School to Success Pipeline: Black youth not in employment, education or training (NEET):
A literature review, December 2019

"*To be Black and at home in Canada is to both belong and not belong*." Walcott (2003)

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Introduction

Addressing the issue of youth who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) is an urgent concern for communities and nations alike because of the implications for transition to adulthood and meaningful participation in society. But it also has the potential to affect social cohesion in general. There is a widespread policy and community perception that being 'NEET' (not in employment, education or training) represents a major risk for young people becoming socially excluded from full citizenship, or alienated and marginalized from the activities of everyday life in society. While the concept of NEET is used to identify young individuals not engaged in education, employment or training, the aim here is to expand the focus beyond youth preoccupation with unemployment, school, training to better understand why some youth have given up looking for work or are detached from the labour market and the implications and socio-economic context for these decisions. The objective is a more holistic approach to the plight of particularly disenfrachised youth in society.[1] The 'NEET' rate has also been used as a measure of youth marginalization and labour market exclusion, raising questions about the implications for social cohesion.[2] In the context of the twenty-first century, youths" integration into the society no longer follows the traditional, linear model (as a succession of steps from school to work) and, consequently, it has been replaced by an understanding of diversified and individualised trajectories from school to work. These allow for a shift from the traditional approaches analyzing the vulnerable position of youths in the labour market, towards more efficient, plural conceptions of adult transitions that can overcome the structural impediments to the labour force market identified by conventional indicators. Needless to say, while participation and unemployment rates remain relevant indicators, with a youth population that is split between school, university and work, they are not as effective in tracking youth engagement in the labour market or the reasons why those patterns exist and how to address them. A more holistic approach to labour market engagement needs to inform key interventions that address the 'NEET' status for youth.

The term NEET ("not in education, employment or training") first appeared in a late-1990s United Kingdom government report to describe youth who were having trouble securing employment or making a successful transition into higher education (Social Exclusion Unit 1999). Since then, NEET has become a regularly reported indicator for youth progress by the

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[1] Contini, D. M. Filandri & L. Pacelli (2019) Persistency in a NEET state: A longitudinal Analysis. Journal of Youth Studies. Vol. 22 No. 7 pp959-980

[2] Eurofound, 2012. Recent policy developments related to those not in employment, education and training (NEETs), Eurofound, Dublin, http://www.eurofound.europa.eu; Eurofond (2104) Mapping Youth Transitions in Europe. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.; M. Balan (2016) Economic and Social Consequences Triggered by the NEET Youth. Knowledge Horizons- Economics, Vol. 8, No.2, pp80-87

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).[3] The popularity of the "NEET" concept relates to its potential to cover a wide range of vulnerabilities among youths: from issues related to unemployment, early school leaving, to elements related to what may be discouraging youths from meaningful participation in the labour market. Today, reducing the proportion of youth **not in employment, education or training** (NEET) is one of the targets of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 8.[4] The European Commission white paper titled 'A New Impetus for European Youth" (European Commission, 2002) suggested that:

"To have a job means adult status, self-respect, money, independence and the opportunity to broaden one's social contacts. Young people who are cut off from work are losing a vital chance to get new perspectives and to integrate into wider society." (p. 49)

Within the twenty-first neo-liberal context, given the increase in precarious employment relationships and the prevalence of temporary job contracts, many societies are dealing with increasing youth unemployment and underemployment, particularly during periods of economic crisis and restructuring. As Balan (2016) has indicated, each of the youths entering into the NEET status brings with them certain costs, meaning this is not an issue just for the concerned individual but also for the society and economy as a whole. Calculating these costs plays a critical role in developing policies for youths and in adopting measures for increasing their insertion on the labour market and encouraging them to remain within the educational or vocational training systems. [5]

Young people tend to experience diversified paths into adulthood, irregular educational careers, delayed entrance in the labour market and intermittent working careers. This is key to understanding the experience of particular groups of youth, whose vulnerability to NEET status are defined by persistent structural and in some cases historical disadvantages. In communities such as the African Canadian community, with a variety of historical social economic challenges relating to slavery, colonization and discrimination, an understanding of the impact of anti-Black racism is critical to establishing the root causes of NEET status and developing key pathways to overcoming historical disadvantages and building intergenerational social and economic success.

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[3] OECD. (2016). The NEET challenge: What can be done for jobless and disengaged youth? In *Society at a Glance*; Powell, A. (2018). NEET: Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training. Retrieved from https://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN06705

[4] Social Exclusion Unit. 1999. *Bridging the gap: New opportunities for 16 – 18 year olds not in education, employment or training*. England: Presented to Parliament by the Prime Minister; United Nations General Assembly. 2015. *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. Document A/RES/70/1; Elder, S. 2015. *What does NEETs mean and why is the concept so easily misinterpreted?* Work4Youth Technical Brief no. 1. International Labour Office.

[5] Balan, M. (2016:83)

The use of the concept 'NEET' has not always provided the type of flexibility assumed by the plural and intersectional approach employed here. For instance, it has not always acknowledged the social demographic diversity of the youth involved in NEET. Part of that has to do with the lack of disaggregation of the youth cohort, sufficiently enough to recognize the particular vulnerabilities of groups of youth such as Black youth. Moreover, as Yates and Payne (2006) have noted, the concept is problematic because it defines young people by what they are not, and presents a negatively-perceived label that covers a mix of young people whose varied situations and difficulties are diverse. NEET related research also suggests that approaches such as NEET-reduction targets encourage a 'fire-fighting' approach to working with young people rather than focusing support on root causes and intervention on areas where they may be most productive.[6]

According to Thompson, Russell and Simmons (2014) the mainstream employment of the NEET concept suffers from several defects. They identify three important points of criticism of the way the NEET concept is utilized in policy and program approaches. Firstly, the definition of NEET is not straightforward: young people are not fixed in this category, and most move between different forms of education, training or employment, interspersed with periods of non-participation. Moreover, the size of the NEET population itself fluctuates in relation to the academic year and seasonal employment patterns.[7]

Secondly, defining young people by what they are not, rather than who they are, conflates disparate circumstances, with very different prospects for participation as Yates and Payne 2006 and Finlay et al. 2010 have also identified. Being NEET may not be the most immediate or significant challenge facing a young person, and effective interventions often require disaggregating the NEET category to support young people with specific needs (Furlong 2006).[8]

Thirdly, framing policy through NEET targets, a popular approach to intervention, can lead to those easiest to place in education or training receiving most attention, those most ready, while those in greatest need, sometimes referred to as 'hard to serve' are neglected (Yates and Payne 2006).

Having said that, Thompson et al, recognize that the NEET category provides a valuable focus on social inequalities affecting young people. It is in that spirit that we have embraced the concept in the work of this project. Being outside education and employment at an early age is often both a consequence of poverty and educational disadvantage, and a predictor of future experiences of social exclusion (Simmons and Thompson 2011).[9]

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[6] Yates, S. & M. Payne (2006) Not so Neet? A Critique of the Use of 'NEET' in Setting Targets for Interventions with Young People. Journal of Youth Studies. Vol. 9, No. 3 pp329-344

[7] Thompson, R., L. Russell & R. Simmons (2014) Space, Place and Social Exclusion: An Ethnographic study of Young People Outside Education and Employment. Journal of Youth Studies, Vol. 17, No. 1 pp 6378

[8] Furlong, A. 2006. ''Not a Very NEET Solution: Representing Problematic Labour Market Transitions among Early School Leavers.'' Work, Employment and Society 20 (3). pp553-569

[9] Thompson, R., L. Russell & R. Simmons (2014:64); Yates, S., and M. Payne. 2006. ''Not so NEET? A Critique of the Use of 'NEET' in Setting Targets for Interventions with Young People.'' Journal of Youth Studies 9 (3). pp329-344;

A study by Catherine Millet and Marisol Kevelson in 2018 has highlighted the critical problem of the high rates of disconnected youth in the United States. These are youth who are not connected to school or employment. Interviews with school officials, policy makers, scholars and arrange of stakeholders working with youth express mounting concern about the phenomenon and the potential social burden it represents. They have costed in in trillions of dollars for countries.[10]

Millet and Kevelson note that while the vast majority of young adults of the millennials - adults born between 1980 and the early 2000s - are 'investing in their human capital by attending school or earning income, or both, as they navigate the transition into adult roles, one cause for concern is that as a group they are taking longer to navigate this transition—taking more time to complete college and enter the workforce—than prior generations' (Bound, Lovenheim, & Turner, 2012; Cramer, 2014; Pew Research Center, 2017; Vespa, 2017). A further concern is that a substantial proportion of millennials are not building their lives or navigating this transition. They are not enrolled in school or training courses that would prepare them for jobs and careers, and they are not earning income. Rather, they have become disconnected from society, and their disconnection represents a loss of economic opportunity for the nation and has drastic consequences for each disconnected individual and his or her family (Belfield, Levin, & Rosen, 2012).[11]

According to the study, social economic status (class), high school achievement level and gender are positively corelated to the potential for disconnection, as are the broader economic conditions. They note that the odds of dropping out of the labor force—not seeking employment—are most strongly explained by gender and having dependent children (in 2006, among those aged 20 years old, 63% who were disconnected were females compared to 42% in the same cohort), and to a lesser extent by race and high school region and urbanicity. Child rearing presents an important focus on the question of labour market disconnection in particular. But Black students, Aboriginal students and poor students were also twice as likely to disconnect earlier – age 18, than others in their cohort, although that difference diminishes among older cohorts. The report concludes that youth disconnection reinforces the cycle of

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Simmons & Thompson, 2011; Simmons, R., and R. Thompson. 2011. NEET Young People and Training for Work: Learning on the Margins. Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham Books.

[10] Millet, C. & M. Kevelson (2018) Doesn't Get Better with Age: Predicting Millennials' Disconnection. Policy Information Report and ETS Research Report Series. No. RR18-42. Education Testing Centre

[11] Belfield, C. R., Levin, H. M., & Rosen, R. (2012). *The economic value of opportunity youth*. Retrieved from http://www.civicenterprises .net/MediaLibrary/Docs/econ_value_opportunity_youth.pdf; Bound, J., Lovenheim, M. F., & Turner, S. (2012). Increasing time to baccalaureate degree in the United States. *Education Finance and Policy, 7*, 375–424. https://doi.org/10.1162/EDFP_a_00074; Pew Research Center. (2017). *Millennials in adulthood: Detached from institutions, networked with friends*. Retrieved from http://assets.pewresearch.org/wp content/uploads/sites/3/2014/03/2014-03-07_generations-report-version-for-web.pdf; Vespa, J. (2017). *The changing economics and demographics of young adulthood: 1975–2016*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Census Bureau.

poverty and that high rates of disconnection can threaten social cohesion and social development. While disconnection varies by age, many disconnected youth remain seeking employment and are not 'discouraged'. The report offers recommendations for aiding those most at risk of disconnection which include interventions aimed at stopping youth from dropping out of school, programs to re-engage disconnected youth and job training programs that both focus on youth NEET in a holistic way.[12]

In the Canadian context, data show that a significant proportion of this cohort experience challenges in youth to adult transitions that are related to their Blackness, their immigrant status or their low income status. The general patterns relating to NEET status among Canadian youth apply generally to black youth and in particular to those Black youth often referred to as '**Disenfrachised Black Youth'** (DBY), partly because of their level of alienation from Canadian society. They are a particular concern because of their vulnerability to historical and social institutional structures, rooted in Anti-Black Racism, that both influence their NEET status but also undermine the effectiveness of the traditional pathways to addressing the challenges of low educational attainment, attachment to employment and/or training, and ability to earn a stable income so as to keep out of poverty. We are also interested in the psychological, emotional and mental health implications of persistent NEET status, as well as the dimensions of identity formation and community or citizenship affirmation issues raised by NEET status for Black youth.[13]

We take an intersectional approach to allow for an appreciation of various experiences of this common phenomenon of youth NEET. Intersectionality, as an approach is used to disaggregate and understand some of the differences among populations and their experiences with social structures and power relations (Collins, 2015; Crenshaw, 1991). It goes beyond focusing on one dimension, or comparing bi-modal inequalities of race, gender or class separately and captures discrete combinations of multiple sources of disadvantage. According to Crenshaw (1991), these reflect differentiated locations of power, domination and discrimination.[14]

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[12] Millet & Kevelson, 2018:15

[13] Social Program Evaluation Group, Queens University (2018) Needs of NEET Youth: Pathways to Positive Outcomes. Prepared for the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities

[14] Zuccotti, J. & C. O'Reilly (2019) Ethnicity, Gender and the Household Effects on Becoming NEET: An Intersectional Analysis. Work, Employment and Society, Vol. 33 No. 3 pp351-373; Collins PH (2015) Intersectionality's definitional dilemmas. *Annual Review of Sociology* 41(1): 1–20; Crenshaw K (1991) Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review* 43(6): 1241–1299; Statistics Canada (2010) Projections of the Diversity of the Canadian Population, 2006-2031. Retrieved from http://www.statscan.gc.ca/pub/91-551-x/91-551-x2020002-eng.pdf; Statistics Canada (2011) Immigration and Ethnocultural Diversity in Canada. Retrieved from https://www12.statscan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/as-sa/99-010-x2011001-eng.cfm

Background: The premise of the School to Success Pipeline initiative

The project proposal indicates that more than 80,000 youth, the majority Black and racialized youth, are not engaged with Education, Employment and Training systems. These disenfranchised youth are often labeled as 'at risk youth', 'hard to engage' or 'hard to reach' youth. These labels have the effect of both stigmatizing and blaming the youth, while putting the onus on getting out of their condition on them since "they are hard to engage. **They** are hard to reach." The stigmatizing implication of the 'at risk' label creates feelings of fear and insecurity for organizations and staff tasked with working with these youth. But these Black youth who are disenfranchised are often affected by individual, family and community trauma as well.

The current state of affairs, depicts on the one hand a complex environment that the Black youth find themselves in (dealing with home and community environment, stress and trauma). On the other hand, they are faced with complex systems that they find overwhelming to navigate. At the same time institutions, service providing agencies ('the system') are not able to engage with the Black youth in the right and meaningful manner. In very simple terms - the systems are disconnected. The youth are not understood and the youth do not understand the system.

