate, or a support worker to assist the child and the parent, their children will likely drop out of school. This seems particularly important in junior high and in the transition to high school. One group noted that this support needed to come from outside the school system to be effective.

In several instances, immigrant and Aboriginal community organizations were in place to perform this function and there were strong indications that workers were able to help schools and parents to better communicate.

Assessment and Labeling

For the immigrant child, problems with assessment stem from lack of cultural understanding. Some students were quick to be labeled as troublemakers because their behaviour was "different". This difference would sometimes arise out of the student having to defend themselves from subtle and overt racism or just simply from speaking a language other than English. On the other end of the behaviour spectrum "… kids who come from cultures who are not assertive … they are labeled as unsuccessful in relating with adults" (P1). Parents felt that children "come in the door to learn and that should be the focus (of the school)" (P7).

Aboriginal parents were incensed with the nearly universal labeling of their children. Frequently FAS (Fetal Alcohol Syndrome) and ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder) and other labels of this kind were assigned, without adequate evidence. There was often a label of learning disability given. Other types of labels were wide ranging and encompassed certain types of behaviour. Parents felt strongly that the assessment procedures were culturally insensitive and that the students did not have special needs, but they were just behind. Problems would also arise out of life circumstances due to poverty and the complex set of circumstances many Aboriginal families deal with. One parent who had advocated for many families in the city, and who had been a teacher himself, had gone to look at students' cumulative files with parents and had seen nothing in the file to indicate the child was not normal.

The act of labeling would ensure that the student stayed at that level throughout their schooling. "Statistically, once a child is labeled, five years later they will still be there" (P12). Parents were also angry about the kind of information recorded in cumulative files – that it was all negative and led to prejudgement of the child's abilities from subsequent teachers. Examples were given of a child being labeled with a learning disability when the reason she was having difficulty in school was that she was not eating. Or a child would be labeled a late-comer and punished for it when there were no adults in the home getting up and helping him get to school on time. "… they don't have learning disabilities, they have learning needs" (P12). Parent perceptions of the reasons for labeling are explained above in the Culture section above. Parents felt teachers "come out of university thinking that special education is what we need to teach Aboriginal children"(P12).

Aboriginal parents felt strongly that the assessment and labeling of their children was not in the child's best interest, but that the schools were only interested in the additional funds allocated to a school once a label had been assigned. They felt the money was not used to assist their children, but that on the contrary, once the money came in, the child was not given adequate attention which is where the problem started in the first place. Parents felt that after the September 30th head count, where schools are allotted a sum for each child registered, the schools cared less about their children than they did about the money.

Streaming and Placement

Placement in inappropriate grade levels was an issue brought forward by both Aboriginal and immigrant parents. For the immigrant child, sending them to class according to their age, without additional supports developed an inferiority complex in the student. Aboriginal parents saw their children get further and further behind and then "shoved ahead because of their age. It is never any other ethnic group that are that far behind" (P2).

Aboriginal and minority students tended to be steered toward non-academic streams. This was done without adequate reasons and without adequate advice given on the consequences of making these choices, and sometimes the choice was made by the school with no consultation with student or parent. Immigrant children in the Francophone system are often placed in French 13, when their French skills are excellent. Once placed in these streams, parents felt there was not adequate assistance given to help the student catch up and join the academic stream.

The Student as Recipient

Emotional Response

Participants expressed in numerous intense ways that Aboriginal and minority students are outsiders in school. They feel outnumbered and unwelcome – isolated and lonely. Emotions associated with their experiences are sadness and anger. Responses to unexpected overt racism are confusion, shock, and fear.

One young African-Canadian youth said to her parent "I wish there were other kids in my class who looked like me … it's more comfortable. We feel like we're not alone" (P1). Isolation and the associated emotions arose out of situations where other children preferred to sit close to, socialize with, and work together in class with members of their own racial group.

> It is a big issue because when there are projects, no one will work with them … the immigrant student will work alone (P4).

Isolation was reported to occur in all school systems, but was more absolute in the Francophone system.

> The children in the Francophone schools live loneliness and isolation because they have NO friends (original emphasis). Interaction stops at the school and there is no interaction in class (P4).

This isolation occurred both as a result of little interaction with other students and, also, because of low levels of interactions with teachers. There was one report of a student who often had his hand up but was never called on by the teacher. In another situation, previously described, the teacher interacted so differently with mainstream students that they all sat near her, with the students of colour at the back of the room.

The different level of communication with teachers that comes from cultural understanding and bias in the curriculum affected the feeling of isolation.

In cases where threats and actual violence were involved, students were afraid. They feared going to certain areas of the school (in high school) and were afraid to report incidents to schools when they believed that it would make their situation more difficult.

Parents and teachers from minority and Aboriginal groups experienced similar emotions. Parents felt they were not welcomed by other parents, that they were just "part of the furniture" (P4) when they attended parent meetings. They were also uncomfortable when communicating with teachers, particularly when discussing a problem. Minority teachers "felt unwanted. Like the students who feel like they don't belong, well it is the same for teachers" (P1).

When Emotions are Directed Inward

There was a clear pattern of students finding themselves in situations where they had to deal with racism alone. They found little or no support in the schools, and when they did report incidents to schools and ask for help, the schools frequently did not give any or adequate assistance. This will be explained more clearly in the School Response section, below. In some cases, students were worried that their situation would become worse by taking the issues to school authorities.

Low Achievement

As indicated in the section on Systemic Racism above, Aboriginal students' level of achievement is very low and parents believe the environment in school is not conducive to academic success.

Also, with students who were struggling to learn English, cope with racism, and adjusting to a new school system, achievement can be affected. There were indicators that many immigrant families were able to overcome these issues when they were highly educated themselves and could provide necessary support to their children at home.

In several situations where a problem became very serious, parents noted a significant and rapid drop in their children's grades. In cases where the child had been hiding the problems from the parent, a report card was the indication that something was wrong.

A white student who was subject to severe racial harassment, including violence:

> Yes, way down, they (the grades) were really down. And that is because her focus was not on school, it was on her surroundings (P7).

Regarding an Aboriginal student who was an honour student the previous year:

> Either he's being graded unfairly, or he's just not doing the work he is capable of, because of the way he's being treated (P11).

A student of colour who was being called "stupid" and put down in other ways by one of her teachers:

> In the beginning she was a straight A student, and now she's failing one semester? All four courses (P11).

Low Self-Esteem

Aboriginal parents said that the schools "don't value building self-confidence, self-worth" in their children (P2), and that the children were often ashamed of who they are.

> I have grandchildren and others – my grandnieces – when you ask them what they are learning in school – they seem ashamed somehow. Something makes them ashamed of being native. So they have just been so wounded … (P12).

This man was very clear that it was the schools and not the family that created this shame and he was extremely angry about it.

Being called names, being ignored, and not being understood or respected led to low self-esteem and shame in other minority groups also.

Behaviours associated with decreased self-esteem were withdrawal and even a desire to change ethnicity. Parents were keenly wary when they saw their children withdraw from others in school or at home. An Aboriginal girl in kindergarten was routinely excluded from being the "special person", and her parent spent time in the classroom with her. The parent commented,

> (a)t home she laughs, she plays, she's bold. But when she comes to school she's shy and withdrawn (P11).

One Aboriginal girl told people she was Mexican and another dyed her hair to fit in better.

Attendance and Dropping Out

Levels of withdrawal often increased to the point where students did not want to attend school, wanted to change schools, or dropped out entirely.

- An Aboriginal boy was being called names at elementary school, asked the children to stop, and when they did not he chose to run home, lock the doors, and hide (P1).

- An Asian-Canadian girl, when she began junior high, " … all of a sudden she wasn't going to school. And she was so reluctant to participate in anything …" (P1).

There were many reports of youth who did drop out due to their experiences in school and this was especially the case with Aboriginal youth. Aboriginal parents were angry that they couldn't get statistics on numbers of their children who were labeled, suspended, and dropped out.

One Aboriginal parent lamented – "I mean what is the point of going to school if you just hate it" (P12).

Some minority and Aboriginal teachers who felt unwelcome in the school system had left to work elsewhere.

Depression and Potential Suicide

In extreme cases, students became depressed, some to the point of needing medication. Parents reported changes in the way their children carried themselves physically; in one case it was referred to as "hunching" and in another "pulled-in, like he had been kicked in the stomach" (P12). One girl who was repeatedly put down by her teacher developed an ulcer.

Two participants indicated that the problem became so bad for some youth that the danger of suicide was real. In cases where there is no support from family, friends, or the community:

> … kids will tend to be involved in high risk and self destructive behaviour that may lead them to feeling worthless and depressed. Some resort to suicide if they cannot deal with poverty, racism, isolation, etc." (p13).

When Emotions are Directed Outward

Some students deal with sadness, loneliness, and anger by exhibiting unacceptable behaviours. Aboriginal youth who come from a different culture with different values, whose culture has been put down wholesale in recent history and continues to be put down, often react with behaviour that is unacceptable in school. As noted above, these behaviours are intensified when the student is so far behind in school that she can't understand what is going on in the class.

The Aboriginal girl who was routinely excluded by her teacher exhibited some behaviours her parent described as bizarre – like crawling under the desk and ripping up papers. Another Aboriginal child who was subject to ongoing verbal harassment from other students just started screaming in school. The parent was frustrated that the principal couldn't understand why the behaviour occurred, even after the parent tried to explain it. Parents would often say that school officials were incapable of understanding something they had never experienced.

One young participant admitted that "when we are oppressed, we tend to oppress others" (P2).

The outward-directed behaviour was occasionally exhibited with violence. This is best described using scenarios.

- A high school youth of colour got in the middle of a conflict between two "gangs" in his school. He was trying to be friendly with people in both factions, and a situation arose where he became violent trying to protect someone.

- An Aboriginal high school student was tormented with racial slurs and general harassment, making her life a "living hell" for several months. The school was informed and was not able to stop the harassment. "And one day in school, my granddaughter finally retaliated, and she got punished for that (P11)."
- Students from a "gang" offered a white youth a "disposable gun". He refused and was beaten up later by this group. He retaliated with violence, aided by a group of his friends.
- Four white girls repeatedly harassed two girls of colour over a period of one year in high school. The school was notified and was not able to stop the problem. "So finally my daughter retaliated and my daughter got punished" (P11). The four girls were not disciplined and laughed at the girl who was punished.

Parent Response

Overwhelmingly, the emotion expressed by parents whose children experienced racism in schools, was anger. They knew that they needed to be always talking to their children and looking for signs of problems. Parents knew that they needed to regularly communicate with schools about these problems and they had many difficulties with this process.

Parents and the Edmonton School System

Many parents do not understand the way in which local education systems function. In some cases they come from other countries where the school systems are very different but this is also a problem for Aboriginal parents. Many immigrant parents noted that in their countries of origin, schools took control of the child's education, questioning the schools was not accepted, but that there was no racial discrimination.

> … in Africa you just send your child to school. The teacher is always right there, but our (African) system is totally different – everybody's regarded or considered the same, you are not discriminated against by anybody (P9).

For many immigrant parents, it takes them time to realize that the racism is occurring, and then that they have the right to speak to schools about it.

Aboriginal parents, who live with the legacy of residential schools, have been taught not to criticize the education system. For them, the teacher has been portrayed as an ultimate authority and questioning them has not been accepted. In the words of one parent, they have been taught that "white is right"(P12).

Life Circumstances

Aboriginal and immigrant parents often live with economic difficulties and are not well connected with support systems. Aboriginal parents have, on average, less formal education than do mainstream or immigrant parents. Many Aboriginal families move to Edmonton from rural areas and live disconnected from their communities. Due to difficulties getting adequate employment, immigrant parents often work two or three jobs. For these parents, communicating with schools about problems is often intimidating and many simply do not have the time.