Because of the use of stigmatizing labels such as 'at risk', there is a shift in focus from some the youth to the agencies, organization and staff concerns. The fact is that the youth are not hard to engage perse. It is the organizations/agencies and the systems that lack the requisite knowledge, expertise and capacity to engage these Black youths.

This lack of capacity and expertise is often coupled with stigmatizing and anti-Black racism stereotypes and assumptions prevalent in the systems or perpetuated by individuals representing the systems. These phenonema are observable in schools, post-secondary institutions, in serving community organizations, and in the labour market.

The Black community in the GHTA is also subject to a persistent pattern of community violence. This violence is experienced in a number of neighborhoods with high proportions of Black populations and is responsible for the loss of precious lives and potential talent, skills, knowledge of these young lives.

The challenge of Black youth not succeeding in school or dropping out altogether, and subject to what has been termed the school to prison pipeline also has economic and financial implications. According to the Canadian Council of Learning collective the lifetime loss to the economy for school drop-outs, over a 35 year span is estimated at $307 Billion [Hankivsky O, (2008), "Cost Estimates of Dropping out of School in Canada". Blueprint Analytics (2018) also provides us significant annual cost estimates of $1.92 Billion that suggest the enormity of the public policy issue.

The imperative for intervention to disrupt these outcomes is clear and informs the current project which aims to explore alternative approaches to the problem and, working with the youth themselves, to develop new pathways to success and intergenerational attachment to the labour market and stable incomes.

The literature review explores some of these themes and introduces others that provide us with a better understanding of the challenges faced by the **Disenfrachised Black Youth** and in particular those dealing with NEET status.

Lit review methodology

This literature review draws from an extensive body of literature exploring various dimensions of the NEET experience in the Canadian context and beyond. It also seeks to explore the Black NEET experience and in particular discusses literature that addresses the various drivers and dimensions of the Black NEET experience in Canada. These include Black youth education achievement gaps, challenges related to the Black employment and training experience, the intersection with government policy and program initiatives, community initiatives and interventions implemented to address the ongoing problem of Black youth unemployment and education under achievement and its implications for contact with the criminal justice system.[15] Because all these contribute to social determinants of health, it also considers questions of identity formation, psychological and mental health, and other personal and community drivers of alienation and marginalization, such as criminalization.[16]

In attempting to provide a broader understanding of the Black youth 'NEET' experience, beyond the demands of the education system and the labour market, in this review, we explore how Black youth navigate their transition to adulthood, construct their identities in an often hostile neo-liberal and anti-black racism environment, confront negative conceptions of Black masculinity that may induce anti-social behaviour and use art and cultural forms such as hiphop to both recover their voices in the debates about their condition and to express their perspectives about how to overcome the condition of disadvantage and possibility. This provides a basis for considering new pathways out of the NEET status and related experiences

[15] Agyekum, 2016; Ahram, Fergus, and Noguera 2011; Albert, Penna-Cooper, & Downing, 2015; Bell & Benes, 2012; Bell & Blanchflower, 2010; Block & Galabuzi, 2011; 2018; Briggs, 2018, 2019; Carlson, Crocker, & Pringle, 2016; Cooper, 2006; Dei, 2003; Galabuzi, 2012; Gastaldo et al, 2005; Government of Canada, 2016, 2017; Hammer, 2012; James, 2012; James et al. 2014; James & Turner, 2017; John Howard Society of Ontario, 2014; Mensah, 2010; Mitchell & Moore, 2015; Picot & Hou, 2012; Reitz, et al, 2011; Rankin et al, 2002; Government of Ontario (2017) A Better Way Forward: Ontario's 3-Year Anti-Racism Strategic Plan. Toronto: Queen's Printer for Ontario; Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (2016) One Vision, One Voice: Changing the Ontario Child Welfare System to Better Serve African Canadians

[16] Perione, A. E. Maticka-Tyndale, K. Gbadebo, J. Kerr (2017) The Social Environment of Daily Life and Perceptions of Police and/or Court Discrimination Among African, Caribbean and Black Youth. Canadian Journal of Criminology and Criminial Justice, Vol. 59, No. 3 pp346-372

using policy and program approaches as well as youth informed creative interventions that can inform the School to Success Pipeline project.[17]

This is a systematic review of a total of 58 NEET literature sources from academic sources, both peer review journals and other publications (25), as well as grey literature including government reports (20), community reports and institutional publications (13) that discussed youth NEET, Black NEET experiences, Black identity, Black educational experiences, Black youth employment and intervention initiatives focused on addressing NEET status. The literature was systematically analyzed for content, key themes and conceptual ideas regarding NEET characteristics and interventions.[18]

Youth NEET in the Canadian context

According to multiple Statistics Canada studies, the number of young Canadians defined as having NEET status has been estimated at close to 1 million, representing 11.1 per cent of youth, aged 18 to 29 years old over a ten year period 2008-2018. However, a 2017 federal government report on youth employment suggested that 860,000 youth were in this NEET category (who are not in education, employment or training). Their conclusion was based on surveys of 13,270 participants between 2015 and 2017. A different study has claimed that in 2018, the NEET rate in Canada was 11.3%.[19] Most (52.6%) were in some type of education, training or work at some point in the past 12 months. A significant proportion of those 25-29 years old (38.8%) were involved in child rearing. These young people, the research concludes, are more likely to have poorer mental and physical health, suicidal thoughts and lower levels of life satisfaction. Physical and mental health issues prevented 11.5% from working or schooling. 3 out of 10 had done some type of volunteer work, demonstrating their availability for and interest in work. These youth in NEET status are at risk of persistent social and economic challenges.[20] They run the risk of losing whatever skills they have acquired through disuse, making a return to the labour market even more challenging.

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[17] Litchmore, R., S. Safdar, K. O'Doherty (2018) Ethnic and Racial Self-Identifications of Second Generation Canadians of African Caribbean Heritage: An Analysis of Discourse……; McCready, 2010; Mensah, 2010; Mitchell & Moore, 2015; Picot & Hou, 2012; Reitz, et al, 2011; Rankin et al, 2002; E. Tabi & K. Gosine, 2018 Neoliberalism, Masculinity and Black Male Youth: The Value of Transdisciplinary Studies to Urban Educators. World Futures Vol. 74, pp 525-541; Yosso, 2005; Walcott, 2003; School to Success Pipeline proposal (2019)

[18] Russell, L. (2013). Researching marginalised young people. *Ethnography and Education*, *8*(1), 46– 60.

[19] Statistics Canada and CMEC (Council of Ministers of Education, Canada). 2017. *Education indicators in Canada: An international perspective, 2017*. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 81- 604-X. Ottawa: Statistics Canada; Statistics Canada and CMEC (Council of Ministers of Education, Canada). 2018. *The transition from school to work – the NEET (not in employment, education or training) indicator for 15 to 19 year olds in Canada*. Education Indicators in Canada: Fact Sheet, no. 12. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 81-599-X.
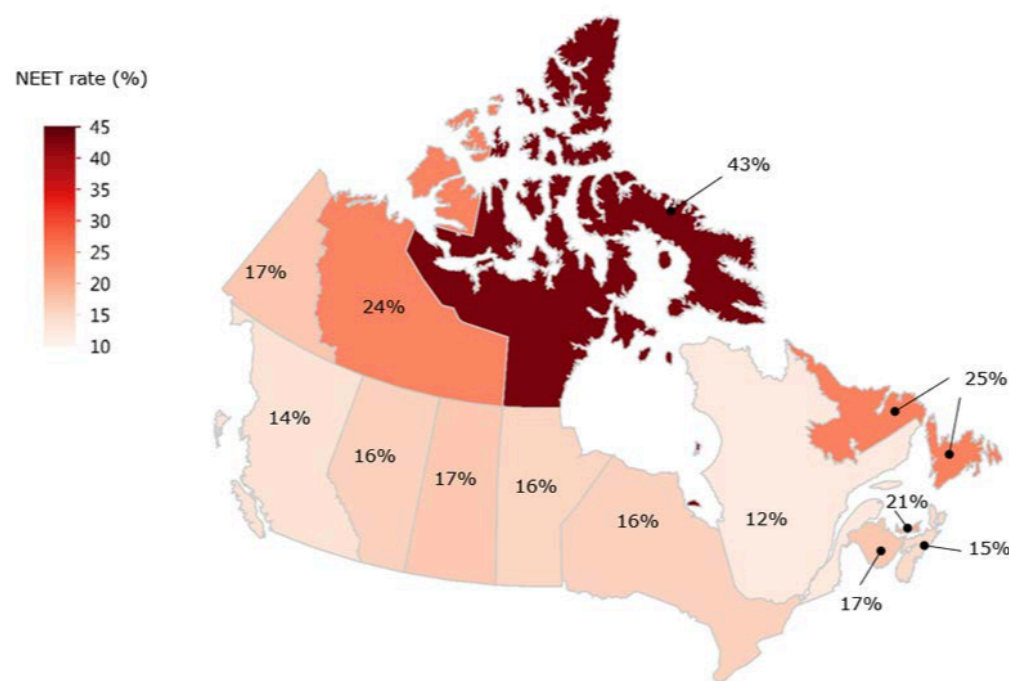
[20] S. Brunet. Statistics Canada (2019) The Transition from School to Work: The NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training) Indicator for 20-24 Year olds in Canada. Education Indictors in Canada. Catalogue 81-599-

In 2017, the OECD reported that the percentage of youth NEET (ages 15 to 29) in Canada was 12.2%, slightly lower than the OECD average (13.2%) and the United States (13.3%), but similar to the United Kingdom (12.2%), although higher than Australia (11.0%) and Germany (9.4%) (OECD 2018). Historically, the percentage of youth NEET in Canada had remained relatively stable between 2000 and 2017, ranging from a high of 13.7% in 2000 to a low of 11.8% in 2008, with the largest increase occurring from 11.8% in 2008 to 13.4% in 2009 during the global recession created by the financial crisis of 2008.[21]

Brunet (2019) reports that NEET rates increase with age. Young Canadians aged 25 to 29 years had a higher NEET rate (15%) than 15- to 19-year-olds (5%) and 20- to 24-year-olds (13%) which is the age groups traditionally used to study the transition of young adults from education to the labour market. Ontario was above average at 16%. The higher rate observed for this age group is also observed for the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average.[22]

In 2017/2018, 15% of 25- to 29-year-old Canadians were NEET

Figure 1: NEET rates for 25- to 29-year-olds, provinces and territories, 2017/2018

X2019001; Statistics Canada (2019) Young People Not in Employment, Education or Training. What did they do in the past 12 months. The Daily, February 13, 2019

[21] Statistics Canada (2019) Making Transitions from School to Work: 20-24 Not in Employment, Education or Training (Canada, 2018/2019). The Daily, July 05, 2019.

[22] Brunet, S. (2019) The Transition from School to Work – the NEET (Not in employment, Education or Training) Indicator for 25-29 Year Olds in Canada.

Source: Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey 2018

According to Brunet (2019), the trend towards 25- to 29-year-olds having a higher NEET rate than the other age groups is observed year after year in Canada as well as for the average NEET rates of OECD countries. Since NEET rates are in part tied to the economic situation in countries, an increase in these rates can be observed after the 2008 recession, particularly for the 20-to-24 and 25-to-29 age groups, who for the most part had completed their studies and made their transition to the labour force. It is also observed that OECD average NEET rates are higher than Canadian averages, with the exception of the 15-to-19 age group for which the Canadian and OECD average are similar.

Regardless of sub group though, youth NEET are more likely to experience multiple economic, health and psychosocial challenges, such as poor labour market outcomes due to long-term unemployment, low income, precarious conditions of work, poor housing conditions, early parenthood, depression and social exclusion (Bynner and Parsons 2002; Dorsett and Lucchino 2014; Kieselbach 2003; Rodwell et al. 2018).[23] Furthermore, it has been noted that if youth are NEET once, they are at risk of becoming NEET again in the future (Henderson et al. 2017; O'Dea et al. 2016; Powell 2017).[24] The broader context within which these conditions are experienced is one of greater social exclusion and potential marginalization of youth in NEET. It is especially the case for particular groups of youth NEET who are also subject to historical disadvantages such as Black and other racialized youth, immigrant youth, indigenous youth, youth with disabilities and LGBTQ youth (Bynner, J., and S. Parsons. 2002; Dei, 2008; Galabuzi, 2006; Jones, 1989; Selimos & George, 2018; Smith, Schneider & Ruck, 2005)[25]

Canadian research on youth NEET has tended to focus on the socio-demographic characteristics and educational and employment experiences of youth NEET during their transition from school to work. In particular, important studies in this context by Statistics Canada and others include Bourbeau and Pelletier 2019; Brunet 2018; Galarneau 2013; Henderson et al. 2017; Marshall 2012; Ravanera et al. 2017; Statistics Canada and CMEC 2017; Statistics Canada and CMEC 2018; Uppal 2017; Wall-Wieler et al. 2018.[26] But there is an important dimension to the

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[23] Lewchuk, W., Laflèche, M., & Canadian Electronic Library (Firm). (2016). *The Precarity Penalty: the Impact of Employment Precarity on Individuals, Households and Communities? And What to Do About It.*

[24] Powell (2017)

[25] Jones, R. (1989) Black Adolescents. Berkeley, Calif: Cobb & Henry; Bynner & Parsons, 2002; G. Dei (2008) Schooling as Community: Race, Schooling and the Education of African Youth. Journal of Black Studies, Vol.38, No. 3 346-366; Galabuzi, G. 2006. Canada's Economic Apartheid: The Social Exclusion of Racialized Groups in the New Century. Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press.; E. Selimos & G. George (2018) Welcoming Initiatives and the Inclusion of Newcomer Youth- The Case of Windsor, Ontario. Canadian Ethnic Studies. Vol. 50, No. 3 69-89; A. Smith, B. Schneider & M. Ruck (2005) 'Thinking about making it': Black Canadian Students' Beliefs Regarding Education and Academic Achievement. Journal of Youth and Adolescents. Vol. 34 No. 4, 347-359

[26] Bourbeau, E., and R. Pelletier. 2019. "Young people not in employment, education or training: What did they do in the past 12 months?" *Labour Statistics at a Glance*: 1–9. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 71-222-X; Brunet, S.

NEET condition that has not been fully explored in Canadian literature. A study by Henderson, et al (2017) provides some connection between NEET status, disengagement and mental health concerns [27] This has to do with the psychological and mental health dimension of the alienation and marginalization that affects youth with NEET status. However, research conducted in other countries has shown an association between NEET status and mental health problems, including suicide risk and substance abuse (Baggio et al. 2015; Rodwell et al. 2018).[28] In the Canadian context, a recent study by Davidson and Arim (2019) titled: *A Profile of Youth not in Employment, Education or Training in Canada, 2015 to 2017* addressed the risks for long-term economic and social difficulties that face youth with NEET status. The study, based on data from three recent Canadian Community Health Survey cycles (2015 to 2017), focused on psychosocial well-being of the youth which it argues are particularly important given the role of mental health in successful transitions from school to employment or to further education or training in young adulthood. Overall, 11.1% of the Canadian youth in the sample were identified as NEET, with 38% working and 25% caring for children and 34.5% classified as 'other'. The study also indicated that youth NEET were more likely to be in the 25-29 age group. The study

2018. *The transition from school to work: the NEET (not in employment, education or training) indicator for 25- to 29-year-old women and men in Canada*. Education Indicators in Canada: Fact Sheet, no. 13. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 81-599-X. Ottawa: Statistics Canada; Bynner, J., and S. Parsons. 2002. "Social exclusion and the transition from school to work: The case of young people not in education, employment, or training (NEET)." *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 60 (2): 289–309; Galarneau, D., R. Morissette, and J. Usalcas. 2013. "What has changed for young people in Canada?" *Insights on Canadian Society*: 1–12. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 75-006-X; Henderson, J.L., L.D. Hawke, G. Chaim, and National Youth Screening Project Network. 2017. "Not in employment, education or training: Mental health, substance use, and disengagement in a multi-sectoral sample of service-seeking Canadian youth." *Children and Youth Services Review* 75: 138–145; Marshall, K. 2012. "Youth neither enrolled nor employed." *Perspectives on Labour and Income* 24 (2): 1–15. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 75-001-X; Ravanera, Z.R., J. Wang, B. Roderic, and J. Liu. 2017. "Vulnerable Young Adults' Entry into Full- time Work: An Analysis Using the Canadian Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics." *Population Change and Lifecourse Strategic Knowledge Cluster Discussion Paper Series* 4 (1): 1–18; Statistics Canada. n.d.*c*. "Goal 8 – Decent work and economic growth." *Sustainable Development Goals Data Hub*. Last updated July 31, 2019. Available at: https://www144.statcan.gc.ca/sdg- odd/goal-objectif08-eng.htm (accessed August 22, 2019); Statistics Canada and CMEC (Council of Ministers of Education, Canada). 2017. *Education indicators in Canada: An international perspective, 2017*. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 81- 604-X. Ottawa: Statistics Canada.; Statistics Canada and CMEC (Council of Ministers of Education, Canada). 2018. *The transition from school to work – the NEET (not in employment, education or training) indicator for 15 to 19 year olds in Canada*. Education Indicators in Canada: Fact Sheet, no. 12. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 81-599-X.

[27] Henderson, J. L., Hawke, L. D., & Chaim, G. (2017). Not in employment, education or training: Mental health, substance use, and disengagement in a multi-sectoral sample of service-seeking Canadian youth. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 75(C), 138–145.

[28] Baggio, S., K. Iglesias, S. Deline, J. Studer, Y. Henchoz, M. Mohler-Kuo, and G. Gmel. 2015. "Not in education, employment, or training status among young Swiss men. Longitudinal associations with mental health and substance use." *Journal of Adolescent Health* 56 (2): 238–243; Rodwell, L., H. Romaniuk, W. Nilsen, J.B. Carlin, K.J. Lee, and G.C. Patton. 2018. "Adolescent mental health and behavioural predictors of being NEET: a prospective study of young adults not in employment, education, or training." *Psychological Medicine* 48 (5): 861–871.

assumes a social determinant of health approach in connecting material conditions to health outcomes for these youth.[29]

Davidson and Arim (2019) also observe that: "The NEET rate among Canadian youth has remained relatively stable at around 13 per cent for the past two decades, and youth NEET are considered to be at risk for a multitude of long-term economic and social difficulties."[30] This stability may not apply equally to all sub-groups of youth though.

Some other findings from the Canadian study about Youth NEET include the following:

- **Education**: 38.9 per cent of youth NEET had completed post- secondary education, compared with 53.1 per cent of non-NEET.
- **Income:** 40.9 per cent of youth NEET were living in households in the lowest income quintile, compared with 22.5 per cent of non- NEET.
- **Mental health**: 13.8 per cent of youth NEET reported poor or fair mental health, compared with 7.8 per cent of non-NEET.
- **Suicide**: 23.7 per cent of youth NEET said they seriously contemplated suicide, compared with 14.9 per cent of non-NEET.
- **Social well-being**: 33.2 per cent of youth NEET said they were very satisfied with their lives, compared with 39.7 per cent of non- NEET.
- **Physical health**: 55.9 per cent of youth NEET reported very good or excellent physical health, compared with 72 per cent of non- NEET.[31]

A recent study focusing on youth in Greater Hamilton, Ontario found that there was a higher than average level of poor mental health outcomes among youth in the region. Based on interviews with high school students in the areas – grade9-12, it found that twenty-seven percent of the sample, a much higher level than was the case of 11-13% in 2007. Youth also reported higher hospitalization rates and diagnoses of mood disorders, including depression, at rates that had more than doubled in five years. Rates of anxiety-related disorders had also increased. The study team speculated that use of social media along with the stresses of transitions to adulthood, including employment, likely contributed to these mental health outcomes.[32]

In November 2019, the Canadian federal government's expert panel on youth unemployment expressed concerns that young people experiencing high levels of unemployment may be at risk

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[29] Davidson, J. & R. Arim (2019). A Profile of Youth Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) in Canada, 2015 to 2017 Social Analysis and Modelling Division Analytical Studies Branch Statistics Canada 11F0019M No. 432

[30] Davidson, J. & R. Arim (2019) A Profile of Youth not in Employment, Education or training in Canada, 2015 to 2017.

[31] Ibid

[32] Greater Hamilton Vital Signs Report, 2019; CBC News. Report Shows Rising 'Troubling' Trends for Youth Mental Health in Hamilton. October 10, 2019.

of isolation and marginalization from society. Its report sought to explore whether different subgroups of youth NEET experience similar psychosocial characteristics. The Panel was launched in 2016 on the recommendation of the federal government's Advisory Council on Economic Growth, which recommended the establishment of a **FutureSkills Lab** to identify, develop and assess the skills workers need in the twenty-first century. Its mandate was to examine the barriers to employment for vulnerable youth and identify best practices to improve youth employment. The Expert Panel's final report, identified 13 Ways to Modernize Youth Employment in Canada, was released earlier this year and contributed to a discussion that remains critical to the future of Canada's education systems, labour market and economy.[33]

The youth panel spoke with employers, researchers, career counsellors, service providers and governments. Their research has found that support mechanisms and services don't happen organically and that the government and its partners in business must invest in key services and train young people for the work available but also focus on creating jobs that are not precarious.

While we have generally defined youth as ages 15 to 29 may be too wide a range to give us a reasonable foundation for policy making. It is important to think about education to employment as a continuum from youth through adulthood. However, challenges related to school attendance, skills development, skills requirements, employment expectations and labour market outcomes do differ greatly within those 14 years.

These findings are consistent with the increasing concern about the future of work which is likely to include major disruptions because of automation and its implications for vulnerable youth in particular. As Alexander and McKean (2017) have noted, the changing nature of work will create additional challenges for Canadian youth already experiencing suboptimal labour market outcomes. Precarious employment arrangements for youth are on the rise, as jobs that young people can acquire are increasingly contractual or temporary. 'Work in the "gig" economy is increasing, too, and will likely continue in the decades to come'. They note that these challenges are more urgent and more complicated for vulnerable youth, such as those in rural, remote areas, low-income youth, Indigenous youth, youth with disabilities, LGBTQ2S and racialized youth and newcomers to Canada.[34]

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[33] Government of Canada Expert Panel on Youth Employment. (2017). 13 Ways to Modernize Youth Employment in Canada.

[34] Statistics Canada and CMEC (Council of Ministers of Education, Canada). 2017. *Education indicators in Canada: An international perspective, 2017*. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 81- 604-X. Ottawa: Statistics Canada.; C. Alexander & M. McKean (2017) The Problem of Youth Unemployment: Predicting the Changing Future of Work. Globe and Mail, October 22, 2017; Statistics Canada. (2015). Perspectives on the youth labour market in Canada, 1976 to 2015.

Alexander & McKean note that the future of learning and work will require new competencies and skills, such as social and emotional intelligence, virtual collaboration, foresight, creativity and adaptability. This, they say, will place new demands on teaching and learning throughout Canada's education systems. The changing economy will also disrupt the way businesses are run, which will alter how workers will need to be trained and developed.

According to the Conference Board of Canada's Centre for Skills and Post-Secondary Education study, too few students have opportunities to accumulate direct work experience while pursuing their credentials – both to better prepare them for employment and to provide experiences for reflection and analysis when they return to the classroom. As a result, they argue, youth struggle to get a foot in the door after graduation and default to taking short-term, contract and precarious work. In that case, they claim, the gig economy may be good for segments of the population – for example, it offers flexibility for students and options for baby boomers easing their way out of full-time work – but for recent grads, it can hamper career development, constrain income growth over time and often involves working without benefits. The Conference Board acknowledges for vulnerable youth, these patterns can exacerbate social inequalities.[35]

However, the Board's research identifies that this is not just a youth problem or a 'blame-the-millennials phenomenon'. Youth unemployment, underemployment and underutilization undermines both the ability of youth to transition to adulthood, but also Canada's ability to plan for the future human resource environment. Today's underemployed and vulnerable youth won't have the financial security Canadians are accustomed to when they're older and ready to retire.

The Conference Board argues for broad co-ordination and collaboration between the education and skills sectors and the governments that support them to recognize the nature of the future of work, so as to close the experience gap for youth, and in particular marginalized and vulnerable youth. This is essential to removing the barriers to transitioning from school to work.

A study by Blueprint Analytics (2018) titled: *Towards a Better Understanding of NEET Youth in Ontario: Findings from the "Made in Ontario" Research Initiative* documents the experience of youth with NEET status in Ontario. It identifies the youth NEET population as around 319,556 representing 12.1% of Ontario's youth and in the Toronto CMA as 142,800. While the overall unemployment rate in Ontario was 5.5%, among young people aged 15 to 24 the unemployment rate was 11.1% (Statistics Canada, 2018). These numbers align well with the Canada wide averages. They are subject to poor working conditions and precarious work, where thy have work opportunities. It also addresses the issue of the cost to the province of the youth NEET phenomenon. NEET youth tend to be older. When compared to all youth in Ontario, youth with NEET status are less likely to be between 16-19 years of age (10.6% vs. 25.8%), and more likely to be 20-24 (40.3% vs. 37.3%) or 25-29 (49.1% vs. 36.9%). There is also

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[35] Conference Board of Canada, 2017 Centre for Skills and Post-Secondary Education Initiative

regional variation in gender, educational attainment, and caregiving status of NEET youth. The percentage of NEET youth who are female ranges from 55% in Toronto to 35% in Sault Ste. Marie.[36]

Among some groups, a drop in high dropout rates led to improved NEET status. There were gender differences as well. In Ontario, higher NEET rates among males is partly attributed to higher school enrolment among females. According to Pullman and Finnie (2018), even during the economic downturns, the NEET rates among young males in Ontario and across Canada are higher when compared to their female counterparts. The NEET rates for women in Ontario (9.4%) have been consistently higher that the NEET rates for women in the rest of Canada (5.9%), while the NEET rates for men in both regions have been consistently similar (Pullman & Finnie, 2018).[37]

An important study by Social Program Evaluation Group (SPEG, 2108) out of Queens University reports that the 'at-risk' groups of youth have a higher NEET population (Greater Toronto Civic Action Alliance, 2014; OECD, 2015). These are defined both as geographical areas with a confluence of factors that include such as: *a sizable percentage of low-income earners (as measured by the low-income measure after tax, LIM-AT), high unemployment rates, a high percentage of Indigenous or ethno- racial minorities, high proportions of subsidized housing, a high percentage of single-parent households, a high percentage of the population with no educational diploma, certificate, or degrees, and a high percentage of the population in foster or group home care* and by population characteristics (Canadian Council for Social Development, 2017). Regarding the child protection population, SPEG's survey of 240 Ontario youth showed that almost half (48%) of youth who were in juvenile custody facilities had some prior involvement with child welfare authorities (Public Safety Canada, 2012). Youth in 'at-risk' neighbourhoods were also found to face risks of gang involvement through association with delinquent peers (Public Safety Canada, 2017).[38]

In 2014, partly in response to an outbreak of violence in low-income neighbourhoods, the City of Toronto designated 13 low-income priority areas as at-risk communities (City of Toronto,

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[36] Blueprint (2018) Towards a Better Understanding of NEET Youth in Ontario: Findings from the "Made in Ontario" Research Initiative; Statistics Canada (2018).