Culture

Assertiveness is not valued in the cultures of many of these parents. They realize that a high level of assertiveness is required of them – their children are having problems and the schools do not openly accept that the problems are genuine. Aboriginal parents have been taught not to question school authorities. Parents need skills that in many cases they do not have.

Respect for Parents

Parent experience with residential schools seems not to be drastically improved in contemporary schools. Aboriginal parents stated clearly that they are generally not respected by school authorities.

> Even when the boarding schools became voluntary, parents were still made to feel that they weren't very important at the school, that they were dumb, they were stupid, they didn't know what to do for their kids (P2).

Participants were clear that they would not advise an Aboriginal parent to go to a school without an advocate.

Minority parents described their interactions with schools with phrases like "not listening" and "not understanding", but Aboriginal parents said the schools lacked respect for them.

> The schools think that as Aboriginal parents we don't have the ability to assess our childrens' needs … not consulted on what is best for our children (P11).

> It is very intimidating, especially for single parents to go to the school, it is very intimidating just to go to a parent-teacher interview. You are going to sit there for 15 or 20 minutes hearing things about your child. Speaking as a parent, I would prefer not to go. If I do go, I have to force myself to go, it is not an enjoyable thing (P14).

> They believe that even if we (Aboriginal parents) have a Master's degree .. we are still not seen as capable … (P12).

> It is very sad. Aboriginal parents are like any other parent, they want their children to succeed and do their best in school. But very few people are happy, for all intents and purposes, you might as well say that nobody is happy …. To go to the school and talk to the teachers they need an advocate, that is the bottom line. I would not advise a parent to go alone because it is too – they get insulted (P12).

Fear of Repercussions

Some parents believed that if they approached the school with an issue related to racism, that there was a danger of the situation becoming worse.

> The reason parents don't question – I went with this parent – she was literally shaking and I realized after we had finished why. She had another child in that school. What she was worried about was what that principal would do to the other child. It is hard to believe what an adult will say to a seven year old – some snarky comment as a result of what the parent did (P12).

> … she (the parent) didn't want to do anything. And I've heard this from parents many many times. We don't want to do anything because we don't know the consequences to our child (P1).

Several parents of high school children just wanted their children to graduate and get out of the system.

Parents Express Concern to Schools

In spite of the many barriers to effective communication between parents and schools, parents know they must bring the issues to the schools and many of them do so. Parents were very clear that in order for their children to have good experiences in schools, they needed to always make themselves aware of what was happening to their children, and to be constantly advocating on their behalf. They were unhappy that this was necessary and were often weary because of the frequent conflicts.

> I am not saying fight the system, be a fighter and a whiner and all this. But when something is wrong, somebody needs to answer up to that and not brush it under the carpet (P14).

> But the issues are ongoing – CONSTANTLY – (original emphasis) she is in the school constantly. So when you do decide to get your child through, you have to be in the school constantly. Who has time? Who has time? Nobody pays us to be parents (P12).

Changing Schools

There were a number of parents who became so frustrated with bad situations in schools that they moved their children to other schools. With the historical transient nature of Aboriginal people, it seemed that they frequently would take this action. Parents felt they were leaving problems behind that would continue to be there for others, but that they had to do what was best for their children.

School Response

With the exception of a handful of "good schools" in Edmonton, school response to issues involving racism was in many cases to take no action at all. When action was taken, it was usually inappropriate, ineffective, or too late.

No Racism Here

Parents described schools as being unable to recognize or understand racism, and not being open to hearing about it. This was one of the most widely and strongly expressed messages that came out of this research. It would not be an exaggeration to say that racism was a huge barrier to Aboriginal and minority students achieving an equitable education and that schools either were not able or were unwilling to recognize this.

> … the teachers were not able to recognize it (racism), and the principals did not know how to work with it (P1).

> … they (school authorities) don't seem to understand these concerns. To them they are small issues (P3).

Participants noted the inability of school personnel to see the subtle racism and its affects on children but were clear that even when it became overt and was taken to school authorities by the student or by the parent, in most cases the inability to understand the problem remained and often school authorities then became defensive to the point of denying any problem existed. Also, the burden of proof that racism occurred often was left with the recipient.

Scenarios help to illustrate this point:

- As previously described, an Aboriginal boy in elementary school was repeatedly taunted with racial slurs and verbal harassment and reacted by running from the school and hiding at home. The parents became involved but the school was never able to deal with the reason he ran away and just punished him for running. From the perspective of the parent, the boy had actually handled the situation in a positive way – he was experiencing repeated verbal abuse and could either fight or flee – he had chosen the non-violent course.
- At the graduation ceremony when the young man dressed as a native person and acted in a derogatory fashion, school authorities accepted including his photo in the ceremony.
- When a boy who had been subject to ongoing overt verbal racism and had reacted by screaming, school authorities were unable to understand the cause of the behaviour when the parents tried to explain it.

Parents who took the course of being assertive with school authorities were in many cases seen as overreacting.

> I work with a lot of families. It seems that their biggest concern is racism and bullying. They (school authorities) are not listening to the parents or the children. The children are not even going to school authorities because they know they won't be listened to … (P11).

> … it makes me wonder what I can do as a parent. Because if I go to the administration, my sense is that my concern is not being recognized at all …. They say 'you're making things up in your head' (P11).

A group of parents noted that if they were an advocate and speaking assertively on behalf of a child, they were sidelined.

> Oh yeah! And they (school authorities) all talk to each other too, oh yeah! It is really sad, very sad (P12).

Lack of Training

There was widespread belief that school authorities lacked the knowledge of different cultures and were not aware of how to recognize racism or of how it affected the children. In most cases this was because the problem was outside the life experience of teachers and principals and they had never had the opportunity to learn about the issue or develop the skills to deal with it adequately.

In one junior high school,

> … there had been incidences of racism in the school, like name-calling and all those kinds of things. The students went to the teachers and principal and told them they were being harassed in the school, they were being called all kinds of names and the principal didn't, I think just didn't have the skills to do anything about it. And she just left it … (P1).

Many parents referred to the lack of training at the university and through in-service education for teachers on this issue.

> No – because there's nothing in their teaching – they go to university – there's nothing, there's nothing. And if there is a course on race relations, it's not a required course (P3).

> I think that MOST of them don't know what to do (original emphasis) (P2).

> Teachers have to be taught about this because they can destroy the future of a child (P4).

Find the Source of the Problem

Parents reported that schools consistently dealt with issues of racism by dealing with the "symptoms" and not looking for the root causes of problems.

> Schools will look at the attitude of the student, the behaviour of the student. These are not issues, these are symptoms. They have to get down to the source of the problem (P12).

Participants describe lists of instances where school inaction on racism left the children to deal with their problem alone, allowing situations to increase in severity until the student had to withdraw from the situation (flight) or respond with violence (fight).

When children channel their emotions inward, they exhibit behaviours like withdrawal, decreased self-esteem, and low achievement, schools were rarely able to see beyond the symptom to find the cause. In one case, a boy experienced extreme exclusion from another ethnic group in his school. Nobody would pass to him in Physical Education, so he chose to sit out. The child was punished for not participating but was not asked why this was happening.

And when emotions were channeled outward, with aggression, it was the aggression that was dealt with. If time had been taken to search for the cause, schools would have found verbally abused children who felt they had no choice but to lash out. Frequent references were made to situations where the school had been informed of the problem, taken no action, and only stepped in when violence erupted. And in these cases, the violent behaviour was dealt with severely, with suspension of the student and/or calling in police.

- Four white high school girls bullied two girls of colour over a period of one year. The school was informed and took no action. Finally one of the recipients responded with violence. "The four girls walked away with nothing, and they were laughing at her … (P11).
- A group of youth of colour experienced ongoing racial harassment from a group of white youth. The principal was informed and did nothing. The white youth threatened violence and the youth of colour brought sticks to their lockers to protect themselves. The school learned of the sticks and responded severely. The white kids were not included in the follow-up (P2).

Parents are left wondering "(w)hat is the school policy on bullying? What are the preventative measures so this doesn't happen (P11)"?

Inequitable Discipline

There was clear indication from many parents that when minority and Aboriginal children were recipients of individual overt racism, the problems were not dealt with adequately. But when the tables were turned and a white student was a recipient, reaction from schools was much different.

- A white girl was the target of violence from another ethnic group in her high school. The principal and parent worked together immediately to remove the girl from the school.
- An Aboriginal boy was hit 20 times at school and the school took no action. He hit back once and was punished.
- An Aboriginal boy was hit over the head with a stop sign. School authorities said to him "What are you, a wimp?" Later when he pretended to chase someone who was repeatedly taunting him, he got two weeks of detention after school.

"Why is it that the children of other races are the first ones to get blamed, versus a Caucasian person? Labeling and stereotyping (P6)."

Low Tolerance for Challenge

Many parents felt that the schools did not receive criticism in a constructive manner.

> As a parent, if you have praise, you are welcome, but when you come to complain (or with a concern), you are not welcome.
>
> Yeah, to be a parent questioning is bad enough but to be an ABORIGINAL parent and question – MY GOD! (original emphasis) … very offensive … Unheard of! (P12).
>
> If parents go to school and act assertively, they are seen as interfering too much. They are labeled a 'complainer' and told they are overreacting. We are not welcome in schools if we complain. We had to go into the school and act dumb – then the school listened and explained things. I guess then we fit the stereotype. I have sat in as an advocate for many parents with their students and school (P12).

Several participants felt that school administrators would not receive criticism of any of their teachers.

> … one thing I know because my best friend has been a teacher for over 20 years – the principals will ALWAYS stick up for their staff (original emphasis). Even if they are wrong … (P14).

Parents perceived that sometimes this difficulty in receiving criticism came out of a lack of understanding, but that other times schools seemed to be trying to uphold their reputation in the community. "…Part of it is politics. They want things to appear all right and all is well (P1)."

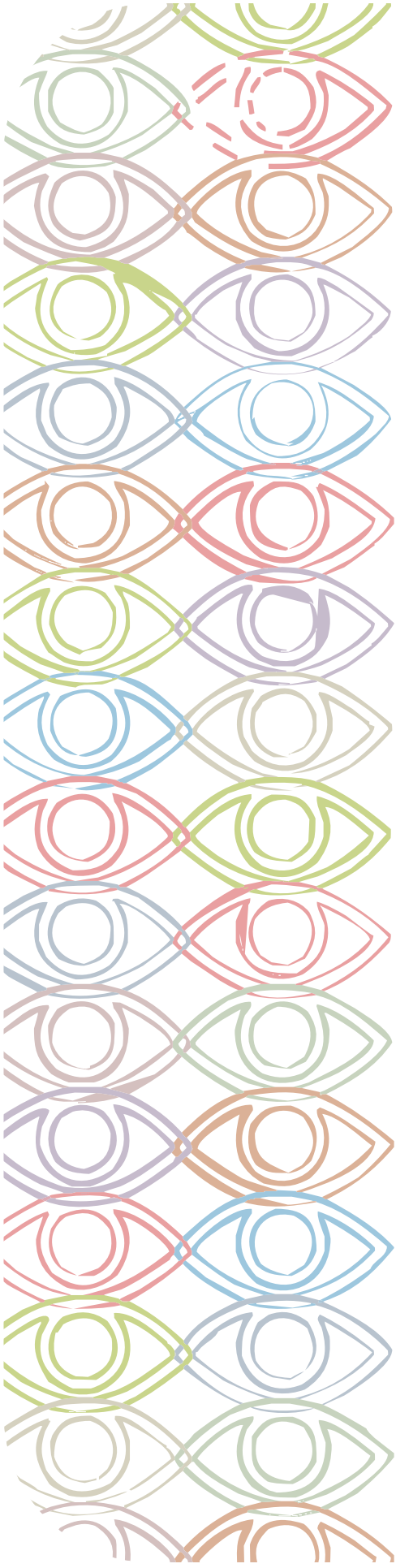
School Systems

A number of parents had taken their issues to superintendents and the response from that person was a denial that racism was a problem in their school systems. These comments came from parents with children in both the Catholic and the Public systems. For some parents, this made it impossible for schools to deal with the problem.