[37] Pullman, A. & Finnie, R. (2018). Skill and social inequality among Ontario's NEET youth. Education Policy Research Initiative. Toronto, ON. Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services; Social Program Evaluation Group, Queens University (2018) Needs of NEET Youth: Pathways to Positive Outcomes. Prepared for the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities; Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services (2014) Stepping Up: A Strategic Framework to Help Ontario's Youth Succeed

[38] Social Program Evaluation Group, Queens University (2018:15); Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services. (2018). *Who are Ontario's NEET youth?* Retrieved from http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/professionals/youthopportunities/ collective-impact.aspx; Public Safety Canada. (2017). Youth gangs in Canada: A review of current topics and issues. Retrieved from https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrcs/pblctns/2017-r001/index-en.aspx

2014). These include many vulnerable population groups that have higher secondary school drop-out rates than other populations. These higher drop-out rates place them at risk of unemployment. Over 15% of people in Ontario are living with a disability (Statistics Canada, 2014). Youth with disabilities have a 26% lower post-secondary participation rate and higher secondary school dropout rates (Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services, 2013). Just over 30 percent of youth with disabilities are unemployed in comparison to 18% of those without a disability (Ministry of Community and Social Services, 2018). The Partnership Council on Employment Opportunities for People with Disabilities (2015) reported that Ontarians with disabilities require more supports and training to be employed members of society, especially since the 1.9 million people in Ontario with reported disabilities of some sort is only increasing.[39]

SPEG (2018) also reports that sub-groups of youth who have been traditionally marginalized based on race, ethnicity, immigrant or refugee status, or for belonging to low-income neighbourhoods, are more susceptible to experiencing extensive periods of unemployment or exclusion from the labour market. Many racialized populations face higher risks of poverty because of lower wages, precarious employment, and economic barriers to post-secondary education (Family Service Toronto, 2016; McMurtry, 2009; Zaami, 2015). James and Turner (2017) found that a cohort of GTA Black high school youth from 2006-2011 had a 20% drop out rate which was twice the White student dropout rate of 11%. In a qualitative study conducted by Shields, Rahi, and Scholtz (2006) in Toronto, 61 immigrant and refugee (IR) youth from Africa and Asia participated in focus group sessions where they described their experiences of social exclusion from the Canadian job market. Many of these youth expressed frustration about the Canadian immigration process that prevented them from working until they received work permits. Employers frequently took advantage of these vulnerable refugee youth by dismissing refugee youth once the training period was done and 'train' another refugee youth (Shields et al., 2006).[40]

Youth who identify as LGBTQ also experience higher secondary school drop-out rates and face risks of depression and suicide (The 519, 2013). Lo and colleagues (2010) found that LGBTQ youth have a complex range of social and emotional needs for support. There was a greater need among transgendered youths and those who experienced intersectional identities.[41]

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[39] Social Program Evaluation Group, Queens University (2018:16)

[40] Social Program Evaluation Group, Queens University (2018:16); Shields, J., Rahi, K., & Scholtz, A. (2006). Voices from the margins: Visible-minority immigrant and refugee youth experiences with employment exclusion in Toronto. Toronto, ON: CERIS.

[41] Social Program Evaluation Group, Queens University (2018:16); The 519. (2013). Creating authentic spaces: A gender identity and gender expression toolkit to support the implementation of institutional and social change. Retrieved from http:// www.the519.org/education-training/training-resources/trans-inclusion-matters/creating-authentic-spaces

In terms of the fiscal implications, the study findings highlight the significant financial impact of NEET youth for the province of Ontario, as well as for NEET youth themselves. The study estimated that each NEET youth accrues approximately **$6,069** in additional fiscal costs (costs for which taxpayers are directly responsible) per year compared to non-NEET youth between the ages of 16 and 29 inclusive. For the entire cohort of NEET youth in Ontario, the cost adds up to yearly total cost of **$1.92 billion**. While they raise a caution due to the methodological question about the use of different models with different levels of precision, it represents a very large expenditure by government in reactive services and supports for NEET youth.

The study highlights the higher downstream costs associated with NEET youth as the following:

• **Education** – While over the long-run lower educational attainment among NEET youth is likely to incur significant costs, in the short-run it creates cost savings to government. This results in a saving of $829.7 million per year.

• **Health care** – NEET youth use some publicly- funded healthcare services considerably more than non-NEET youth. We estimate that these differences result in an added annual health care cost of $778.8 million per year.

• **Income tax** – NEET status lowers tax revenue because NEET youth have lower earnings than non-NEET youth. This results in an added annual cost of about $685.6 million per year.

• **Social assistance** – NEET youth are considerably more likely to receive income assistance through Ontario Works or the Ontario Disability Support Program. The added cost of NEET youth on social assistance is approximately $725.0 million per year.

• **Criminal Justice** – NEET youth are more likely than non-NEET youth to be involved with the criminal justice system. The study estimates that this results in an added annual cost of about $526.4 million.

• **Homelessness** – The study estimated that NEET youth use shelters at approximately six times the rate of non-NEET youth, resulting in an added annual cost of $25.0 million per year.

The costs associated with the foregone earnings of NEET youth are even higher than the fiscal costs, at **$20,925** per NEET youth, or **$6.40 billion** annually.

NEET youth are also likely to follow different lifetime trajectories than non-NEET youth which generates additional fiscal and social costs. While the study concedes that it is difficult to accurately predict lifetime costs for lack of quality longitudinal data on NEET youth, it hazards a an estimate. Taking the limitations into consideration, they estimate that after the age of 29, an average NEET youth would accrue an additional total fiscal cost of **$212,640** and an additional total social cost of **$211,112**. Combining costs accrued during youth and adulthood, the total

lifetime fiscal cost of a NEET youth to Ontario's taxpayers is **$222,713**. The total social cost is even higher at **$248,159**.[42]

These figures should also indicate the urgency and imperative of dealing with the youth NEET issue as a public policy priority, along with the concern for youth social and economic disconnection, and the possibility of negative impact on social cohesion.

Finally, in the context of a broad holistic minded approach to the NEET problem, it is important to acknowledge the role of the social determinants of health as drivers as well as products of these processes of change in work and how they extend beyond income, housing to educational attainment to include race, indigenous status, gender identity, and sexual orientation, for instance. Canadian research has established that freedom from discrimination and violence, social inclusion, and access to economic resources are the social determinants of particular significance to positive mental health (Canadian Mental Health Association, 2018; Toronto Public Health (2008); Keleher & Armstrong, 2006; Keiselback, 2003; Galabuzi, 2008).[43]

As the School to Success Pipeline project statement has indicated, Black youth are impacted in the process of transition to adulthood by various systems and institutions. Chief among these being the family, the community, the Education system - elementary, middle, secondary as well as post-secondary educational systems (Universities, Colleges, Vocational Training Centres), employment agencies and the Canadian job market.[44] These are vulnerable to anti-Black racism and its structuring of achievement gaps, opportunity deficits and low income outcomes, and ultimately marginalization.[45]

Black Youth and the NEET experience

 "The historical legacy of systemic racist exclusionary practices continues to impact the lived experiences of second-generation Caribbean Black males in the form of a lack employment opportunities, mobility, membership, citizenship and confinement within underemployment also known as precarious work (i.e. temporary work, contract, seasonal work, part-time work and casual work with no benefits) positions." Briggs (2019)

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[42] Blueprint (2018:3); Statistics Canada (2007- 2014). Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS). Statistics Canada.; Statistics Canada (2002-2010). Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics (SLID). Statistics Canada; Belfield, C. R., Levin, H. M., & Rosen, R. (2012). The Economic Value of Opportunity Youth. *Corporation for National and Community Service.*

[43] Canadian Mental Health Association, 2018; Toronto Public Health (2008); Keleher & Armstrong, 2006; Keiselback, 2003; Galabuzi, 2008)

[44] Project proposal document
[45] Ibid

According to Civic Action, in 2015, there were over 100,000 youth between the age of 15-24 in the GTHA who were not in education, training or employment.[46] This represents about 10% of the youth population in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton. There is significant evidence to suggest that Black youth are disproportionately represented in those numbers.[47] Black youth NEET are more likely to experience multiple economic, health and psychosocial challenges, such as poor labour market outcomes related to long-term unemployment, low income, and leading to such social economic factors as poor housing conditions, early parenthood, depression and social exclusion (Bynner and Parsons 2002; Dorsett and Lucchino 2014; Kieselbach 2003; Rodwell et al. 2018).[48] Furthermore, these Black Youth NEET are also at risk of NEET recidivism - becoming NEET again in the future (Henderson et al. 2017; O'Dea et al. 2016; Powell 2017).

The racialized population in the City of Toronto represents over 50% of the total population and Blacks comprise 8.5% of the total population (Statistics Canada 2006). Through ongoing growth in the immigrant population, among the second generation, the second-generation black population is expected to increase from the current 17.5% to nearly one in five people (19.7%) by 2036 (Statistics Canada 2011).[49] This trend indicates an increasingly diverse population and emphasizes the importance of understanding the experiences of Black Youth in its diversity.[50] But it also calls to attention the need to successfully address the question of adult transitions for these youth. Again, these also vary in some respects by immigration status, ethnicity and religion.

There is growing evidence that, for instance, among the second generation, Blacks are the most underprivileged group in Canada (Banerjee 2006; Este et al. 2012; see also endnote 1).[51] Picot & Hou (2010) have noted that the positive earnings of the second-generation males were determined entirely by non-visible, minority second generations who had a 9% lead over their third and higher order generation counterparts. They also noted a 5% negative wage gap among visible minority males, regardless of their higher academic achievements, compared

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[46] Civic Action. (2014). Escalator: Jobs for Youth Facing Barriers – Companies and Youth Moving Up in the World.

[47] Davis, A. (2017) "The Real Toronto": Black Youth Experiences and the Narration of the Multicultural City. Journal of Canadian Studies Vol. 51, NO. 3 pp725-748

[48] Bynner, J., and S. Parsons. 2002. "Social exclusion and the transition from school to work: The case of young people not in education, employment, or training (NEET)." *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 60 (2): 289–309; Dorsett, R., and P. Lucchino. 2014. "Explaining patterns in the school-to-work transition: An analysis using optimal matching." *Advances in Life Course Research* 22: 1–14. Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.alcr.2014.07.002; Kieselbach, T.2003. "Long-term unemployment among young people: The risk of social exclusion." *American Journal of Community Psychology* 32 (1/2): 69–76.

[49] Second-Generation refers to individuals with at least one parent born outside of Canada
[50] Litchmore, R., S. Safdar & K. O'Doherty (…) Ethnic and racial Self-Identifications of Second-Generation Canadians of African and Caribbean Heritage: An Analysis of Discourse
[51] Banerjee 2006; Este et al. 2012

with second, third, and higher-generation White Canadians (Kerr 2010; Picot & Hou 2012).[52] The literature indicates that second-generation Black youths face greater problems in the Canadian labour market than other groups. It also surveys the diversity of the experience of Black youth NEET status and its associated patterns.

Andrea Davis' (2017) study titled: *"The real Toronto": Black Youth Experiences and the Narration of the Multicultural City* discusses the ways in which race, class, age and gender intersect to create conditions of alienation from full access to educational and employment opportunities for Black youth in Toronto and so disrupt the 'construction of Canada as an ideal and exceptional multicultural democracy that promises free education and equal access to employment for all. Instead, she argues, that this promise is not born out in the lives of poor Black youth. Davis' work is based on the perspectives of a group of Black youth depicted in the film *The Real Toronto* (Madd Russian, 2005) done during 2005, the 'Summer of the Gun', as well as a three year study of the effects of violence on Black youth in Canada and Jamaica completed in 2013. It speaks to the precarious nature of the lives of Black youth who are routinely pathologized and criminalized leaving them with diminished opportunities in the labour market and by extension on the margins of the very idealized Canadian society. But it also speaks to their insistence on demands for greater access to the resources of society to address their predicament and for upward mobility.[53]

Davis' narrative gives voice to the compounding experience of Black youth who are caught in the contradictions of Canadian society which promises Canadian born and immigrant youth the prospect of realizing their potential through processes and institutions that are deemed fair and equitable, but they have to explain their poor educational, employment and income outcomes. It explores the role experiences of routine criminalization and pathologization of Black masculinities play in constructing a condition of Anti-Black racism that creates barriers to equitable access to opportunities for Black youth in Toronto. The NEET status is a measure that brings in sharp focus these very realities that the Black youth in the film Davis cites effectively articulate within the context of a multicultural society and a neo-liberal period. The gap between the reality of Black youth existence and the promise of Canada. At the heart of that gap is the preoccupation with educational achievement, transition to the Labour market and stable income attainment. Davis (2017) shows us how what Frances Henry and Carol Tator (2005) have referred to as democratic racism is implicated in the creation of conditions of education and employment disparity that this project seeks to address.

Farhia Abdi's (2012) study of Somali Canadian youth titled: *Kicked Out of School: The Perspectives of Somali Students on Why they Have not Completed School* centres the youth voice in examining the high drop-out rate of mostly Muslim Somali youth who straddle the first and second generation axis, but for who many of the institutional barriers to school engagement, retention and achievement are as stack as they are for African Canadian youth of

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[52] Picot & Hou (2012); Kerr, 2010
[53] Davis, A. (2017) "The Real Toronto": Black Youth Experiences and the Narration of the Multicultural City. Journal of Canadian Studies Vol. 51, NO. 3 pp725-748

Caribbean background represented in the study by Anthony Briggs (2019) titled: *"We Support our Brothers": A Critical Race Counternarrative Inquiry into Second Generation Black Caribbean Male Youth Responses to Discriminatory Work Pathways.* This study also emphasizes the need to understand the experience of transition to work from the perspective of the youth themselves and identifies the extent to which structural impediments such as long standing systemic racism in the education system and the labour market, as well as the 'White Gaze' based construction of the Black male is applied to the valuation of Black human capital and hence opportunities for entry into the market by Caribbean Canadians. A similar take is presented in Boadi Agyekum's (2016) study of Ghanaian Canadian youth titled: *Labour Market Perceptions and Experiences Among Ghanaian-Canadian Second-generation Youths in the Greater Toronto Area.* This study identifies a disproportionate level of unemployment and underemployment among Ghanaian-Canadian youth, both immigrant and second generation. This pattern of labour market attachment, the study observes, leads to uncertainty in job tenure but also income attainment and structures low income status and housing and neighbourhood segregation.[54]

According to Agyekum (2016) among the racialized groups, studies have revealed that employment rates are lower and unemployment rates are higher among second-generation Asians, Blacks and other visible minority groups compared with third and higher order generation non-visible minorities. He notes that the situation for Blacks is particularly unfavourable because they do not experience the same returns for their educational attainment as other visible and non-visible, minority second generations.[55] Picot & Hou (2012) observed a significant variation among visible minority (racialized) groups in Canada, with Blacks having the largest earning gap (i.e. wage gap). Picot & Hou (2010) also noted a 5% negative wage gap among visible minority males, regardless of their higher academic achievements, compared with second, third, and higher-generation White Canadians.[56]

Lori Wilkinson's (2008) study of the labour market transition experiences of immigrant-born, refugee-born and Canadian-born' youth using the 1998 Survey of Labour Market Dynamics, calls attention to the experience of both transition into the labour market as well as integration into Canadian society for immigrant youth. The vast majority of immigrant youth being racialized coming into the twentieth century means that the subjects of the study and the conditions it explores are relevant to our interest in describing the experience of Black youth. She argues that employment is an integral part of the process of transition to adulthood for immigrant and refugee youth and the conditions under which it occurs are critical to its success.