> I think it's because of the superintendent saying there's no issue, of course she's (the principal) going to say that (there is no racism in her school). They don't want all that media attention (P1).

Parents felt it was crucial for leaders in each school system to acknowledge that there are inequities and racism in their schools and that only then could system-wide positive changes occur.

There was a level of skepticism and hopelessness expressed by some groups and this was particularly apparent with black and Aboriginal parents. Representatives of the black community said they had been working on these issues at the system level for 20 years and had seen no positive changes. These parents felt that "If they (School Board) were interested, they would have done something by now (P3). Aboriginal parents believed there was nothing that would make substantial change in the system. Other parents who were more positive felt that any change would be very slow.



SECTION 7:

SURVEY DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

This summary reports on the data collected in the student survey called *"Student Perceptions about Equity in Edmonton Schools."* This section applies to Edmonton Public Schools as only students from that system participated. The objective of the survey was to examine student perceptions about equity in their education, and how diverse students experience the schools in regard to racial and cultural fairness.

Data from one particular school that is much more culturally diverse over-weighted the sample. Research consistently shows the effect of "school culture" on student experience and perceptions, particularly of those school elements that are not standardized parts of the curriculum.

Also, response rates varied considerably from school to school and by type of class surveyed. Students in advanced social studies 10 returned 78% of their permission forms, students in social studies 10 returned 50%, and students in social studies 13 returned 21% of their forms.

In spite of these limitations, the study did illuminate racism in the school system.

Survey responses were analysed with conventional descriptive and inferential statistical techniques.[1] The analysis used $p=.10$ as the level of significance. This level was chosen because there are greater consequences for students if too stringent a standard is applied and racism that exists was erroneously overlooked by the analysis. It is our judgment that the negative consequences of racism and the positive consequences of anti-discriminatory practices are greater than the possibility of overstating the case. Because of rounding, figures do not always total to 100%.

When doing the ethnoracial breakdowns, numbers within the various categorizations were too small for all except "white" and "Chinese." Following standard practice, all other categories were aggregated as "other visible minority." When the sample was further reduced by inter-school comparisons, all non-white respondents were combined.[2]

Numerous analyses showed little significance on the complete sample, but did show a school-by-school effect. Therefore, the utility of this study is less for the whole of EPSB, than to highlight the context-specific nature of racism. However, when permission was requested from EPSB the application stated that comparison between schools would not be reported. Therefore, although highly relevant to this study, these inter-school comparisons are, for the most part, not included in this report. Permission was granted from EPSB for some such comparisons.

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1 Data entry was funded by an internal research grant from The King's University College.

2 In most cases these charts are reported in terms of percentages rather than actual numbers. This is to add the readability and comparison across categories. Percentages serve a standardizing function. However, they weaken the reader's ability to assess the actual data. Therefore, actual numbers can be provided if desired.

Demographic Breakdown of the Sample

The sample was heavily female as shown in Table 1. None of the survey items varied by gender. Most of the students had gone to school in EPSB the majority of their lives, also shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1: DEMOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN OF THE SAMPLE	
GENDER	
MALE	59
FEMALE	85
YEARS IN EPSB	
1-4	17
5-9	9
10+	114
OTHER	8
TOTAL	148

One question asked students to self-identify by racial or ethnic categorization. The EPSB does not collect data on student ethnic or racial background. Thus there was no opportunity to derive either an effective sampling frame, or to compare the demographics of the survey respondents to the actual Grade 10 population. Table 2 lists the ethnic self-identification of respondents according to the categories on the survey. These categories were written to follow the 2001 census categories. For comparisons, the 2001 census data for the City of Edmonton is also provided. Caution should be taken regarding conclusions of the representability of this data compared to the Edmonton population, as data on school district population is not available.

TABLE 2: COMPARISON OF ETHNIC SELF-IDENTIFICATION BY SCHOOL						
ETHNO-RACIAL INDENTIFICATION	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	SCHOOL A	SCHOOL B	SCHOOL C	TOTAL %	EDMONTON CENSUS %
MIDDLE EASTERN	5	0	1	4	3	2
LATIN AMERICAN	1	1	0	0	1	1
SOUTH-EAST ASIAN	11	2	5	4	7	3
SOUTH ASIAN	13	5	7	1	8	4
ABORIGINAL	2	2	0	0	1	5
BLACK	6	4	1	1	4	2
CHINESE	40	1	30	9	24	5
WHITE	76	43	11	22	46	80
NO RESPONSE	7	6	0	0	--	--
OTHER	7	3	2	0	4	1
TOTALS	**167**	**67**	**57**	**43**		

The demographic variability of the three schools surveyed is represented by the school-by-school breakdown by ethnicity in Table 2. The total does not match the number of respondents because respondents were allowed to self-identify in multiple categories. Seventeen respondents (11%) did so. This represents the hybrid nature of multi-ethnic identities (James, 1999). In the data presented below, when comparison is made to ethnicity, these respondents are included in analyses under both self-identified categories as there is no way to know which, if any, was visually or culturally dominant. This multiple identity represents a confounding factor in the analysis, but more closely matches the complex nature of ethnicity and identity in our multicultural nation. The lived experience of multi-ethnic identity does involve some choice as to which identity to utilize at particular times (James, 1999).

There was considerable variation between schools. For example, the majority of respondents from one school were Chinese. White students made up more than two-thirds of two schools, and one-fifth of another. This suggests that it may be more important to take individual school characteristics into account, rather than generalizing across the entire Edmonton school system.

Findings

Q1: I am satisfied with my opportunities to learn in this school.

Q2: I feel safe in this school.

Q3: School staff and my teachers seem to care about me.

Q4: The students at this school generally respect other students who are culturally different.

Q5: Cultural diversity makes my school an uncomfortable place to be.

Q6: If students are bullied, I am confident that teachers or the principal will deal with the bullying effectively.

Q7: My teachers grade me fairly.

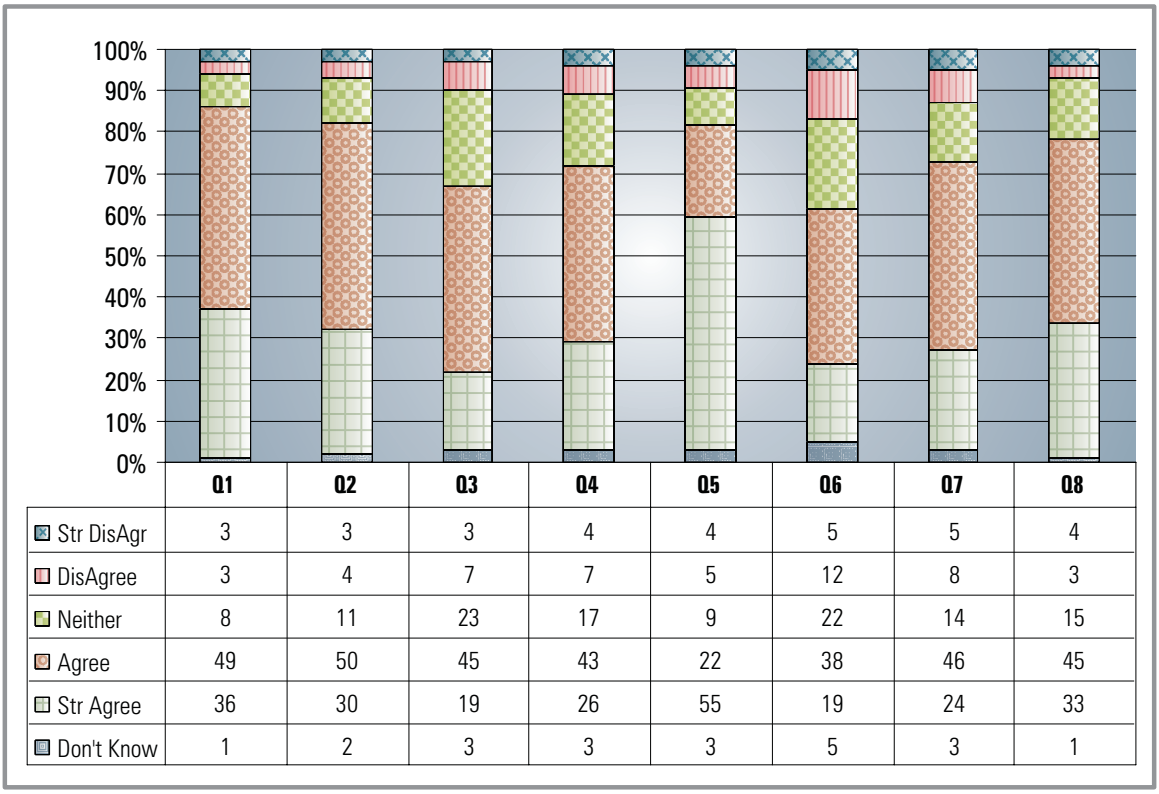
Q8: My teachers encourage me to do my best.

Questions 1-8 addressed general perceptions of the school environment as safe, caring, and equitable locations for learning. The literature has shown that racism negatively impacts school experiences in each of these areas. Question 6 also asked about perception of the school as a safe and caring environment. The question paralleled Question 10 and provided a comparison of general bullying with racial harassment, and the perceived effectiveness of school staff on these two situations. Questions 4 and 5 provided further understanding of the ways in which diversity is perceived or valued in relation to the school environment. Question 5 was reversed in its wording, so that the socially preferred answer (a positive school environment) required a student to disagree.[3] In the following analyses, responses have been unreversed for easier comparison with the other questions.[4]

In Questions 1-8, students were asked to "strongly agree," "agree," "neither agree nor disagree," "disagree," or "strongly agree." An additional option for "don't know" was provided. Figure 1 shows the total responses to the eight learning conditions. For the eight questions, between 57% and 85% of students "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that schools were succeeding in fulfilling their role as equitable locations for learning, which suggests that there is room for continued improvement. Figure 1 also contains the percentage of respondents out of the entire sample in each level of agreement or disagreement for each question.

3 This corrects for "test-wiseness" - the tendency to keep marking responses in the same place on the test, without actually considering one's answers.

4 The question would now read "Cultural diversity DOES NOT makes my school an uncomfortable place to be."



	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8
Str DisAgr	3	3	3	4	4	5	5	4
DisAgree	3	4	7	7	5	12	8	3
Neither	8	11	23	17	9	22	14	15
Agree	49	50	45	43	22	38	46	45
Str Agree	36	30	19	26	55	19	24	33
Don't Know	1	2	3	3	3	5	3	1

Figure 1. Chart of student responses for Questions 1-8. *Responses for Q5 have been reversed for comparison to the other responses.

Q1) I am satisfied with my opportunities to learn in this school.

The responses to Question One are aggregated in Table 3 to show the inter-school pattern. In all three schools over 80% agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with their learning opportunities in their school. However, one school had a much higher proportion of students strongly agreeing that they were satisfied with their learning opportunities.

TABLE 3: SATISFACTION WITH OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEARNING, SEPARATED BY SCHOOL.

BY PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS (Q1)	STRONGLY AGREE %	AGREE %	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE %	DISAGREE %	STRONGLY DISAGREE %	DO NOT KNOW %	NO RESPONSE %	TOTAL %
WHOLE GROUP	36	49	8	3	3	1	--	100
SCHOOL A	29	53	10	3	5	--	--	100
SCHOOL B	51	38	4	4	2	2	--	101
SCHOOL C	28	58	11	--	--	3	--	100

Q2) I FEEL SAFE IN THIS SCHOOL.

This pattern of school difference persisted across all eight questions. It was especially evident in the case of Question 2: "I feel safe in this school," as shown in Table 4.

TABLE 4: SENSE OF SAFETY, BY SCHOOL AND BY ETHNORACIAL SELF-IDENTIFICATION

BY PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS (Q2)	STRONGLY AGREE %	AGREE %	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE %	DISAGREE %	STRONGLY DISAGREE %	DO NOT KNOW %	TOTAL %
ALL STUDENTS							
WHITE	22	58	16	1	1	1	99
CHINESE	43	38	5	10	3	3	102
OTHER VISIBLE MINORITY	29	54	5	5	2	5	100
SCHOOLS A & C COMBINED							
WHITE	13	65	17	2	2	2	101
VISIBLE MINORITY	11	57	9	14	3	6	100

Whereas 92% of students in School B agreed or strongly agreed that they felt safe in the school, fully 20% fewer students in the other two schools so agreed. Furthermore, far more students in School B "strongly" agreed than in either of the other schools (58% compared to 12% and 19%).

The feeling of safety was significantly different in School B compared to the other two schools. Comparison of the response to this question by ethnoracial self-identification also showed significant differences. This was particularly the case in the two similar schools, which is shown in the latter part of Table 4. The situation in School B appears quite different as the white student population was a minority. A comment that represented the views of many students at this school was:

> There is no racism because there are many people of different races. The majority of people are different cultures.

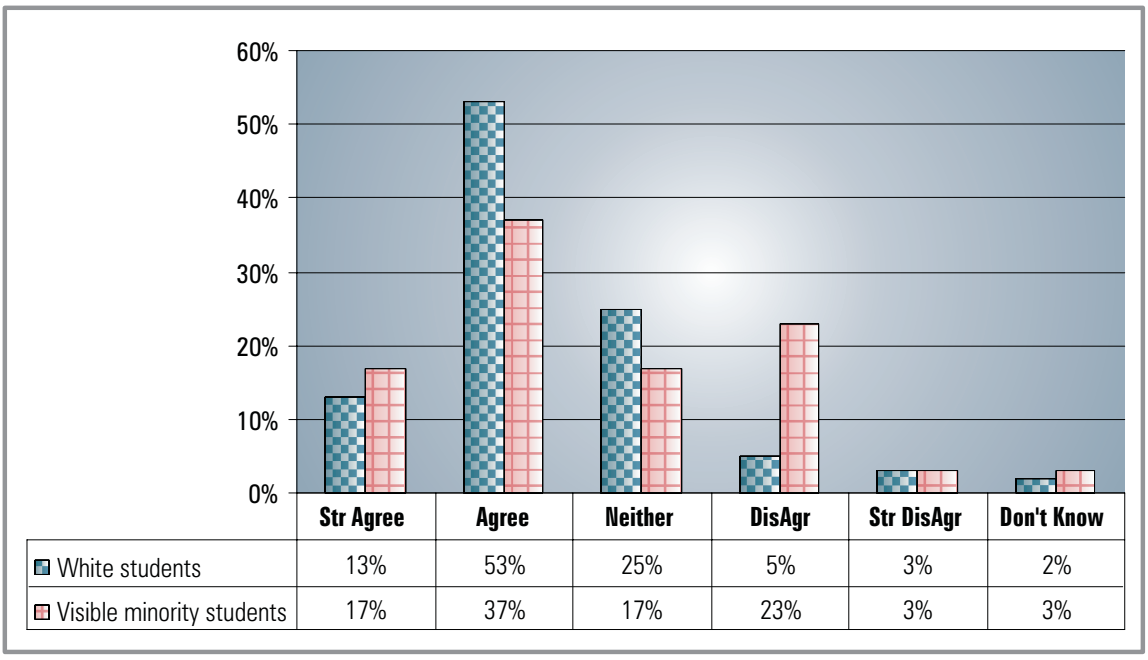
Whereas students in one school overwhelmingly declared their sense of personal safety in their school, students in the other two schools were less positive overall, and visible minority students expressed even less of a sense of safety.

Q4) The students at this school generally respect other students who are culturally different.

This question did not show significance in the whole sample, but was significant for the combined schools A and C, as well as for ethnoracial comparison. Once again, the students at the one school "strongly agreed" at a far higher rate than the other two schools. Respondents at these two schools

"neither agreed nor disagreed" at three times the rate of School B. Furthermore, students at these two schools were slightly more in disagreement with the question.

This difference between the schools showed that student respect for cultural differences were perceived as being much lower in two of the schools compared to the third school. In these two schools, there is a significant difference ($p=.05$) in the response to this question by visible minority students. More than a quarter of them disagreed that students of other cultures are respected by fellow students. This is graphically represented in Figure 2.



	Str Agree	Agree	Neither	DisAgr	Str DisAgr	Don't Know
White students	13%	53%	25%	5%	3%	2%
Visible minority students	17%	37%	17%	23%	3%	3%

Figure 2. Chart of student responses for Questions 1-8. *Responses for Q5 have been reversed for comparison to the other responses.

Questions 3, 5, 6, 7, and 8 showed no significant findings when comparisons were made between schools, or by ethnoracial identification. Questions 3, 6, 7, and 8 specifically queried student perceptions of teachers and their interaction with students. This data indicates that students did not perceive of differential treatment on the basis of race by teachers and staff. Finally, Q6 ("If students are bullied, I am confident that teachers or the principal will deal with the bullying effectively") showed the lowest positive response. This will be addressed later in conjunction with Q10.

Question 9 asked about student perceptions of the prevalence of different forms of discrimination at different levels of society - school, city, and country. Human rights is a section in the Grade 10 social studies curriculum, so students should have awareness of these forms of discrimination. This question allowed comparison of student perceptions of discrimination. It showed which equity-related concerns are most recognized by students and the extent to which discriminations were perceived.

- Presentation of the eighteen measures associated with Q9 is complicated. There are six types of Discrimination:
- Discrimination because of racism
- Discrimination because of gender

- Discrimination because of "lack of money" or poverty
- Discrimination because of sexual orientation
- Discrimination because of being from a different culture
- Discrimination because of physical disability; at each of three geographic scales:
- School
- City
- Country; and four degrees of assessment:
- No Problem
- Occasional Problem
- Some Problem
- Major Problem

This section will provide an overview of the whole sample results for the six types of discrimination at all three scales of School, City, and Country. More detailed assessment of the school level will follow the overview.

Comparison of types of discrimination

Generally speaking, more respondents felt there was a lower level of "problem" relative to these forms of discrimination in their schools than they perceived in their city or their country. Figures 3-5 show that the perceptions of the "extent of discrimination" shifts upwards as the scale moves from school to city to country. In other words, discrimination was perceived to be more of a problem in Canada as a whole, than in the city or school, and in Edmonton more than in their school.

Discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation was perceived to be the most serious issue at all three scales. The next highest at all three scales was discrimination because of the lack of money or poverty. Discrimination on the basis of gender was generally seen as the least problem among the six types. While racism was not recorded as the most significant problem in schools, it was seen as some problem or a major problem in Edmonton by almost 40% of the students, surpassed only by discrimination because of sexual orientation and lack of money.

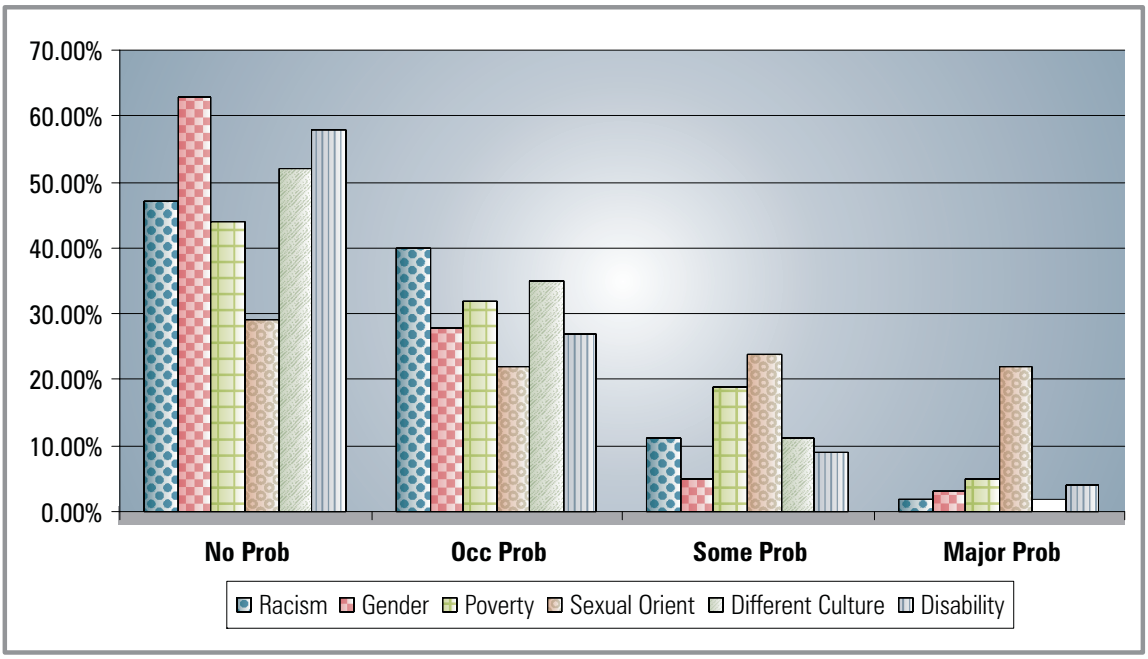


Figure 3. Student perception of the extent of several types of discrimination in their school.

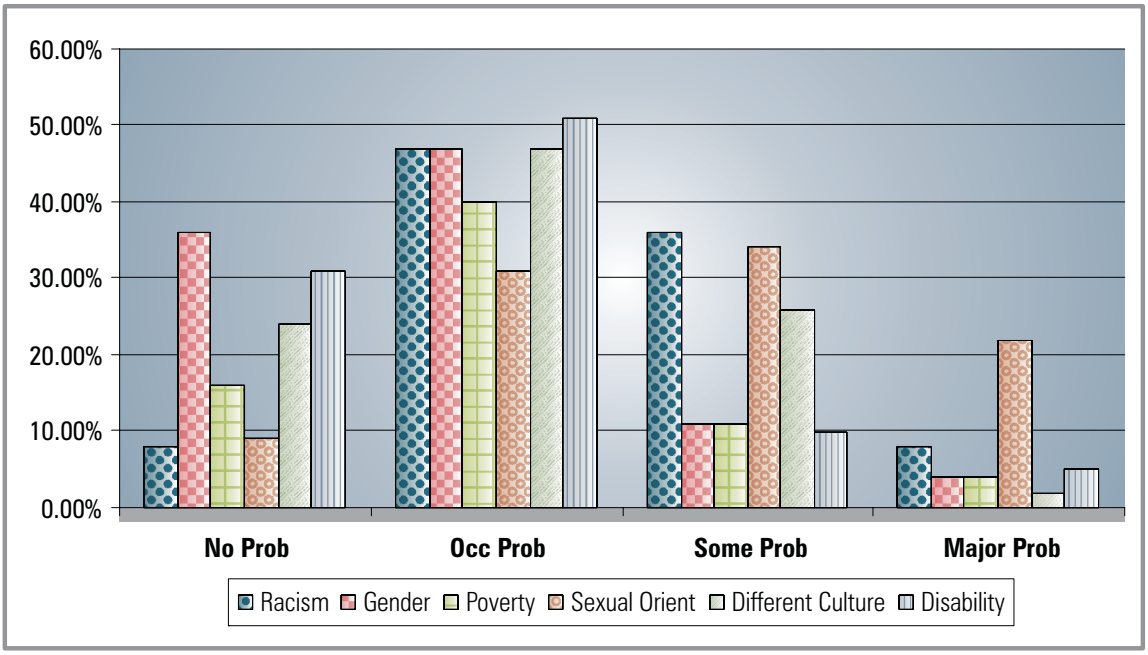


Figure 4. Student perception of the extent of several types of discrimination in their city.