[54] Abdi, F. (2012) Kicked-Out of School: The Perspectives of Somali Students on Why they Have not completed High-School. A Masters Thesis. York University; A. Briggs (2019) "We Had Support from our Brothers": A Critical Race Counternarrative Inquiry into Second-Generation Black Caribbean Male Youth Responses to Discriminatory Work Pathways. Journal of Education and Work. Vol. 32 No. 4 pp377-392; B. Agyekum (2016) Labour Market Perceptions and Experiences among Ghanaian-Canadian Second-Generation Youth in the Greater Toronto Area. Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift-Norwegian Journal of Geography Vol. 70 pp112-124

[55] Agyekum, B. (2016) Labour Market Perceptions and Experiences Among Ghanaian-Canadian Second Generation Youth in the Greater Toronto Area.

[56] Picot & Hou 2012

She identifies a set of difficulties associated with the process of attachment to the labour market. These include high unemployment rates, decline in wages, challenges in translating educational attainment and human capital into comparable employment and income. She also notes that their refugee and immigrant status is an important source of mediation for how these factors apply to their experiences. She also references a Statistics Canada (2003) study that concludes that labour power and investments by immigrants arriving in the 1990s accounted for over 70% of Canada's economic growth during the decade, indicating how important successful school to work transitions to the labour market and integration for immigrant and refugee youth are to the economic well-being of the country (Wilkinson, 2008; Shield, Rahi & Sholtz, 2006; Statistics Canada, 2003).[57]

Reitz et al. (2011) found that second-generation Afro-Caribbean Blacks in the USA and Canada had, on average, the same amount of education as the respective mainstream populations, but were not as successful in securing employment in skilled occupations. Incidentally, an earlier, related study of the second-generation youth in the USA by Portes et al. (2005) noted that mainstream perception of the children of Black immigrants was negative. The differences from Whites and the persistent strong effects of discrimination based on those differences were considered barriers to their occupational mobility and social acceptance.[58]

Selimos and George's (2018) analysis of newcomer youth in Windsor, most of who are racialized reveals that these youth experience uneven employment opportunities, treatment in public space, and neighbourhood connection. They note that their social participation outside of schools is marked by 'their regulation to immigrant-specific spaces'. Selimos & Geroge call for community initiatives that support newcomer youth in ways that are inclusive of their complex identities as young people, address their long-term integration needs, and that do not reproduce or intensify exclusionary silos in the community.[59]

An article by Madibbo (2007) examines the integration challenges confronting Black Francophone youth – both immigrants and refugees, in Ontario. It explores their concerns about language, racism and violence. It identifies challenges both for the youth but also the institutions responsible for their integration and inclusion, such as schools, settlement agencies and the labour market. It identified that in 2001, there were 58,520 racialized Francophones in Ontario, representing 10.3% of the Francophone population of 548, 630. This racialized Francophone population is more youthful, with an overpopulation of 38.7% of those under 20 years old as opposed to 19.6% among the rest of the Franco Ontarian population (OFA, 2005). Using data from interviews of youth between 16 and 30 years old, community organizations and parents, collected between 2000 and 2006, the analysis identified important issues relating

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[57] Wilkinson, L (2008) Labour Market Transitions of Immigrant-Born, Refugee-Born and Canadian-Born Youth. CRS vol. 45 No. 2, pp151-176; Statistics Canada (2003) Annual Labour Force Survey Statistics. Ottawa: Ministry of Public Works and Government Services; J. Shield, K. Rahi & A. Sholtz (2006) "Voices from the Margins: Visible Minority Immigrant and Refugee Youth Experience with Employment Exclusion in Toronto" CERIS Working Papers
[58] Portes et al, 2005
[59] Selimos, E. & G. George (2018) Welcoming Initiatives and the Inclusion of Newcomer Youth- The Case of Windsor, Ontario. Canadian Ethnic Studies. Vol. 50, No. 3 69-89

to the integration process relating to racialization and the labour market. The findings include concern about racism and discrimination and other socio-economic barriers to education, skilled development and skilled employment. Newcomer Francophone youth experience problems with insufficient language services, housing and employment, cultural adaptation, religious and racial profiling, and failure to convert their prior education and training into comparable employment and income attainment during the period of settlement (Makundila, 2007; Madibbo, 2005; 2006)[60]

A seminal report by McMurtry, R,. & Curling, A. (2008) titled *The review of the roots of violence* addressed the connection to Black youth disconnection and the increase in violence in Black community neighbourhoods.[61]

"*Youth who feel connected to and engaged with the broader society, and who feel valued and safe and see a positive future for themselves in it, will not experience [conditions of exclusion] and will not commit serious violence.*"

The report was the product of an extensive literature review and public consultation. Volume 1 went beyond merely identifying the immediate risk factors associated with youth violence to examine the underlying conditions that lead to youth violence. The volume concluded with recommendations for how Ontario can make its neighbourhoods, communities, and schools safer.

The Roots of Youth Violence Report focuses on youth most likely to experience violent crime either as perpetrators or victims. Young Black or Aboriginal males who come from disadvantaged, complex-needs communities facing the prospect of little opportunity for change are most at risk. The report calls for moving away from pathologizing these youth to working toward changing the conditions that contribute to the creation of a risk profile.

The Roots of Violence secretariat included youth, researchers, community and government officials who created a five-part strategy:

- involve youth in the research effort
- hold community consultations
- conduct an overview of the issue by drawing on academic and grey literature conduct

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[60] Madibbo, A. (2007) The Integration of Black Francophone Immigrant Youth in Ontario: Challenges and Possibilities. Canadian Issues. Newcomers, Minorities and Political Participation in Canada: Getting a Seat at the Table; A. Madibbo (2006) Minority within a Minority: Black Francophone Immigrants and the Dynamics of Power and Resistance. New York: Routledge; E. Makundila (2007) Canadian Francophonie and Francophone Minorities: The Case of the Congolese in Ontario; Office of Francophone Affairs (2005) Statistical Profiles, 2005

[61] McMurtry, R,. & Curling, A. (2008). *The review of the roots of violence (Volume 1)*, Toronto, Canada: Queens Printer for Ontario.

- key-informant and focus group interviews use an online survey (completed by 5400 respondents) to understand the problem of youth violence in Ontario

Researchers worked with a grassroots youth organization, the Grassroots Youth Collaborative (GYC) and the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres (OFIFC) to ensure that the process and findings connected with culturally and racially diverse youth across Ontario. Among others, the review concluded that:

- Exclusion is at the heart of youth violence.
- The pathways to exclusion are multiple and interconnected. Experiences of exclusion can also lead to other negative outcomes for youth – e.g., disengagement from school, political life, and society; involvement in criminal activity, including gangs; increased street involvement; and experiences of victimization.
- Community-level risk factors are complex and intersect with each other. Neighborhood poverty, racism, and structural barriers to equitably accessing opportunities compound individual-level risk factors.

To address the multiple and overlapping processes of exclusion that negatively shape the development of some youth in Ontario, the report calls for stakeholders to work together. Youth-serving organizations are particularly tasked to play key roles. These organizations are well-positioned to support service navigation, cross-sector planning and service- delivery coordination for youth who need to access systems that don't always work together (e.g., mental health, youth justice, education and child welfare).

Overall, the data show that there are both structural and cultural factors underlying immigrants' and their children's labour market performance. While this topic has been widely explored and this is not the appropriate venue for further discussion of it, its relevance to Black and racialized youth experiences cannot be overstated. Suffice to say though that historically, immigrants were regarded as a secondary labour force leading to a structure of labour market attachment fraught with unemployment and underemployment as a consequence (Gastaldo et al. 2005; Galabuzi, 2006; Mensah 2010). But these conditions apply to Canadian born Black youth as well and the historical trajectory of Black related conditions is well documented (Winks, 1997). More recently, these patterns of unemployment and underemployment have been associated with low incomes among immigrants compared to non-immigrants (Block & Galabuzi, 2011; 2019). The factors that explain immigrants' challenges in the labour market include, but are not limited to: their difficulties in obtaining recognition of their educational qualifications; their physical and cultural characteristics; their country of origin; and language barriers (Li 1999; Dean & Wilson 2009; Yap et al. 2010).[62]

The Black NEET Issue in a historical context

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[62] Li 1999; Dean & Wilson 2009; Yap et al. 2010; J. Mensah, 2010 Black Cnadians: History, Experinces, Scoial Conditions. Halifax: Fernwood; Galabuzi, 2006; R. Winks (1997) Blacks in Canada: A History o. Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press.

In general, the Black Youth NEET experience needs to be put in a historical context relating to the experience of African Canadian history of slavery and colonialism that has resulted in systemic barriers that prevent Black people from fully participating in all parts of society. This is particularly true for young Black Ontarians whether immigrants, second-generation or Canadian born of long standing lineage. So, whether recent immigrants or descendants of Africans who were enslaved, Black people in Ontario live a shared present-day experience informed by the reality of anti-Black racism.

It is also important to acknowledge is that the African Canadian population is made up of people from a range of ethnicities and varied source countries, but in Canada their employment experience and stigmatized identity tend to converge. As Smith et al (2005) have noted, African Canadian youth endure a confluence of stereotypes and institutional or systemic structures that undermine their educational experience and marginalize them in school, creating a negative impact on their learning experience, social opportunities, educational outcomes and life chances (Smith *et al.*, 2005). These experiences then transfer to employment and the labour market experiences as part of the process of adult transition. In some cases, the criminalization of some youth that starts in the education system has implications for job ready and job search status, creating new barriers to the labour market not experienced by other youth not in contact with the criminal justice system.[63]

Young black males face many challenges, even in a relatively progressive and diverse city like Toronto. Recent research shows 45% of black males drop out (or are pushed out) of high school (Livingstone and Weinfeld 2017; James and Turner 2017; Dei 2008).[64] In the school system, the overrepresentation of black males in college and work-related streams, as opposed to university streams, also persists and raises questions about the streaming process, which we will discuss later in this review because of the implications of this structuring of these young people's futures (James et al. 2014; Dei 2003; Moore, Henfield, and Owens 2008; Ahram, Fergus, and Noguera 2011).[65]

An estimated 50% of Blacks and other racialized group members are overrepresented in precarious employment positions (Block and Galabuzi 2011; Lewchuk 2017). These realities reflect the ongoing treatment of African Canadians as second-class citizens (James 2011). The result is the structuring of conditions under which Black people engage in the labour market as unfree subject to differential exploitation (Gordon, 2018; Farady, 2012).[66] Race-based exclusion assigns Black youth to futures that are uncertain, problematic, bleak and difficult to resolve

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[63] Smith et al, 2005

[64] James, C. E. & Turner, T. (2017). Towards race equity education: The schooling of black students in the Greater Toronto Area. Toronto, ON: York University; Livingstone and Weinfeld 2017; Dei 2008

[65] James et al. 2014; Dei 2003; Moore, Henfield, and Owens 2008; Ahram, Fergus, and Noguera 2011

[66] Gordon, T. (2018) Capitalism, neoliberalism and Unfree labour. Critical Sociology pp1-19; F. Faraday (2012) Made in Canada: How the Law Constructs Migrant Workers' Insecurity. Toronto: Metcalf Foundation

(Briggs, 2018). Briggs (2018) has argued that long-standing systemic racism undermines the educational and employment opportunities of many black males in particular. He goes on to note that stereotyped such as 'lazy, criminal, uncivil, dangerous, hoodlums, gangsters,' mean 'Black youths face relentless micro-aggressions that are too often internalized and undermine their self-esteem and hope from within.' Adding that: "Black males have a heightened awareness to these micro-aggressions, and when they acknowledge their true feelings, they have the ability to both identify and oppose the racism they experience (Briggs 2018; Watkins 2012; Watkins and Neighbors 2007).[67]

Briggs further argues that precariously employed Black males make sense of their limited employment opportunities as part of their Black experience. His study explores their social interactions with other Black men in their lives while they pursue stable employment. In particular, Briggs work focuses on second-generation black men who self-identify as belonging to the broader African diaspora, which includes people from the Caribbean. He demonstrates how the voices of Caribbean Born Male Youth (CBMY) form a counter-narrative that opposes the negative dominant narrative and constructed image of young black males, and reveals a common sense of solidarity in facing the struggle for a better future.[68] This work speaks to the need to overcome the negative labels that create barriers to effective engagement with the labour market for many Black youth. Again, these negative and stereotypical labels often start impacting youth in the school system but also surface in the process of job search, thereby adversely affecting attachment to the labour market.