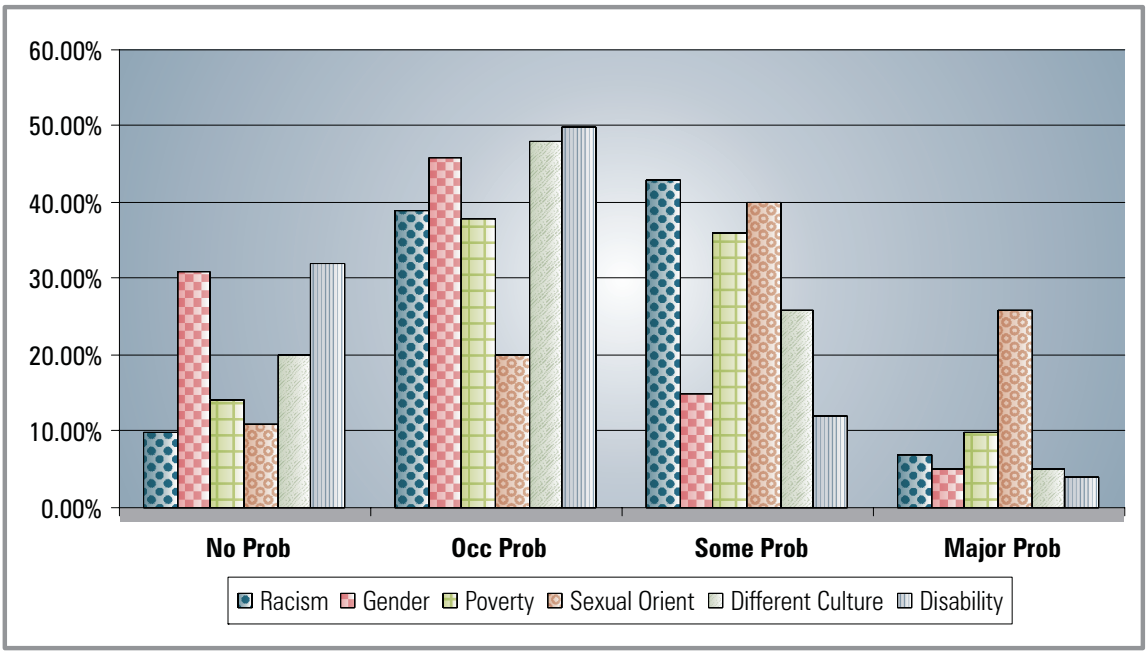


Figure 5. Student perception of the extent of several types of discrimination in Canada.

Comparison of Discrimination in Schools

Students at the three schools showed clear differences in their perception of discrimination in the school. Cross-tabulation of the responses by school showed significant differences in perception of the presence of discrimination at their school for each of the six measures (at the $p=.01$). In all cases, students at School B saw each type of discrimination as "No Problem" at a much higher rate than did students at the other two schools. In each case except discrimination by gender, students at School B were more than twice as likely as the other students to mark the "No problem" box on the survey. For example, 81% of students at this school believed discrimination because of cultural differences was "No problem." Only 36% of students at each of the other two schools believed this.

Focusing on discrimination based on racism and cultural difference, the school-by-school results show different patterns (Table 5). Specifically, at one school one quarter of the students felt discrimination because of cultural differences was some problem or a major problem. Racism was believed to be some problem or a major problem by 17% and 20% of the students at two of the schools.

TABLE 5: PERCEPTION OF THE EXTENT OF TWO TYPES OF DISCRIMINATION, BY SCHOOL.					
	NO PROBLEM %	OCC PROBLEM %	SOME PROBLEM %	MAJOR PROBLEM %	TOTAL %
DISCRIMINATION BECAUSE OF DIFFERENT CULTURE					
SCHOOL A	36	39	22	3	100
SCHOOL B	81	15	4	0	100
SCHOOL C	36	58	3	3	100
DISCRIMINATION BECAUSE OF RACISM					
SCHOOL A	27	53	17	3	100
SCHOOL B	75	21	4	0	100
SCHOOL C	75	47	14	3	100

Visible minority and white students differed in their perception of various forms of discrimination only on the Racism measure. Visible minority students (other than those of Chinese background) were much more likely to view racism as a more prevalent problem at their school than were other students. This was true at all three schools, which breaks with the tendency for students at School B to show lower acknowledgement of discrimination. This finding may suggest that minority students other than those who are Chinese (who appear to be a very large demographic, if not the majority) still face racism at this school. (More analysis would be needed to know if this includes white students at this school, who are seen as being in a minority position.)

Question 10 paralleled Question 6 and provided a comparison of the perceived effectiveness of school staff in dealing with racial incidents. The literature indicates that most racial incidents are ignored, often until things turn disruptive. At this point, the racialized youth may be punished (for responding aggressively to seemingly unprovoked events), situations may be irremediable, or the racialized youth is removed from the situation rather than addressing the racial incident.

Q10) If racial incidents happen, I am confident that teachers and the principal will deal with the problem effectively.

Student respondents generally felt that school staff would effectively deal with racial incidents (which were left unspecified in the survey). 67% of the 148 respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. However, at one school there was a much lower rate of agreement with this question (30% "agree" or "strongly agree," compared to 78% and 70%).

There were no differences by ethnoracial self-identification in response to this question. Furthermore, the responses to Q10 did not correlate with the responses to the bullying question (Q6). The responses to Q10 were higher than those for Q6, suggesting that students felt school staff could address a racist incident more effectively than one involving general bullying.

Q11) I feel comfortable speaking out against racism if it occurs at school.

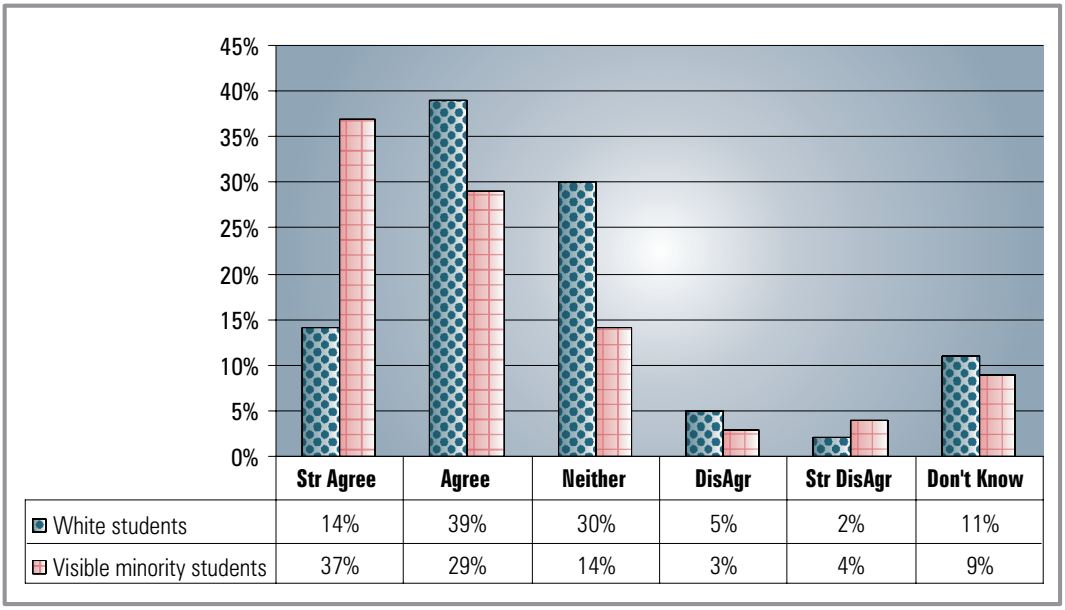
The comfort level by which students were able to speak out against racism indicates the social norms of the school environment. Students' ability to counter racism expressed in school is important in creating a school climate wherein racism is unacceptable.

TABLE 6: STUDENT RESPONSE TO QUESTION 11 REGARDING WHETHER THEY WOULD FEEL COMFORTABLE SPEAKING OUT AGAINST RACISM IN THEIR SCHOOL.

STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEITHER	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DO NOT KNOW	TOTAL
46	48	31	6	3	13	147

Overall, 64% of respondents indicated they would feel comfortable speaking out against racism in their school (see Table 6). This question also shows considerable inter-school variation. Beside much lower levels of agreement, an extremely high number of students at one school chose either "neither agree or disagree" (34%) or "don't know" (17%). The inter-school variation is statistically significant at the $p=.01$ level.

In addition, speaking out against racism that occurs at school varied significantly by ethnoracial category in two of the schools (Figure 6). Visible minority students expressed less comfort in speaking out in these two schools. A substantial number of white students (30%) took a neutral stance and neither agreed nor disagreed regarding their comfort in speaking out against racism in school.



	Str Agree	Agree	Neither	DisAgr	Str DisAgr	Don't Know
White students	14%	39%	30%	5%	2%	11%
Visible minority students	37%	29%	14%	3%	4%	9%

Figure 6. Reponses by ethnoracial self-identification regarding comfort speaking out against racism in the two similar schools.

Finally, there was a significant positive correlation between responses to Q2 ("I feel safe in this school") and Q11. Those feeling safer, tended to be more willing to speak out against racism.

The second part of Q11 allowed open-ended explanations for why students did or did not feel comfortable speaking out against racism. Thematic coding was applied to the open-ended responses. Once again, this analysis has to take account of the differences between the three schools. For example, some students, tending to cluster in the school that is highly diverse, listed "no racism" as a reason for not speaking up. Other students expressed a fear of getting hurt as reason for not being comfortable in speaking out. In fact, for those uncomfortable with speaking out, fear was the dominant reason. In one school, five of twelve students who checked "neither agree or disagree" mentioned fear, as did most of the students who did not feel comfortable speaking out against racism in their school. Sample explanations included:

> Because many times when you stand up for somebody that puts a large target on your back for discrimination.
>
> I believe strongly in speaking out but I fear judgement by students & staff.
>
> I will get my ass kicked.

Students who expressed a comfort speaking out gave a number of reasons. The immorality or wrongness of racism was frequently mentioned. Some people spoke from personal experience. A feeling of being supported in this stance by others was also important, as was the cultural diversity of their school. Sample comments included:

> I feel that racism, while vaguely present at our school needs to be abolished because I think it's wrong.
>
> It bothers me to even talk about the incidents I have been through.
>
> I know how it feels to be discriminated because of my race. I don't want anyone to have to go through the same feeling.
>
> The principal and other staff will keep it completely confidential if you come to them with a problem because of racial discrimination.
>
> Because it is such a rarity that when I stomp out the little weed I will be in minimal danger, rather than trying to chop the whole forest down, and be in major danger.
>
> My school is very diverse in cultures and races; the students are very understanding.

Still, even among those who agreed with the question, there were concerns:

> Because [speaking out] could incriminate my friends, and I believe if my objections were against the administration, I would be 'indirectly' penalized.
>
> The school is generally safe, and I am confident that many support my views.

These comments show the complexity of addressing an issue such as racism. School climate, student attitudes, being in a safe learning environment, and understanding of the issue are complex and interwoven.

Students were asked to mark how often they had either "Observed" or "Experienced" certain behaviours that may signify or accompany racism. The literature shows how a variety of social practices

may be discriminatory. Some behaviours are subtle; in some cases persons may be unaware of the effect it has on the other person (e.g. racial jokes). Five behaviours that are specific and observable were selected for the study, all of which can be the basis for later institutional remedy. The five behaviours are:

- Discrimination because someone spoke English poorly
- Racial/ethnic jokes
- Differing discipline for students of different ethnic groups
- Verbal insults because of someone's skin colour or ethnicity
- Fighting or violence because of someone's race

Respondents were given five choices of frequency:

- Never or almost never
- Once a month
- Monthly to Once a week
- 2-3 times a week
- Every day

An overview of all the responses shows the pattern of behaviours. Observations of behaviour are presented in Figure 7. Reported experiences are presented in Figure 8.