The reality and implications of the 'Youth at risk' label

The use of negative labels is not always malicious on its face. In some cases, it represents an attempt to identify and organize a response to existing achievement gaps and social problems that affect particular populations. An example that relates to Black youth in school and work is the term 'at-risk'. It refers to a range of concerns about youth, from learning deficits to disengagement and dropping out, to potential criminality and vulnerability to the school-prison pipeline, to failure to sustain attachment to the labour market. A variety of school, home, community and societal factors account for the risks associated with those outcomes. The literature on risk identifies a litany of risk factors including: school truancy, poverty, suspension, expulsion, lack of curriculum involvement, poor home-school relations, ethnic /racial minority status, transience, inadequate familial environments, residing in the inner-city, English as a second language, substance abuse, illegal activities (Manning and Baruth, 1995). Johnson (1997) suggests that the ultimate risk is that students become disconnected from economic productivity and from participation in society. Risk and youth are increasingly synonymous in the literature, with youth either considered *at* risk (victims) or *posing a* risk (perpetrators). These conceptions of youth at risk are based on particular constructions of the subject 'youth at

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[67] Briggs, 2018; Watkins, 2012; Watkins & Neighbour, 2007
[68] Briggs (2019)

risk' consistent with dominant understandings of the characteristics that these youth embody. Race and youth status are key aspects of this construction.[69]

From an intersectional perspective, Kelly (2001) has argued that the 'at-risk' discourse represents attempts to regulate and recode institutionally structured relations of race, class and gender. This shifts responsibility for the circumstances of disadvantage to the youth, their families and communities, in the era of neo-liberalism. Withers and Batten's (1995) review of the literature on youth at risk identifies two essential but competing rationalizations for the construction of the 'youth at-risk' identity. There is what they refer to as the 'humanistic intention' which structures the identification and intervention processes that lead to the identity construction (Withers & Batten, 1995:5-6). It is grounded in the 'concerns about danger, harm, care and support for the youth' (Kelly, 2000:464). The second is the 'economic intention or imperative' that rationalizes the construction and regulation of youth identities for the 'benefit' of the youth and society. This imperative foregrounds the costs and benefits of identifying the risk factors associated with the transition to adulthood of kids from at risk populations, thereby mobilizing key interventions to address these risks (Withers & Batten, 1995: 5-6). Fine (1993) has argued that risk is not just an abstract or rhetorical construct but an ideological one. It involves modes of assessment that are rooted in social, political and ideological values that determine the nature of relations in society. Race is a critical factor in the assessment of risk. She contends that the "cultural construction of a group defined through a discourse of risk represents a quite partial image, typically strengthening those institutions and groups that have carved out, severed, denied connection to, and then promised to 'save' those who will undoubtedly remain 'at risk" (Fine, 1993:91)[70]

Further she argues that, the 'popular and promiscuous deployment of discourses of 'youth at risk' beginning with the 1980s represents a turn towards neo-liberal problematizations of the welfare state. They seek to make young people, their families and communities responsible for the 'generalized risk' of child development. The individuation of such risks allows for the racialization of the problem and concept of risk in a manner that reinforces racial hierarchies and differential outcomes. Consistent with this reading of risk is work by Leslie Roman (1996) who argues that the discourse of 'youth at-risk' seeks to create a moral panic that allows for the manufacturing of crisis in the dominant social order represented by the deviant, dangerous, threatening and risky behavior and disposition of particular populations – working class youth, Aboriginal and Black and racialized youth. Their behavior is presented as a threat to the very working of the society and its institutions.[71]

Factors driving the Black youth NEET experience

- o Educational attainment gaps
- o The stigmatization of the Black identity

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[69] Johnson (1997)
[70] Fine, 1993
[71]

- o Anti-Black racism
- o Immigrant status
- o Low-income status
- o Insecure and precarious labour market
- o Systemic discrimination in employment
- o Barriers to training and employment opportunities

There are a number of key factors that have been identified as contributing to the disproportionate experience of NEET status by Black youth. These include but are not limited to: Educational attainment gaps, the stigmatization of Black identity, insecure and precarious employment conditions in the labour market, systemic discrimination in employment, training and employment opportunity gaps and the disparate needs and barriers that Black youth encounter when seeking training and employment opportunities.[72]

As indicated earlier, the available literature suggests that Black Canadian youth are more likely to be unemployed and out of school than the general population largely because of a variety of factors including an experience in education that involves streaming, disproportionate rate of suspension and expulsion, an achievement gap and lower graduation rates. They also face significant challenges in access to employment in the labour market that include systemic discrimination in employment, are last hired, first fired, disproportionate exposure to precarious employment and segmentation into low income and insecure employment. These barriers are coupled with other social determinants of health including poverty, poor housing and social environment, and anti-Black racism that significantly affect the success of Black youth in their educational attainment and employment pursuit. These barriers then contribute to Black youth disproportionately being overrepresented among the youth not in education, education and training.[73]

Gender, racial identity, cultural identity, Aboriginal/First Nations/ Metis/Inuit, Canadian-born or foreign-born, sexual orientation, spiritual/religious identity, ability, age, area of residence, and proficiency in either English or French are all factors that play a role in how youth navigate and are treated in the labour market (Canada 2020, 2014; Lightman & Gingrich, 2012; Preston, 2008; Pullman & Finnie, 2018; St. Stephen's Community Housing and Access Alliance, 2016). These factors should be given adequate attention because discrimination exists in the labour market (Lightman & Gingrich, 2012; Shields et al., 2006) and it often dictates labour market outcomes for youth driving them into NEET.

Shields et al (2006) emphasized that racism in the Canadian labour market is a major issue faced by racialized youth, a less discussed factor driving youth into NEET status is proficiency in

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[72] Social Program Evaluation Group, Queens University (2018)

[73] Social Program Evaluation Group, Queens University (2018:17); James, C. E. & Turner, T. (2017). *Towards race equity education: The schooling of black students in the Greater Toronto Area.*

English or French, which was evident in 2011 data illustrating that the employment rate of immigrant youth aged 15-29 was approximately 12% lower than Canadian-born youth (Pullman & Finnie, 2018). Moreover, according to Lightman & Gingrich (….) "gender, visible minority status, age, and length of stay in Canada are all found to be strong predictors of economic exclusion...these social characteristics intersect in ways that result in rather profound material outcomes" (Lightman & Gingrich, p. 137).[74]

The long-standing structural factors discussed above have combined with the current instability in economic conditions in the period of restructuring such as precarious work arrangements to create a disproportionate impact on the economic chances and choices of disenfranchised Black youth, as well as other marginalized youth groups such as immigrants, LGBTQ, disabled and indigenous youth. It is therefore no surprise, as the research shows, that there has been an increase in the number of Black youth that are not employed or in education or training (NEET) partly due to these factors.[75] Employment opportunities for youth with limited training and education have also diminished in number with government cutbacks and the restructuring of the labour market due to automation promises to wreck havoc on these youths. From a social determinants of health perspective, the attendant challenges with poverty, homelessness, low educational attainment, poor health can be seen as contributing to intensified marginalization in the economy and in society.

As indicated above, the literature explores some of these dynamics drawing on an extensive body of work from academic sources to government sources to community literature addressing the condition and the state and community response to the condition of Black youth who are not in employment, education, and training in the Canadian context. But it is supplemented by work from other jurisdictions in North America and Europe.

Black Youth Identity and Black NEET Status

African Canadian youth endure a confluence of stereotypes that define their education and employment experience. The stigmatization of Black male youth in particular and the reconfiguration of their masculinity is mostly a top-down process that has roots in a history of enslavement and structural racism that defined African humanity in particular ways and for particular purposes (Walcott, 2009). What emerges is a contradictory set of images and impulses that reflect stereotypes from the top and resistance from the bottom. These appear anti-social in some contexts but ultimately are a defensive reaction. They include not only images of fatherlessness, underachievers, and troublemakers but also of immigrants and migrants. All of these images are coded to represent deviance and truancy in a manner that leads to placement in Special Education or Applied and Essentials programs. The images deny the possibility of university education. In deciphering the complexity of Black masculinity, Walcott emphasizes its existence under constant social and cultural surveillance – a condition in which Black humanity is continuously doubted, continuously seen in need of or under repair,

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[74] Social Program Evaluation Group, Queens University (2018:19); Lightman & Gingrich, p. 137
[75] Social Program Evaluation Group, Queens University (2018:16)

continuously associated with lawlessness, defiance, deviance, truancy, violence and lack of moral control.

James (2012) has argued that these stereotypes serve to reinforce a disposition in our schools that Black youth cannot be effectively educated in the common stream without disrupting the normal processes of learning for other students or with the same success as other students. It is here that the concept of stereotype threat that we discussed earlier seems to apply, in setting expectations for authorities and for the students. At the same time, students are internalizing these threats even as they are externally acted upon on by the prevailing assumptions about their abilities. Race (and gender and class) mediate students' interaction with the education system and their outcomes and are used to 'notice, identify, regulate, and even distort individuals' points of order making situations "dangerous enough to require constant vigilance"' (James, 2012:468). The requirement to monitor and regulate is consistent with the paternalist logic of streaming even as the threat of disorder confirms the neo-liberal need to separate, through safe schools policies to ensure a pacified environment for the rest of the education project (James, 2009).

The construction of the fearsome Black youth becomes a basis for close policing and teacher distancing, creating an inhospitable climate for learning and triggering disengagement, Behavioural designation and Special Education assignment (Sewell, 1997). Behaviours displayed in school hallways, cafeterias, parking lots and staircases are routinely labelled hyper-aggressive, scary and gang-like by administrators and teachers. Solomon and Brown (1998) report on an interview with a White female teacher in a Canadian school who articulates this sentiment:

> "At times, I'm literally sacred of them (Black youth). Going down the hallways, especially near the exits to the rear of the school building, and running into a group of six or more, you get a real eerie feeling; and I've known female teachers who simply turn around instead of passing that group (Solomon & Brown, 1998:111)

The impact of these interactions is to further alienate stigmatized students and confirm the self-fulfilling prophesy of the defiant behavior they are characterized as possessing. It makes them targets for forms of evaluation that confine them to narrowing pathways, in many cases 'medicalizing' the problem, assigning them a behavioral disorder, leading to Special Education as an intervention (Ferguson, 2000; Sewell 1997).

The 'crisis' in Black NEET experience correlates to the negative identity construction of the Black youth, particularly the male subject, as "incompliant, lawless, defiance, deviance, truant, violent and lacking in moral control" making him particularly vulnerable to marginalization (Solomon & Brown, 1998).

DBY and Educational attainment

Education is understood variously as a process for:

- Building human capital by transferring skills that enhance productivity
- Providing a sorting mechanism to identify individual and group ability
- Building social capital by installing social norms
- Providing a consumption good that is valuable in its own sake[76]

Schools, colleges and universities address all four in various ways, from a human capital investment model for person and community/national growth; to identifying private and social returns to education; instilling democratic and patriotic values, and developing a sense of community and citizenship; a market or public good for consumption.[77]

But the avails of the education system are determined by particular structural forces. Anti-Black racism persists in the education system with disastrous consequences for Black youth. In that context, Black student underachievement is well documented (James, 2012; ......). Historical processes of racialization and colonization are mobilized to enable the practice of streaming, and it manifests within schools and across the education system to deny Black students the full benefit of the learning experience.

As early as 1828, Black immigrants from the United States were denied admission to common schools precipitating a Negro Separate Schools Act in 1849 and a Common Schools Act in 1850 that enshrined a separate but equal logic in Ontario legislation that remained on the books until the 1960s. The Common Schools Act, 1850, included conditions for the legal establishment of separate public schools for Blacks. The act allowed *" ... on the application, in writing, of twelve, or more, resident heads of families, to authorize the establishment of one, or more, Separate Schools for Protestants, Roman Catholics or Colored people"* (Cooper, 2007)[78]

Where such separate schools did not exist, it said, Black students had to attend school at a separate time of day from White students, or be seated in separate arrangements.

According to Benjamin Drew
> *"Many of the whites objected to having their children sit in the same forms with the colored pupils; and some of the lower classes would not send their children to schools where the blacks are admitted"* (Hill, 1992: 149)[79]

There are at least four key ways in which streaming is operationalized, leading to differential educational outcomes for particular racialized groups[80]: the racial disproportionality of Applied

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[76] Gradstein, M., & M. Justman, V. Meier (2005) The Political Economy of Education: Implications for Growth and Inequality (Boston: MIT)

[77] Gradstein, M., & M. Justman, V. Meier (2005)

[78] Cooper, 2007

[79] Hill, 1992

[80] It is important to make clear that the experience of racialization in education is not singular but varied. Racialization impacts different racial groups differently and compromises different aspects of the educational experience. While Aboriginal youth, Blacks and Latin American youth have the lowest test scores, low credit accumulation and high levels of disengagement, South Asian and East Asian students have high test scores but

and Academic streams and outcomes; the expansive use of Special Education to designate 'learner' identities; the deployment of 'youth at-risk' discourses and interventions; and the safe schools discourse and the zero tolerance policies that structure differential learning opportunities through safe school transfers and safe school programs, and school to prison pipelines (Meiners & Winn, 2010; Hatt, 2011). These four processes structure different pathways for Aboriginal and racialized youth and lead to a diminished educational experience, and destructive outcomes.[81]

The differential impacts are reflected in the program of study data for race identified groups in the Toronto District School Board. As the table below shows, particular groups are under-represented in the academic program of study while significantly over represented in the Applied, Essentials and Undefined streams whose pathway to university and college admissions are substantially lower. For example, Black students are significantly over-represented in Applied, Essential and Undefined programs. While 12.6% of the student population, they make up 23% of students in Applied courses and close to 30% in Essentials. They are also over-represented in Undefined classes, though not as dramatically. The implications are that they have much lower post-secondary education application rates (Applied, 39.2%; Essentials, 20.3%; Undefined, 41.4% compared to Academic, 81.6% and overall 67.5%).

A key part of this streaming process is the constitution of distinctive identities based on racial and religious differences that become the basis for differential treatment in the system. Identity formation becomes an essential part of the practice of streaming, especially for Aboriginal and racialized students. For the education system, these identities are formed primarily out of the intersection of race and social class and particularly out of racialized poverty. It is an identification process that leads to the well-discussed achievement gap between Black and non-racialized students. These key identities also intersect with the 'youth at-risk' identity to harden the streaming process. Such identification is, finally, an act of social construction that seeks to maintain the dominance of the White power structure, underpinning an ideology of meritocracy that helps keep in place the current hierarchy of globalizing capitalism. Finally, given the long established connection between poverty and poor educational outcomes, the current intensification of racialized poverty disproportionately exposes Aboriginal and racialized youth to the class-based streaming.