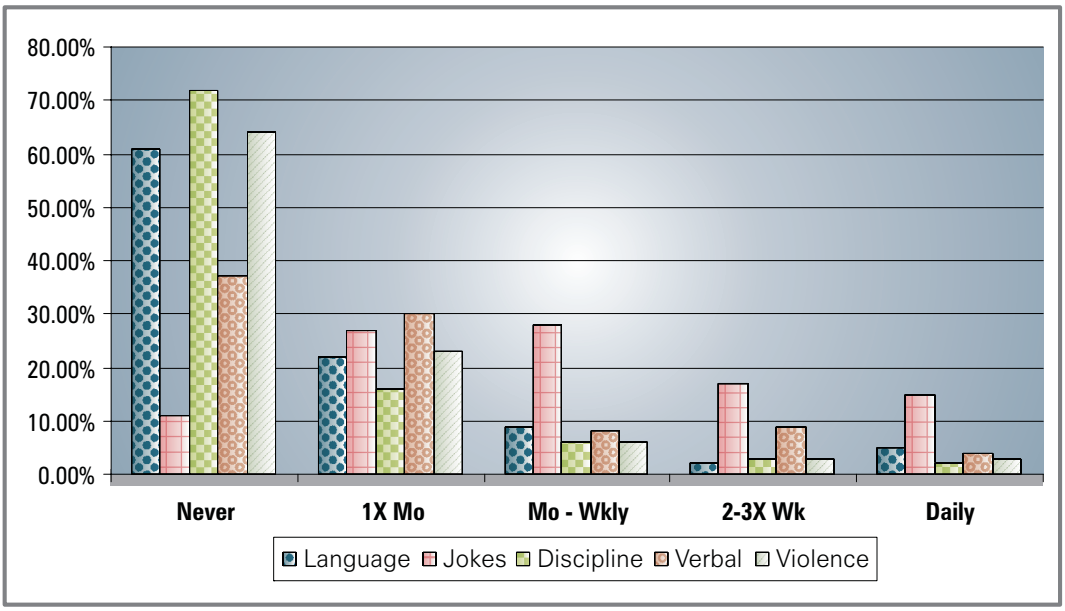


Figure 7. Frequency of racial incidents observed by respondents.

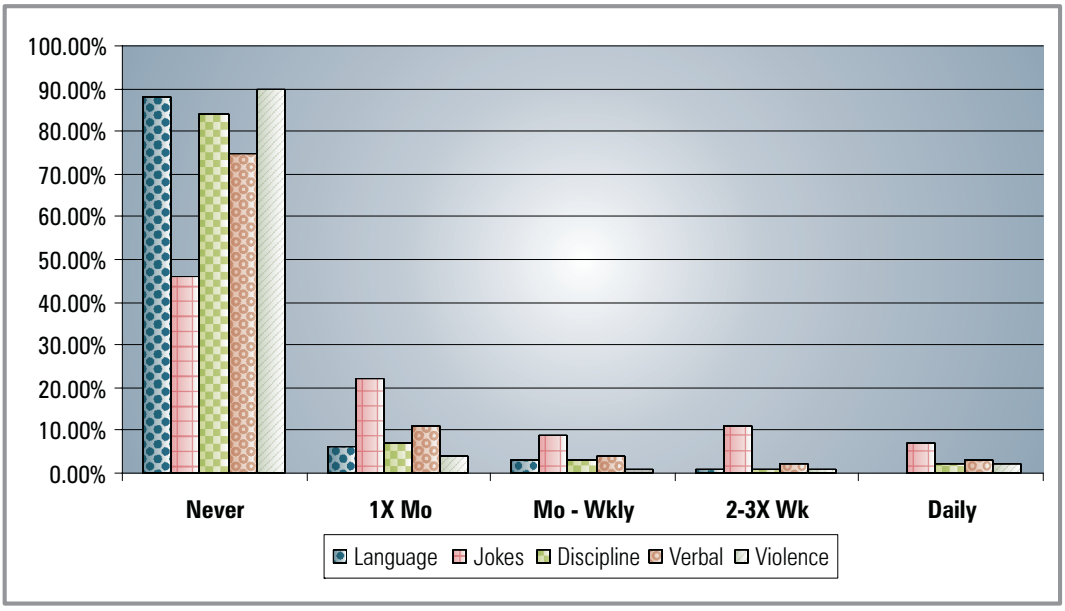


Figure 8. Frequency of racial incidents experienced by respondents.

Jokes with a racial aspect were certainly the most frequently observed action, being reported daily by 15% of respondents. Poor-taste jokes can contribute to an uncomfortable climate for visible minority students. Verbal actions and insults were the second most prevalent action, occurring monthly or more often for over three-fifths of the students (63%). Over one-third of the students (35%) observed race-related violence on a monthly basis, suggesting concerns about the safety of the schools are not misplaced. An equal number claim to witness discrimination because of language on a monthly basis. Although caution should be expressed due to the potential for multiple interpretations of the meaning of the language question, the prevalence of this type of discrimination recommends follow-up assessment. Overall, this data suggests that racial incidents were witnessed by a great many students. One student commented, "most of the time the teachers don't even know about it."

Personal experience of racial incidents shows a different frequency, with much lower rates of the behaviours directly experienced by students. A similar pattern exists as described above. Jokes were the number one type of racist expression, while verbal insults were the second most common.

Segregating responses to this question by school revealed fewer patterns than other areas addressed in the survey. Schools varied in reported incidences of racial jokes. More disturbing, students at one school reported well over twice the incidence of teacher-imposed discipline possibly being racially associated. **61% of students at School A did not report observing such discipline once a month or more. This compares to 83% (School B) and 75% (School C).** Finally, since race-related violence is such a stark indicator of a problem, it is charted in Figure 9, providing yet another indication of inter-school variation. However, such data does not determine where to draw lines regarding the acceptable limits of behaviour or incidents. It does provide information on what is occurring, from which authorities will have to decide what can be tolerated. Violence was the least reported of these five indicators of racial incidents or behaviour.

An analysis of these five indicators, both observed or experienced, was done to investigate possible correlations based on ethnoracial self-identification. Recognizing the inter-school differences, the

analysis was run on both the whole sample, and on the two schools that have shown greater incidence of problems. Ten measures (five specific behaviours for each of the Observed and Experienced portions) analyzed across two different sample sets equal twenty tests. Although only six tests of association ($\chi 2$) were significant at the $p=.10$ level[5], there is evidence of a pattern. Two conclusions can be drawn from these six measures.

The six measures that had significant association between a type of racist behaviour and ethnoracial self-classification were:

- Observed discrimination because of language proficiency, among visible minorities in the whole sample;
- Experienced racial jokes, among visible minorities in the two schools;
- Experienced differing discipline, among visible minorities in the whole sample;
- Experienced verbal insults, among visible minorities in the two schools;
- Observed violence, among visible minorities in the whole sample;
- Experienced violence, among visible minorities in the whole sample.

The first conclusion is that visible minority students are experiencing racial incidents. The second point is that both measures of racial violence are significant across the entire sample.

In short, it is apparent that racism is prevalent in EPSB schools and that it is perceived and experienced by different students in different ways. Sometimes it is a matter of where one looks. As one respondent said, "We never have fights here at —— . . . but at other schools like my junior high it was way worse." This study only examined student experiences during the 2002-2003 school year and in the school they were attending in that school year.

Q13) If there is racism in your school, who are the groups that are most targeted?

Question 13 allowed students to describe who they perceived as targeted by racism in their school context. This provides an assessment of the variability of racial targeting, thereby allowing more appropriate remedial measures for individual schools and the school system.

Analysis of these open-ended responses required collecting the varied responses into categories. This will be presented, along with specific themes that emerged. Consistent with evidence already presented, the open-ended responses to this question provide additional evidence that "school culture" affects how racism is perceived. Responses showed definite patterns that varied from school to school. For example,

- In one school, East Indian or Pakistani people were mentioned most often (by 18 respondents), followed by "Brown" (7). Meanwhile, East Indian/South Asian was only mentioned by one person in another school and by no one in the third school.

5 This test was the Chi Test (X^2), which compares observed rates to expected rates in the sample responses.

- Aboriginal/Native people were mentioned by eight people in one school, three times in each of the other two schools.
- In one school, White/Caucasian was mentioned far more frequently (11) than the next group. White people were not mentioned in any other school.

People in this latter school were most insistent that there was "not much racism" in their school, while numerous others made similar comments, such as "There really isn't a lot of racism, it's more like people just making racial jokes." Comparatively, only four and five respondents in the other schools said there was either no racism or they hadn't seen any. It should also be noted that this question was left blank by twenty-five respondents, three-fifths of whom were in the first school mentioned. One possible explanation is that the question asked who was targeted and most respondents from this school did not feel that there was racism in the school. Leaving the question blank would provide support for this view.

Without knowing the ethnoracial mix of the school, it is difficult to assess the responses. Generally speaking, it is likely that people notice the racism against groups present in their school and who receive curricular or media attention. As noted previously, the clear evidence of school specific patterns indicate that any anti-racism or multicultural programs will need to be sensitive to the unique character and culture of each school.

Several other themes were also evident. Targets of racism included those who were somehow "visible", or who had internal cohesion.

> The groups that seem to dress or act differently from what is considered normal.
>
> There are groups who stay to themselves and so they are targeted.

Language, and disability were also mentioned as characteristics used to target people.

It is evident throughout the data that awareness of the complexity of racism could be improved. Respondents who sought to explain themselves often expressed minimal awareness of the complexity of racism. The following quotations show that many students see race-related actions, but devalue their potential effects.

> I don't feel that there is an uncontrolable [sic] amount of racism at our school, but people of aboriginal descent are picked on a bit.
>
> I haven't really seen any racism in the form of violence.
>
> I have heard frequent use of the word "nigger," as well as jokes about black people.
>
> Usually friendly jokes with no offence intended.

Finally, the topic of racism against white students was mostly expressed in one school. Their positions as targets of racial actions were attributed to their minority status.

> Caucasian people are biased against (but only for jokes).
>
> Most likely the 'white' people because majority of the school is asian [sic].

It would be very interesting to investigate this further in schools such as this. Perry (2001) has shown how "whiteness" takes different forms but is a definite subtext even in multicultural schools.

Q14) If you think there is racism in your school, what could be done to improve the situation?

Solutions to potential or actual problems involve the key stakeholders. Question 14 is open-ended and involves students in problem-solving and solution generating. It also provides information about how students are thinking about the topic. Table 7 summarizes the most frequent themes that arose from the open-ended question.

TABLE 7: RESPONSES TO THE OPEN-ENDED QUESTION ABOUT WHAT SHOULD BE DONE TO ADDRESS RACISM IN THEIR SCHOOL.

THEME	NUMBER RESPONDING THIS WAY	NOTES
EDUCATION	24	
PERSONAL ACTION	18	
PUNISHMENT BY SCHOOL	16	
SCHOOL HANDLE IT	13	
THERE'S NO RACISM	11	10 OF THESE RESPONSES CAME FROM ONE SCHOOL

Several observations arise immediately. First, the view that nothing should be done because there is not a problem was expressed by few students, and these were nearly exclusively at the one school that is clearly different than the other two. Second, most of the solutions involved school administrative action – punishment, increased education, or other forms of letting the school handle things.

Students clearly feel that school support is needed rather than having students handle racism by themselves. Students do not appear to feel that their own actions will change attitudes or behaviour effectively, at least not alone. Among the most prevalent responses is for schools to provide more opportunities for cultural awareness. This takes the form of specific programs and events, but also in day-to-day operations. For example, students suggested "more teaching in school about the good things of other cultures," "more group activities would encourage co-operation and friendship," and "continue with classes of students from all cultures. A lot of it depends on the students feeling safe and being prepared to meet new people." As other data in this study has shown, racism and respect for cultural difference shows some linkage in the student's minds. Racism and cultural difference are different. But such a linkage, which is even more obvious in the student comments to this question, show that effort needs to be made to give students a stronger grasp of the fundamentals of the topic.

Conclusion

- Students generally perceive schools as good, equitable and positive sites for learning.

Although schools were generally perceived positively, there is variation between schools. An analysis was done of one question (Q1) to show a pattern that persists across all the responses to the survey.

There is also variation by ethnoracial self-identification. Specific findings will be addressed in following points.

- *Sense of safety* showed significant variation by school, and minority youth felt less safe.
- *Respect for students who are culturally different* showed significant variation by school, and minority students felt less respect for cultural difference.
- While many students feel comfortable speaking out against racism, at certain schools, for visible minority students at times, and for those who do not feel safe, there is less comfort in doing so.

That students with cultural differences are seen as less respected in the school by visible minority students, combined with a reduction of sense of safety in school for visible minority students, suggests that racial issues exist. Even if not overt, schools would do well to address the potential for an escalating situation. More importantly, ethno-racial issues currently exist and schools and school districts would be advised to determine approaches to addressing them. These two measures go to the heart of the school "environment," which does affect student learning.

- Discrimination is present more at some schools than at others.

This finding clearly points out that school "culture" varies. It does show that policies and programs will have to allow school-specific dynamics.

- Racism and discrimination because of culture were perceived more by visible minority students than other students.

Considerable research shows that non-minority persons are often less aware of the race-related dynamics that occur in everyday life. Racism is often only addressed when it becomes blatant. However, many subtle forms of discrimination also occur, and may even occur without intent. Nevertheless, these discriminations affect the lives of those who face them. That visible minority students perceived greater discrimination makes this a part of their school experience. It will affect their attitudes, motivation, and other aspects of their learning.

- Visible minority students are experiencing racial incidents.

Verbal insults, violence, racial jokes, discipline that differs by race, and discrimination because of language proficiency are all observed to happen monthly by over 30% of the students. Most of these are also experienced by one-fifth of the students. There are significant differences between visible minority and white students in what types of racial behaviours were experienced, with such behaviours as violence and verbal insults being prominent.

Racial jokes were also commonly reported. However, most students rationalized their prevalence with comments showing that they did not believe that jokes hurt anyone or caused offence. As noted immediately above, majority and minority experiences of the same situation can be quite different. Jokes with a racial aspect may contribute to the sense of discrimination and lower sense of safety and respect that visible minority students report.

The data further suggest that students do not perceive school practices to differ on the basis of perceived race. Two cautions should be made. First, this is not to say discrimination does not happen occasionally, or in specific cases. Based on this potential, and the evidence of other research (see the comprehensive literature review, as well as focus group reports), clear anti-discrimination policies are

still warranted. Second, this study is extremely limited and readers should be hesitant to see this as the final word before a more comprehensive assessment of the equitable realities of Edmonton schools can be conducted.

- Targets of racism vary widely, but Aboriginal people and South Asians are listed by students as the most prevalent targets.
- Students believe that racism requires school administration involvement.

Summary

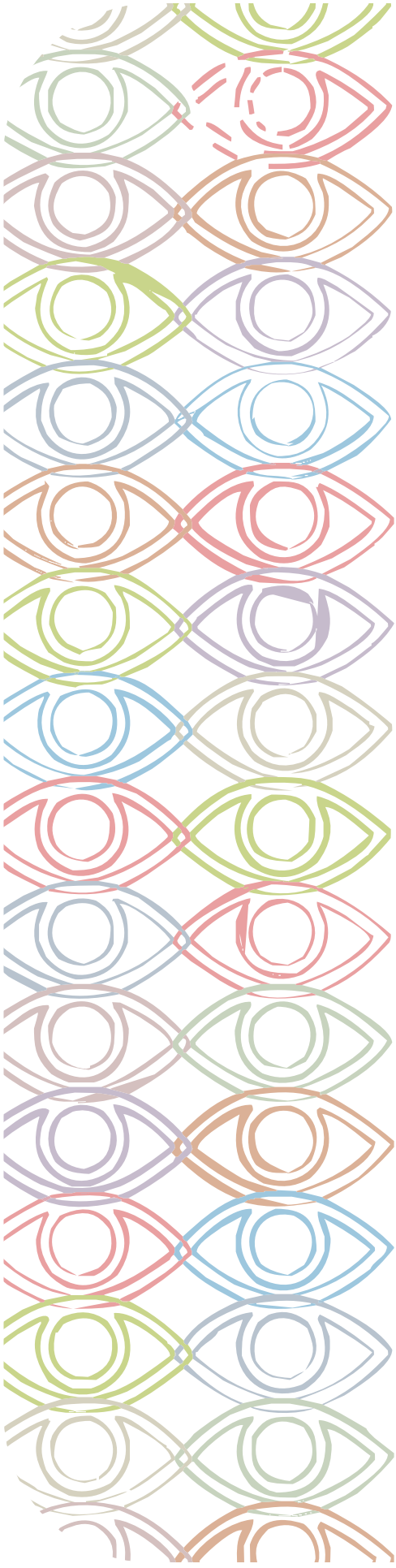
This study demonstrates the ongoing presence of racism in Edmonton Public Schools. That the evidence does not indicate strong prevalence across numerous measures is a positive, but should not imply that all is well. There are weaknesses inherent in survey methodology that are exacerbated in dealing with such a subtle and sensitive set of practices as other research has shown racism to be (see the literature review for documentation). There is also pressure in the self-report format to "put up a good front," or "be positive," as well as other well-documented variances. Finally, the inter-school variation already demonstrated in this study limits the ability of this research to definitively show the extent of racism that does take place.

More importantly, the evidence that racism is present in Edmonton Public Schools leads next to decision-making about how to enhance the equitability of schools given that there are still some problems regarding race, ethnicity, and cultural differences. What level of racism and cultural discrimination should be accepted are political and philosophical decisions that social science cannot address.

References

James, C.E. (1999). Seeing ourselves: Exploring race, ethnicity and culture (2nd edition). Toronto: Thompson Educational Publishing.

Perry, P. (2001). White means never having to say you're ethnic: White youth and the construction of "cultureless" identities. Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, 30 (1), 56-91.



APPENDIX I:
SURVEY

Student Perceptions about Equity in Edmonton Schools

This survey will take about 25 minutes.

This survey is about <u>your</u> perception of your school's sense of community or well-being, especially around issues of race and ethnicity.

All surveys will be kept completely confidential and secret. Your name will never be used. *(The recording number at the top cannot be linked to any person. It only identifies schools.)*

Take your time. <u>If you wish to explain any answers please do so!</u>

Put an "X" on the number that shows how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement. Feel free to explain any of your answers.

① Strongly agree ② Agree ③ Neither Agree nor Disagree ④ Disagree ⑤ Strongly Disagree ⑥ Do not know

1) I am satisfied with my opportunities to learn in this school.
① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥

2) I feel safe in this school.
① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥

3) School staff and my teachers seem to care about me.
① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥

4) The students at this school generally respect other students who are culturally different.
① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥

5) Cultural diversity makes my school an uncomfortable place to be.
① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥

6) If students are bullied, I am confident that teachers or the principal will deal with the bullying effectively.
① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥

7) My teachers grade me fairly.
① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥

8) My teachers encourage me to do my best.
① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥

9) Discrimination can exist in many forms. To what extent are these a problem in your school, your city and in Canada? (Check your answer)

		No Problem	*Occasional Problem*	*Some Problem*	*Major Problem*
A.	Discrimination because of racism				
	SCHOOL:	☐	☐	☐	☐
	CITY:	☐	☐	☐	☐
	COUNTRY:	☐	☐	☐	☐
B.	Discrimination because of gender (whether one is female or male)				
	SCHOOL:	☐	☐	☐	☐
	CITY:	☐	☐	☐	☐
	COUNTRY:	☐	☐	☐	☐
C.	Discrimination because of lack of money (poverty)				
	SCHOOL:	☐	☐	☐	☐
	CITY:	☐	☐	☐	☐
	COUNTRY:	☐	☐	☐	☐
D.	Discrimination because of sexual orientation (for example, if a person is gay or lesbian)				
	SCHOOL:	☐	☐	☐	☐
	CITY:	☐	☐	☐	☐
	COUNTRY:	☐	☐	☐	☐
E.	Discrimination because of being from a different culture				
	SCHOOL:	☐	☐	☐	☐
	CITY:	☐	☐	☐	☐
	COUNTRY:	☐	☐	☐	☐
F.	Discrimination because of physical disability				
	SCHOOL:	☐	☐	☐	☐
	CITY:	☐	☐	☐	☐
	COUNTRY:	☐	☐	☐	☐

10) If racial incidents happen, I am confident that teachers and the principal will deal with the problem effectively.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥

11) I feel comfortable speaking out against racism if it occurs at school.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥

Why or why not? _____

_____

12) In this school year, have you experienced yourself or observed: (Mark an "X" on what *generally* best applies). Feel free to explain your answers.

		Never or almost never ①	*Once a month* ②	*Monthly to Once a week* ③	*2-3 times a week* ④	*Every day* ⑤
A.	Discrimination because someone spoke English poorly					
	Observed:	①	②	③	④	⑤
	Experienced yourself:	①	②	③	④	⑤
B.	Racial/ethnic jokes					
	Observed:	①	②	③	④	⑤
	Experienced yourself:	①	②	③	④	⑤
C.	Differing discipline for students of different ethnic groups					
	Observed:	①	②	③	④	⑤
	Experienced yourself:	①	②	③	④	⑤
D.	Verbal insults because of someone's skin colour or ethnicity					
	Observed:	①	②	③	④	⑤
	Experienced yourself:	①	②	③	④	⑤
E.	Fighting or violence because of someone's race					
	Observed:	①	②	③	④	⑤
	Experienced yourself:	①	②	③	④	⑤

13) If there is racism in your school, who are the groups that are most targeted? _____

_____

14) If you think there is racism in your school, what could be done to improve the situation?

_____

_____

There are different ways that people describe their family heritage. These can include country of origin or cultural group. Following are a list of some commonly used terms.

15) How would you describe yourself? (Mark more than one if applicable.)

- □ Caucasian
- □ Chinese
- □ Black (e.g., African, Jamaican, Somali)
- □ Aboriginal, (e.g., First Nations, Métis, Inuit)
- □ South Asian (e.g., East Indian, Pakistani, Punjabi)
- □ South-East Asian (e.g., Filipino, Vietnamese)
- □ Latin American
- □ Middle Eastern
- □ Other – Specify _____, _____,

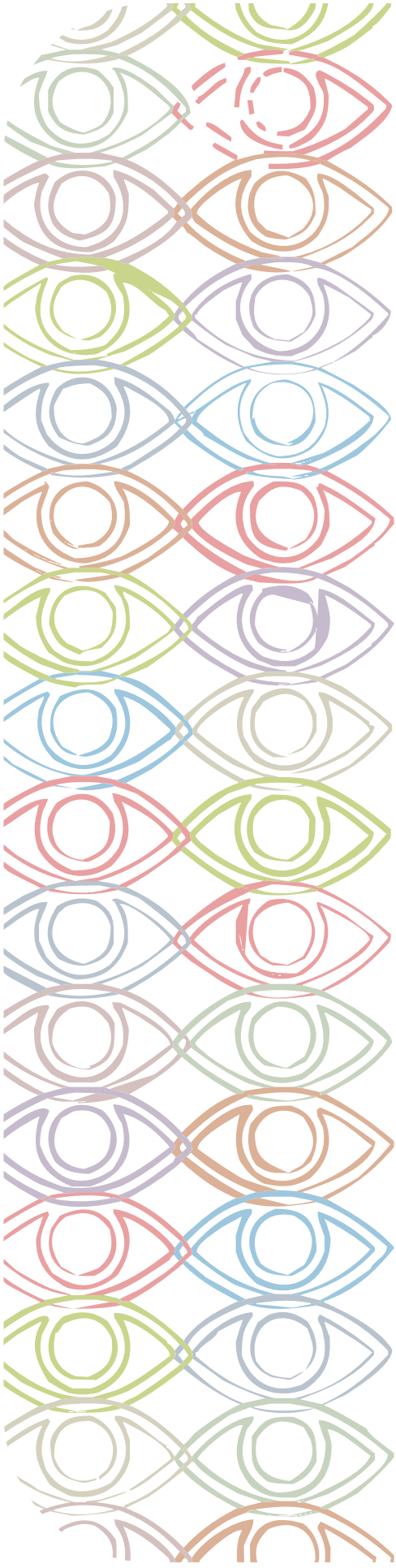
16) I am □ Female □ Male

17) How many years have you gone to school in Edmonton? _____ .