According to the literature, the explanations for Black student achievement gap are multifold. They, for instance, include the genetic-cultural perspective (Murray & Fairchild, 1989; Slaughter-Defoe et al, 1990). The genetic and cultural approaches, otherwise popularly referred to as the "deficit models" assume that limitations or deficiencies within the Black child are a result of either their genetic background or arise within their environment or life circumstances. These then are responsible for underachievement and school failure (Murray

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report being subjected to racial stereotypes that make them uncomfortable participating in class discussion and school activities. The educational experience is diminished for both sets of students. (See TDSB, 2010a).
[81] Galabuzi (on streaming)

and Fairchild, 1989). These explanations have however been discredited on both conceptual and methodological grounds (Barbarin, 1999; Sue and Okazaki, 1990).[82]

In contrast to genetic and cultural-deficit explanations, the cultural–ecological perspective explains the poor school performance of Black children in terms of the cultural context in which they function (Slaughter-Defoe et al., 1990). One popular cultural– ecological explanation is based on the work of Ogbu et al. (Fordham, 1988; Ogbu, 1987, 1993). According to John Ogbu (1987), Black students, as a result of their involuntary incorporation into American society through historical enslavement and systemic discrimination have been denied assimilation into mainstream society. Social stratification mechanisms such as racial discrimination, prejudice and restricted economic opportunity serve to limit or block the academic achievement and motivation of African American students.[83]

This results in many Black students believing they will experience limited occupational opportunities, preventing them from receiving the rewards and benefits that correspond with their educational attainments (Mickelson, 1990). Smith et al (2005) have indicated that although many African American students may hold positive views about school success and may embrace the ideology of achievement, they may yet not work to their full potential in school, resulting in a "paradox of underachievement" (Ford and Harris, 1997; Mickelson, 1990; Steinberg et al., 1992; Smith, Schneider & Ruck, 2005).[84] They further argue that because of Black students' assumptions about the opportunity structure, it is sometimes believed that academic underachievement is an adaptive response to their restricted social and economic opportunities (Ford, 1993; Ogbu, 1987, 1993). Ogbu's model also suggests that inequalities in the social and educational systems can also lead minority students to develop an oppositional social identity whereby academic achievement and related behaviors are viewed as associated with the dominant or White culture (e.g., Fordham, 1988; Ogbu, 1987, 1993). Therefore, Black students may perceive schooling as a "subtractive process" in which students may feel the need to forfeit or lose some of their collective Black identity in order to achieve academic success (Fordham and Ogbu, 1986).[85]

One other possible explanation of the different outcomes in school comes from the work of Claude Steele (1995). He has posited the notion of the 'stereotype threat' as a way of understanding why students are subject to diverging stereotypes – negative and positive – and can experience such varied outcomes (Steele & Aronson, 1995).[86]

Steele argues that the fact certain minorities experience a lower stereotype threat than others may explain their better educational performance. Stereotype threat is a situation in which individuals are concerned that they are being judged based on a dominant stereotype rather than on their own merit and so act in a manner that may lead to their replicating the

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[82] Barbarin, 1999; Sue and Okazaki, 1990
[83] Fordham, 1988; Ogbu, 1987, 1993
[84] Ford and Harris, 1997; Mickelson, 1990; Steinberg et al., 1992; Smith, Schneider & Ruck, 2005
[85] Ford, 1993; Ogbu, 1987, 1993
[86] Steele and Aronson (1995)

stereotype. Stereotype threat has been demonstrated to interfere with the intellectual performance of African-American students and children of low socio-economic status in the United States (Steele, Spencer & Aronson, 2002; Kang & Inzlicht 2012; Inzlicht *et al.* (in press); Schmader *et al.*, 2008).

Because these stereotypes influence what people see and expect of students, educators are more likely to reinforce these stereotypes than to destabilize them. In other words, students are impacted both internally and externally by stereotype threats. Claude Steele (1997) concludes that:

"The susceptibility of the stereotype threat derives not from internal doubts about their ability but from their identification with the domain and the resulting concern they have about being stereotyped in it" (Steele, 1997:620)

According to the American body of evidence, and some studies in the Canadian context, stereotype threats exact a powerful toll on the targeted individuals. Steele (1997) makes the point that society has deeply embedded stereotypes that connect racial identity to academic ability. Children and youth become aware of these stereotypes as they navigate the school environment. These include strong assumptions prevalent in the education system that if you are Black you will not do well, but if you are White or Asian you will do better. These assumptions affect both teachers' expectations of students as well as students' expectations of themselves.

Over time, students perform in a manner that corresponds to the stereotype because the educational environment reinforces expectations related to the stereotype. It becomes a self fulfilling prophesy (Steele, 1997; McIntyre *et al.*, 2003; Fairlie *et al.*, 2011; Gonzales *et al.*, 2002; Carell *et al.*, 2010.) According to Kang & Inzlicht (2012), stereotype threats impose a different kind of pressure on various minorities depending on the nature of the dominant stereotype. Children learn about their social devaluation differently depending on the stigma or stereotype attached to their identity. As such, students are likely to perform in a manner consistent with the stereotype. They argue on the basis of their Canadian studies that there is a demonstrable relationship between social identities and achievement domains due to stereotype threat (Kang & Inzlicht, 2012).[87]

In the Toronto District School Board, the largest in the province, we have some disaggregated data to help define the experience of some groups among the racialized students. Using data on test scores (EQAO), school dropouts, and pathways to post-secondary education, we can sketch a profile of the racialized experience and outcomes. While the data suggest some complexity in the experience, more racialized groups score poorly or are at risk of non-completion than non-racialized groups. This does not in and of itself negate the proposition that there is a racial effect in the processes and the outcomes we document here.

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[87] Kang & Inzlicht, 2012

In the Toronto District School Board, of the 25% of students who do not graduate, proportionally the largest number are Aboriginal, Black, Latin American, Portuguese and those of Middle Eastern background. These student groups are also the ones most likely to have the lowest EQAO test scores, the lowest credit accumulation through secondary school and the highest dropout rates. They also tend to have the lowest rates of school attendance and the highest suspension rates. On average, these students also have lower family incomes and are most likely to live in socio-economically disadvantaged areas of the city. All this translates into low levels of school engagement and the proverbial achievement gap that defines their educational experience (TDSB, 2010).

Students of Caribbean (50.8), East African (69.2), and Latin American (70%) backgrounds are less likely to graduate from secondary school than other Canadian students generally (77%) or students of East Asian (88.8), South Asian (84.9), and Eastern European (82.9) backgrounds. These students are also the most likely to disengage entirely and drop out of school at higher rates. The dropout rate for Whites (12%), East Asians (6.3%), South Asians (10) is considerably lower than that of Blacks (22%), Latin American (20%) Mixed (18%) and Middle Eastern (16.1%). Recent immigrants also face a substantially higher incidence of poverty, which in turn means that they may face poverty-related obstacles to academic achievement (Ornstein, 2006; Galabuzi, 2006).

Data on suspensions help fill out the profile of marginalization and exclusion. One of the ways the student experience of racialized students is compromised is by the amount of time they stay out of the classroom as a result of suspensions. Disproportionate rates of suspension not only represent a differential administration of discipline but they also structure differential levels of engagement with schools and, ultimately, outcomes. Below, the table shows the differential rates of suspension, with Black, Middle Eastern, Latin American and Mixed students incurring significantly higher rates than others. For Black students the rate is twice as high as any other group and three times higher than for the most populous group in the system, White students.

Table 2: Suspension rate by Student background (TDSB)

Suspension Rate by Student Racial Background						
Racial Background	JK-Gr. 6		Gr.7-8		Gr. 9-12	
	2007-08	2011-12	2006-07	2011-12	2006-07	2011-12
Black	2.2%	1.5%	13.7%	7.6%	12.7%	8.6%
East Asian	0.3%	0.2%	2.0%	0.8%	1.2%	0.7%
Latin American	1.0%	0.8%	8.2%	4.5%	5.7%	3.6%
Middle Eastern	0.4%	0.5%	6.2%	2.7%	6.9%	4.1%
Mixed	1.1%	0.6%	8.2%	4.1%	8.1%	4.8%
South Asian	0.3%	0.2%	2.7%	1.4%	3.5%	2.1%
Southeast Asian	0.2%	0.4%	3.8%	1.2%	2.7%	1.9%
White	0.6%	0.5%	4.8%	2.4%	4.3%	2.9%

According to TDSB's 2006 Student Census and 2008 Parent Census as reported by Yau, O'Reilly, Rosolen & Archer, 2011:1-8, Black students are less likely that others to say that they:

1. enjoy school,
2. view school as a welcoming place, and
3. feel safe inside school.

The 2006 Student Census and 2008 Parent Census also point out that Black students are less likely than other to feel:

1. supported by teachers,
2. comfortable discussing problems with school adults, and
3. respected by staff.[88]

DBY Labour market experience

Black youth sustain some of the highest levels of unemployment in Ontario and low levels of income even when they have attained a university education.

In 2013 the unemployment rate for Ontario youth between the ages of 15 and 24 ranged between 16 and 17.1%, higher than the average Canadian range of 13.5 to 14.5%. Of the 16-17.1% the highest represented group were racialized youth however without a specific disaggregation of data on African Canadian youth specifically (Geobeym, 2009). Toronto's youth unemployment rates the worst of any region in the province (Geobeym, 2009).

Racialized Youth in the Labour Market, 2001

Age 15-24	Labour Market Participation	Unemployment Rate
All persons	58.4%	13.3%
Immigrant Youth	55.0%	14,8%
Racialized Youth	43.7%	16.1%
Racialized youth – Canadian born	48.4%	15.5%
Black Youth – Canadian Born	33.2%	21.4%

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[88] Yau, O'Reilly, Rosolen & Archer (2011). Census portraits: Understanding our students' ethno-racial backgrounds. Toronto, Ontario: Toronto District School Board; S. Fearon (2018) Partnering for Black Student Well-being: A Teacher's Journey. The Learning Exchange

Age 20-24	Labour Market Participation	Unemployment Rate
All persons	72.9%	12.5%
Racialized Youth	67.3%	15.4%
Racialized Youth – Canadian Born	64.7%	14.6%
Black Youth – Canadian Born	64.8%	16.5%

Source: Census of Canada. Catalogue 97F0012XCB200102.

There is a need to prepare Black youth through partnerships with educational and training institutions to facilitate skills and knowledge acquisition, so qualified racialized people can compete for employment opportunities

Successful interventions to address Black youth NEET status

The vision and long term outcome that the 'From School to Success Pipeline" (FSSP) collaborative is to improve the wellbeing of **Disenfranchized Black Youth** and effectively address the Black youth NEET experience. The wellbeing concept is defined broadly and holistically, and includes physical, emotional social and spiritual health. It also includes attention to other Social Determinants of Health – employment, education, Anti-Black Racism, social and physical location.

The project vision represents an exploration of a series of holistic interventions that focus on the unique drivers of Black youth disconnection from society and marginalization, with particular effort to address educational and employment disconnection. There are numerous local and international examples with varying degrees of success documented.[89]

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[89] Bancroft, L. (2017). *Not so NEET: A Critical Policy Analysis of Ontario's Youth Job Connection Program* (Unpublished Thesis), Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, ON, Canada; Tatum, A. W. (2005). Teaching reading to black adolescent males: Closing the achievement gap. Portland, Me: Stenhouse Publishers;
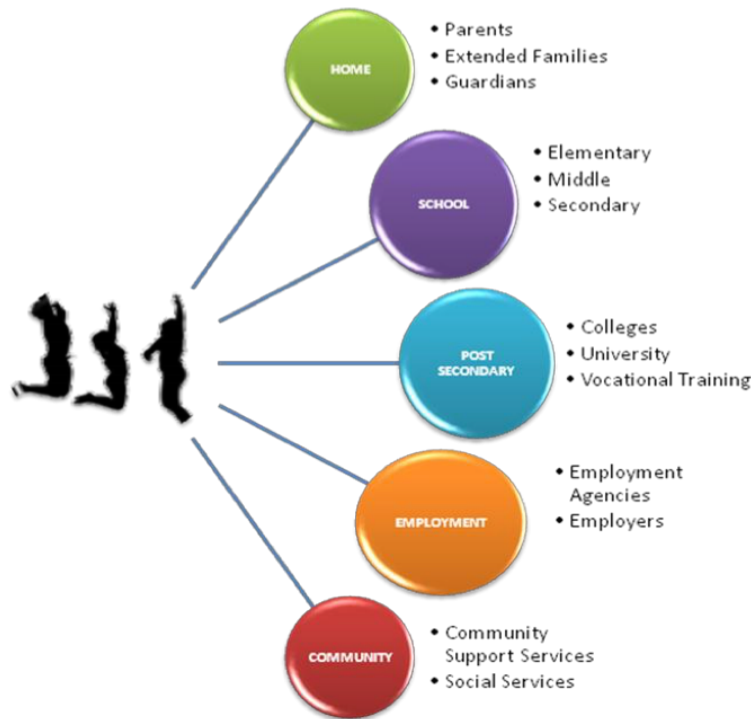
Influencers and Stakeholders that impact DBY (School to success pipeline vision document, 2019)

The research shows that youth employment programs in an increasingly diverse province like Ontario must take a holistic and wrap-around approach that fosters collaboration with other youth support networks to make a difference in the lives of NEET youth by reducing the social exclusion they experience and, ultimately, moving them out of NEET status into sustainable and meaningful employment. Secondly, they must embrace a positive youth development approach, valuing youth assets and potential.

As the Federal Expert Panel Report (2016) indicated, flexible and holistic programming go hand-in-hand to support youth with meeting the highest needs as their struggles are often complex, intersecting and interacting with each other, and accompanied by multiple barriers (Government of Canada, 2016). In both their 2016 and 2017 reports, the Expert Panels noted that ensuring youth employment initiatives are flexible will mean having policies (e.g., eligibility and suitability requirements) and practices that are accommodating and adaptable to address the complex needs of youth. Program flexibility also requires collaboration and commitment among organizations that work together to create innovative solutions to the problem of youth un- and underemployment (Canada, 2020, 2014; Government of Canada, 2016). The Expert Panel (2016) also called for the development of more job pathways for youth other than the

one directly from schools (i.e., co-op), thus allowing youth to experiment with various options in low-risk environments.[90]

Flexibility in youth employment programming can also prevent certain groups of vulnerable youth from being excluded from opportunities because of historic barriers arising from anti-Black racism for instance. It also addresses the unique reality of young parents or a young single-parent with a baby likely to be excluded from a Monday through Friday 9-5 job opportunity provided through a youth employment program due to inability to afford childcare for all five working days. A flexible and holistic youth employment program might adequately address the needs of this young single-parent by coordinating with the employer to provide flexibility in the work schedule and/or negotiating a reduced cost of childcare at a daycare facility in the community.[91]

Disenfranchised Black youth face complex barriers that require a multiplicity of social, economic and cultural supports to adequately address the life stabilization issues they are dealing with and enable their successful integration into the labour market and society. Effective youth employment programs must first support the vulnerable and marginalized Black youth to overcome barriers in order to successfully integrate them into the Ontario labour force.

The focus of the successful interventions ought to be on positive youth development that involves developing a positive identity concept of the Black youth, building strong relationships between Black youth and adult allies, enabling youth leadership and decision making, focussing on skill development and setting high expectations for Black youth. There is a role for partners in this youth centred approach. The partners can be an important source of resources and community assets.