Are there ANY other comments you would like to make ?

THANK YOU for your time !

For more information on this survey, please contact:
Charlene Hay, Northern Alberta Alliance on Race Relations (NAARR)
#41, 9912 - 106 St., Edmonton, AB T5K 1C5
780-425-4644 naarr@interbaun.com



APPENDIX II:

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Equity Project
Parent Focus Group
Interview Guide

1. Let's begin by talking about your own experiences and involvement with the Edmonton schools. Can you begin by describing your first experiences with the Edmonton school system (Catholic or public)?

2. Have the school or school personnel provided opportunities to help you understand the school processes (i.e. the system) and your child's learning needs? If so, please describe.

3. In what ways have you participated in your child's education?

4. What strategies has the school used to encourage your participation in your child's education?

5. I'd like to turn now to the issue of importance for this research, which is fostering respect and equity in Edmonton schools. Before we do that, let's begin by talking about what "equity" means to you. What is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the term "equity/equality" as it concerns your child's schooling?

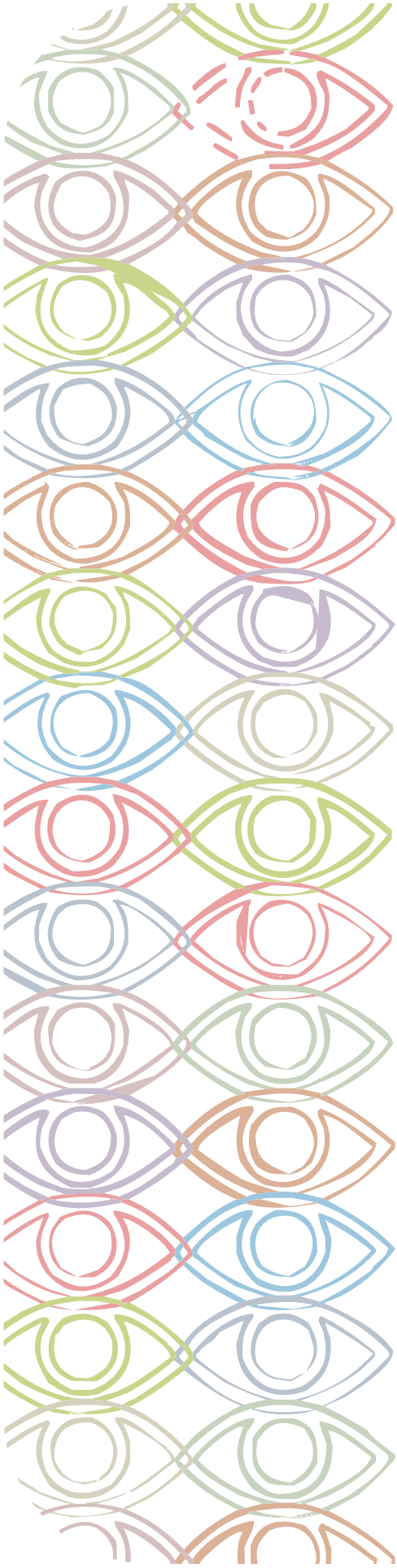
6. Currently, what challenges, concerns and issues does your child or children face in schools? What challenges/changes do you anticipate them facing in the future?

7. Tell me about your child experiences with racism or discrimination in the schools? Do they feel safe in the schools?

8. Does your child' school have a specific policy that deals with racial incidences and raced-based harassment? If not, how does the school, in your opinion, deal with racism and racial incidents?

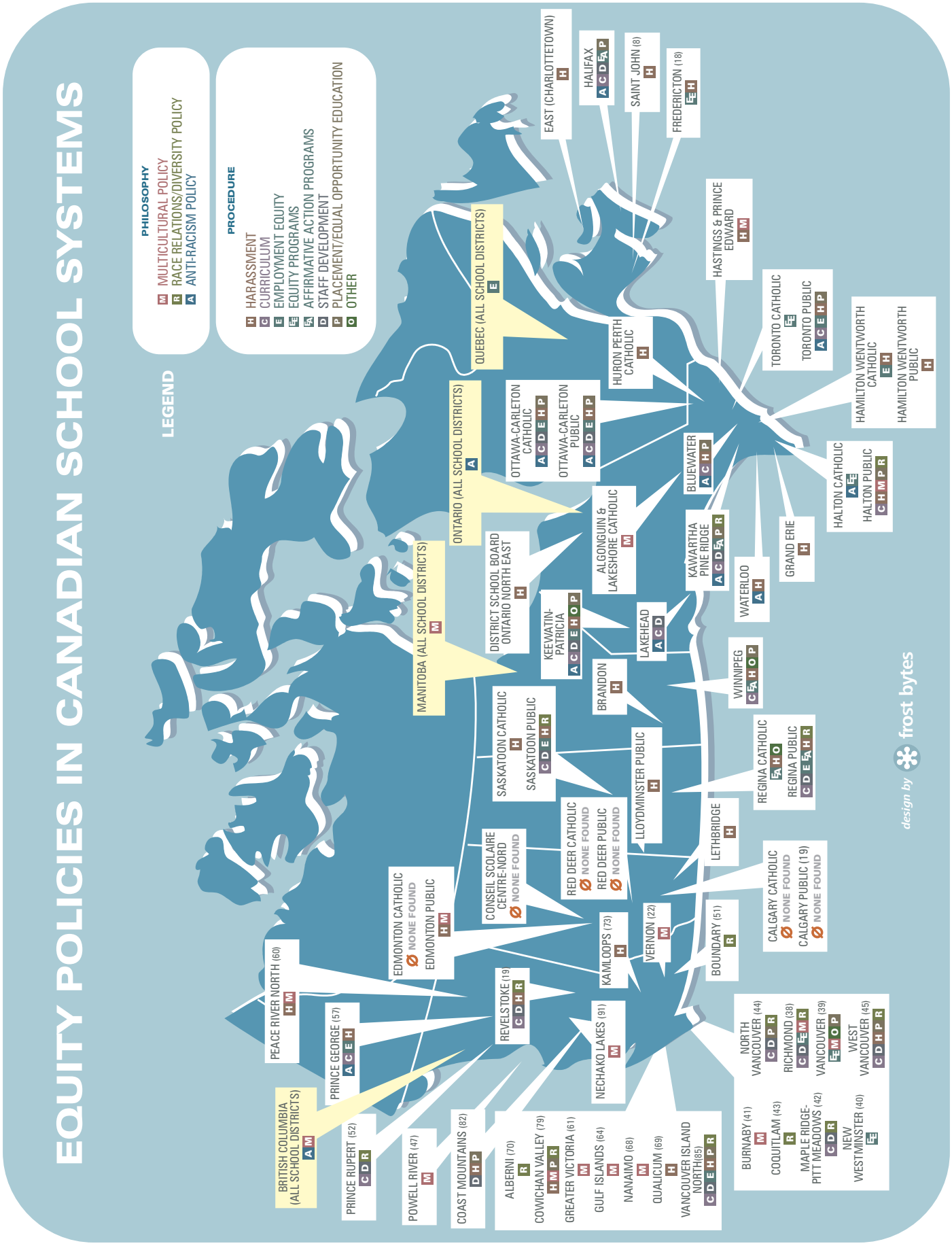
9. If you had an opportunity to advice the school board on a policy that deals with racism and racial harassment in the school how would it look like?

We've covered a lot of ground today. Is there anything else you would like to discuss or add from our discussion? Is there one comment you would like to make that was not covered by this discussion? Your contribution to this research is highly appreciated and we hope that your comments today will help in ensuring that the needs of all children are meet in Edmonton schools. If you would like to be informed on the results of this discussion and others to follow, please write your name and contact information provided to you by the research assistant. We will contact you at a later date.



APPENDIX III:

MAP OF EQUITY POLICIES IN CANADIAN SCHOOL SYSTEMS


EQUITY POLICIES IN CANADIAN SCHOOL SYSTEMS
LEGEND
PHILOSOPHY
M MULTICULTURAL POLICY
R RACE RELATIONS/DIVERSITY POLICY
A ANTI-RACISM POLICY
PROCEDURE
H HARASSMENT
C CURRICULUM
E EMPLOYMENT EQUITY
EE EQUITY PROGRAMS
EA AFFIRMATIVE ACTION PROGRAMS
D STAFF DEVELOPMENT
P PLACEMENT/EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EDUCATION
O OTHER
BRITISH COLUMBIA (ALL SCHOOL DISTRICTS) A M
PEACE RIVER NORTH (60) H M
PRINCE GEORGE (57) A C E H
PRINCE RUPERT (52) C D R
POWELL RIVER (47) M
COAST MOUNTAINS (82) D H P
ALBERNI (70) R
COWICHAN VALLEY (79) H M P R
GREATER VICTORIA (61) M
GULF ISLANDS (64) M
NANAIMO (68) M
QUALICUM (69) H
VANCOUVER ISLAND NORTH (85) C D E H P R
REVELSTOKE (19) C D H R
NECHAKO LAKES (91) M
KAMLOOPS (73) H
VERNON (22) M
BOUNDARY (51) R
EDMONTON CATHOLIC Ø NONE FOUND
EDMONTON PUBLIC H M
CONSEIL SCOLAIRE CENTRE-NORD Ø NONE FOUND
RED DEER CATHOLIC Ø NONE FOUND
RED DEER PUBLIC Ø NONE FOUND
LETHBRIDGE H
CALGARY CATHOLIC Ø NONE FOUND
CALGARY PUBLIC (19) Ø NONE FOUND
MANITOBA (ALL SCHOOL DISTRICTS) M
SASKATOON CATHOLIC H
SASKATOON PUBLIC C D E H R
BRANDON H
LLOYDMINSTER PUBLIC H
REGINA CATHOLIC EA H O
REGINA PUBLIC C D E EA H R
WINNIPEG C EA H O P
ONTARIO (ALL SCHOOL DISTRICTS) A
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD ONTARIO NORTH EAST H
KEEWATIN-PATRICIA A C D E H O P
ALGONQUIN & LAKESHORE CATHOLIC M
LAKEHEAD A C D
OTTAWA-CARLETON CATHOLIC A C D E H P
OTTAWA-CARLETON PUBLIC A C D E H P
BLUEWATER A C H P
KAWARTHA PINE RIDGE A C D EA P R
WATERLOO A H
GRAND ERIE H
HURON PERTH CATHOLIC H
HALTON CATHOLIC A EE
HALTON PUBLIC C H M P R
HAMILTON WENTWORTH CATHOLIC E H
HAMILTON WENTWORTH PUBLIC H
TORONTO CATHOLIC EE
TORONTO PUBLIC A C E H P
HASTINGS & PRINCE EDWARD H M
QUEBEC (ALL SCHOOL DISTRICTS) E
EAST (CHARLOTTETOWN) H
HALIFAX A C D EA P
SAINT JOHN (8) H
FREDERICTON (18) EE H
BURNABY (41) M
COQUITLAM (43) R
MAPLE RIDGE-PITT MEADOWS (42) C D R
NEW WESTMINSTER (40) EE
NORTH VANCOUVER (44) C D P R
RICHMOND (38) C D EE M R
VANCOUVER (39) EE M O P
WEST VANCOUVER (45) C D H P R
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