Race-based Data collection

Effective policies to address the Youth NEET experience must support flexible and holistic youth education, training and employment interventions. These programs require longitudinal, high quality and timely data that is currently unavailable and call for the collection of disaggregated data by race and sub-group to inform both policy and program design as well as ensure that progress is measured for the most vulnerable youth. Collecting longitudinal data would also expand understanding of NEET youth needs, barriers, and the employment trends over time, allowing for more informed policymaking and programming in the positive youth development.

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[90] Expert Panel on Youth Employment. (2016). *Understanding the realities: Youth employment in Canada (interim report)*. Retrieved from https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social- development/corporate/youth-expert-panel/interim-report.html

[91] Social Program Evaluation Group, Queens University (2018) Needs of NEET Youth: Pathways to Positive Outcomes. Prepared for the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities

Ontario Initiatives

The Ontario government has a number of initiatives aimed at addressing the NEET condition and in particular focused on Black youth that stretch from education to employment.[92] The Ontario Government's Ontario Black Youth Action Plan launched in 2017, aims to reduce disparities in outcomes for Black children and youth. It was launched as a 4-year, $47 million commitment to support approximately 10,800 Black youth dealing with challenges of disconnection from education, employment and society in general. Its various initiatives include the Enhanced Youth Outreach Worker program, among others.[93]

The Government of Ontario program 'Together We Can program', launched in 2017 had as its focus the need to build positive Black identity concept as a basis for educational and employment success. It involves partnering with local community organizations to provide mentorship opportunities for Black youth to help build skills and connections to employment opportunities in the long run.[94]

Ontario's job connection and Youth job connection summer program

The Ontario Youth Job Connection is delivered by service providers to almost 8,000 participants at 137 sites across Ontario. As of November 2017 (i.e., a few months prior to the completion of this literature review), over 21,000 participants have exited the program since its inception on October 1, 2015. Youth Job Connection Summer (YJC-S) is only offered over the summer to youths between the ages of 15-18. Youth Job Connection Summer is another related program now in its fourth year of operation. Service providers are currently delivering the program to over 4,200 participants at 137 sites across Ontario (as of Summer 2017). As of November 2017, over 6,800 participants have exited the program since its inception on April 1, 2016. The Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development's commitment to a leadership role in the monitoring and evaluation of programs and policies, and performance monitoring and evaluation are integral components of YJC and YJC-S.

Given the reach that both YJC and YJC-S has achieved and the number of youth that both programs serve, the findings of this literature review support the need for an extensive evaluation of both programs in order to collate a robust evidence base for continued informed decision making regarding program content, structure, and delivery of these two programs that strive to serve the employment needs of Ontario's most vulnerable youth populations.

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[92] Ontario Ministry of Education. (2016). Ontario's Well-being Strategy for Education. Toronto, Ontario: Queen's Printer for Ontario.

[93] Ontario Black Youth Action Plan
[94] Newport, A. 2017. Ontario Launching New Program for Black Youth. Mississauga News August 7, 2017.

Ontario Black Youth Action Plan

Ontario's Black Youth Action Plan (BYAP), part of Ontario's Anti-Racism Strategy,
is a four-year, $47 million commitment to help reduce disparities for Black children, youth, and
families. It is aimed at investing in Black youth in the GTA, Hamilton, Windsor and Ottawa;
support the emergence of Black Youth Voices across the sectors; reduce disparities for Black
children, youth and families in five key areas. The BYAP is based on a Cultural Identity and
Collective Impact (CI2) approach. In this context, cultural Identity is defined as the identity or
feeling of belonging to a group. It is symbolic of a person's self-conception and self-perception
and is related to nationality, ethnicity, religion, social class, generation, locality or any kind of
social group that has its own distinct culture. Black cultural Identity works to protect against
anti-Black racism. Collective Impact refers to the commitment of a group of stakeholders from
different sectors to a set of principles for solving a complex social problem.

In 2017 Toronto implemented the Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism which
seeks to work with Toronto's black communities and create a better relationship with the
government in order to end discrimination and work towards a more equal society. The action
Plan has five overarching themes, twenty-two recommendations and 80 actions that the City is
undertaking.

Other jurisdictions

The SPEG (2018) study referenced earlier identifies a Manitoba based program named **Futures
Forward** is a collaborative partnership between the Canadian Mental Health Association, Youth
Employment Services, and Community Financial Counselling Services to offer wrap-around
services to current or former youth involved in the child welfare system in Manitoba. Central to
this intervention is the wrap around nature of the supports that seek to meet multiple complex
needs all at once.

Futures Forward helps youth with health and wellbeing, housing, money and finances,
emergency services, education and training, and employment programs. Employment and
training programs include career exploration, job skills training, and access to apprenticeships.
Some private organizations focus on increasing employability for at-risk youth, and
simultaneously run programs to help stabilize youth.

In Newfoundland, a program called **Choices for Youth** is run by a charitable organization that is
funded by industry, government, foundations, and community partners. It provides crisis
response, supportive housing, and targeted support programs for at-risk communities in
Newfoundland. Their Jumpstart program provides youth with pre- employment skills training
and work experience placements (household repairs, carpentry, gardening, art programs, and
food service).

The McCreary Centre Society (2014) report based on a province-wide study on negotiating the
barriers to employment for vulnerable youth in British Columbia, the emphasizes the need for a

holistic approach to supporting young people in obtaining and maintaining employment. Aspects such as building relationships, developing employability skills (e.g., CV writing), developing job skills and experience, addressing health and mental health concerns, and accessing transportation were seen as elements that contributed to a youth's holistic ability to be successful in the workplace.

In supporting youth in a holistic way, programs such as the Youth Job Connection program help vulnerable youth not only gain employment, but also develop the necessary skills, experience, and confidence needed to maintain and succeed within the workforce and life beyond.

"The shit looks grimy, but it's community." Black rapper, Ricky Dred (a.k.a. King Friday) (Davis, 2017:733)The film represented the youth's performance of economic and social disenfranchisement and expressions of nihilism

Africentric approaches to transition and NEET experience

Afrocentric approaches to Black Youth NEET interventions
Africentric approaches to Black youth NEET programing are important for addressing the identity and cultural issues implicated in the proliferation of Black youth NEET status. They are essential to building African Canadian youth self-esteem through centring them in the design process of interventions, by raising awareness of African culture and its contributions, and developing their sense of responsibility to a larger community through the principle of Ujima (collective work and responsibility). It helps overcome the stereo-typical mainstream media driven portrayals of Black culture that only highlight Hip-Hop or sports as areas of achievement and interest. Instead it focuses on the ability of Black youth to achieve academically and to utilize their talents and potential in the labour market and the broader society.
As Asante (1987) has argued, Afrocentricity is the approach and examination of phenomena from the standpoint of Africans as subjects rather than objects of social endeavour, becoming, by virtue of its authentic relationship, the centrality to African reality (Asante,1987). Africentricity places African Canadian history, culture, and African heritage at the center of the experiences of persons of African Descent. An Africentric perspective also epitomizes the political, economic, and social freedom of Black youth, families and communities. More importantly, understanding the cultural dynamics of African Canadian families and their historical and contemporary use of resources (e.g.,worldview, language, spirituality, etc.) to adapt and overcome certain life circumstances can be useful in assessment and treatment. The application of Africentricity to the NEET project is an important development in addressing the condition of people of African descent everywhere, but particularly in the African diaspora.

Africentricity's overarching belief system (i.e., paradigm) and theoretical underpinnings recognize the culture and history of people of African descent as the focal point in any analysis

of people of African descent. It is a theory of social change that epitomizes the political, economic, and cultural freedom of people of African Descent. Asante (1990) suggests that Africentricity asserts that peoples of African descent are active, primary, and central agents in the making of their histories. This guiding principle of human agency acts as a filter in describing the African existence throughout the African Diaspora. The history, culture, and philosophy of African people are used as the reference point for determining one's approach to reality and understanding of the world (Kambon, 1992). Therefore, the strategies and procedures for the development of African students must use African values as their foundation. Anything else would simply be creating or determining how Europeanized African students are in their thought and behavior.

Afrocentrism restructures African worldview and culture and thus reconnects it to the student of African descent. Afrocentrism penetrates the effects of racism and slavery on the development of African American college students. It reconnects them to African worldview and culture. Afrocentrism does not ignore the challenge of overcoming anti-Black racism and thus restructures the culture and worldview in ways that can be processed and understood by those who are victims of such racism.

African Canadian students are disengaging from what they see as a negative the educational experience, dropping out at high rates and experience a significant achievement gap. This in turn impact their life chances and denies them the opportunity to live to their potential like their counterparts. Many of these youth are exposed to negative interpretations of what it means to be Black in this society with the effect that at critical moments in their development they are not able to develop a positive self-concept.

A comprehensive Africentric learning system is an essential and unique approach to educating students of African descent because it recognizes the impact of their history and current reality of structural racism on their learning. Education has not been colourblind and it is our children and communities that have paid often the price for the illusion of inclusion

NGUZO SABA

Umoja (unity): To strive for and maintain unity in the family, community, nation, and race.

Kujichagulia (self-determination): To define ourselves, name ourselves, create for ourselves, and speak for ourselves instead of being defined, named, created for, and spoken for by others.

Ujima (collective work and responsibility): To build and maintain our Community together and make our sisters' and brothers' problems our problems and to solve them together.

Ujamma (co-operative economics): To build and maintain our own economic base - stores, shops, and other businesses and profit from them together.

Nia (purpose): To make our collective vocation the building and developing of our community in

order to restore our people to their traditional greatness.

Kuumba (creativity): To do always as much as we can, in the way we can, in order to leave our community more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it.

Imani (faith): To believe with all our hearts in God, our people, our parents, our teachers, our leaders, and the righteousness and victory of our struggle.

The Africentric informed PLUG project implemented by TAIBU and Rexdale CHC achieved an 85% reduction and/or withdrawal of suspension and expulsion. The wrap around support facilitated the students to remain in school or continue their education elsewhere; which in turn will reduce the number of Black youth NEET

Other Culturally based approaches to Youth NEET status

Tabi and Gosine's (2016) work on neoliberal secondary educational reforms of the last three decades in Ontario, documents have they resulted in heightened standardization in schools and promotion of norms of individual attainment, competition, and social control, that serve to intensify the stigmatization and alienation of Black Male Youth (BMY). In response to the interlocking racial, gendered, and class oppression they experience within the prevailing neoliberal context, many BMY have embraced a defensively situated resistant Black masculinity (Ogbu, 1998). They argue for inviting the cultural wealth of BMY into school can help bridge the divide between schools and the Black communities, thereby making mainstream schooling more inclusive by diversifying curricula, democratizing the classroom, and challenging the neoliberalization of education. They highlight Hip-Hop as an example of cultural wealth that illuminates the knowledge and lived realities of BMY and can be utilized by urban educators to promote academic engagement and intercultural exchange in classrooms.

Neoliberalism serves to marginalize and categorize individuals by race, gender, and class as well as privatize inequalities generated by such categories (Badwall, 2013; Wilson et al., 2011), Within this context, the voices of our youth, particularly youth of color, are often ignored and marginalized (James, 2012; Mitchell & Moore, 2015). So, positive cultural initiatives are essential to addressing the hegemonic neoliberal discourses that reinforce negative constructions of Black masculinity and lead to negative implications for educating DBYs. Confronting the dominant values that characterize the neoliberal era—individualism, colorblindness, competition, and meritocracy— and provide ideological justification for racial inequality by pathologizing the communities of "bad" DBY is essential to deemphasizing institutionalized anti-Black racism. It is no surprise then that many DBY have tended to embrace a defensively situated resistant Black masculinity (Fordham & Ogbu, 1992; James, 2011, 2012).

Rapping and spoken word poetry are two forms of cultural production that Black male youth have used to express their lived experiences and resistance (Fisher, 2003; Gosine & Tabi, 2016). Hip-Hop is an "amalgam of practices" using rap music, graffiti, writing and fashion to mobilize attitudes of insubordination; enabling Hip-Hop to be seen as powerful and attractive (Walcott, 2003, p. 54).[95] When situating Hip-Hop culture within popular culture, Bakari Kitwana (2002) has stated that Black youth are not only becoming visible within pop culture, but are piecing together their values and identities using various forms of media such as rap music.

Gosine and Tabi (2016) have argued that the experiential knowledge, consciousness, and modes of resistance of BMY, often illuminated through Hip-Hop culture, can be seen as a form of knowledge that transcends traditional academic discourse and neoliberal understandings of the way we educate youth. There is much that can be learned from authentic engagement with Hip-Hop and spoken word poetry, for these forms of cultural production often represent the lived experience and cultural practices of many urban youth (Alim, 2006). Hip Hop is among some of the most influential artistic social and cultural movements for youth around the world. As a reflection of the realities of marginalized communities, rapping and spoken word poetry have become a means of reading and acting on the world (Akom, 2009; Jocson, 2011).

Marginalized youth subcultures, in particular the sense of community, resistance, and rebellion they exhibit along with the counterhegemonic identities that they construct, provide windows by which to observe how youth experience and traverse social issues such as racism and access to economic resources and opportunities (Walcott, 1997). Rap music has been the vehicle by which many BMY have chosen to articulate their perceived exclusion and relationship with social, political, and economic trajectories (Kirkland 2013; Walcott, 1997), thus providing the opportunity for youth of color to share their stories using their own voices; to express their perceptions and identities (Dimitriadis, 2009; Rodriguez, 2009). It is therefore essential that a project of recovery for disenfranchised Black Youth embrace their stories and experiences as a productive way to teach, because they are "'pedagogical' in the sense that they have the potential to educate teachers, researchers, and policymakers about the effects of dominant cultural practices, representations, and ideologies in urban communities and schools" (McCready, 2010, p. 52).[96]

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[95] Walcott, R. (2006) The Disenfrachised, Give Alienated Youth Cultural Outlets to Bring them into the Canadian Family. University of Toronto Bulletin, Vol. 18, No. 5

[96] Tabi, E. & K. Gosine (2016) Neoliberalism, Black Masculinity and Black Male Youth: The Value of Transdisciplinary Studies to Urban Educators. World Futures, 74: 525–541