"I Really Wasn't Ready": Expectations and Dilemmas of a University Student in an Access Program

CARL JAMES
York University

Abstract

Using a life story approach, I discuss the experiences and actions of Ewart, one of eighteen university recruits into an access program, to understand the ways in which the university, and the access program specifically, was accommodative of his needs, interests, expectations and aspirations. Critical Race Theory provided the framework to understand how educational institutions' liberal notions of merit, equality of opportunity and democracy, on one hand, made access to university possible for Ewart, and on the other, circumscribed his opportunities, possibilities and interests even as he tried to maintain his hopeful optimism.

I remember meeting Ewart (all names are pseudonyms) for the first time in late August, 2002 at the half-day orientation for the students selected to enter a Toronto university through the "Bridging the Solitudes" access program.¹ He looked twenty-ish, fashionably dressed in his

¹ "Bridging the Solitudes" was an access program funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) and Community University Research Alliance (CURA). The program was designed to facilitate the entrance of marginalized youth who faced racial, ethnic, cultural and financial barriers to education and who, without the support of the program, were unlikely to have gone to university. Two cohorts of students (nine students each of 2 years) were admitted into the university through the Bridging program. Students were offered some financial assistance to offset the cost of their tuition, as well as some administrative and academic support by program administrators and researchers.

oversized blue jeans and shirt, and the usual short hair-cut. What made this meeting with Ewart stand out was not so much that he was the only Black person in the group, but that he had his 8-year-old brother with him, leaving me to assume that he had some primary responsibility for his brother while his parent or parents were at work. As well, this was a possible indication that for him to have attended the meeting he had to bring his brother. Beyond introducing himself and his brother, Ewart listened attentively but remained quiet throughout the meeting. At the end, as everyone mingled, Ewart did not; he took what might be considered an observer position standing at one side of the room. And as he was about to slip away, I approached him, re-introduced myself, and asked how he felt about the meeting and about his educational interests. As he left, I wondered what Ewart's quiet, disciplined and serious demeanor suggested in terms of his expectations of the university program in which he was about to participate. What should we make of the fact that he did not ask any questions and of his seemingly disengaged-observer appearance? That Ewart appeared somewhat unsure of what to expect of the program was not unusual, for his peers were equally unsure; but unlike Ewart, they asked questions and expressed their concerns. What was Ewart's understanding and expectations of university; and was he ready to engage with it? How might this early experience with Ewart – his silence and his family situation and responsibility – explain what we were to expect from Ewart's time in university, his participation in the Bridging Program, and eventual outcome?

In this article, I use the experiences and actions of Ewart, one of nine university recruits into an access program, to understand his struggles with his university program, and his eventual stop-out/dropout/transfer from the university. I read Ewart's actions, in other words, his

disengagement from the program, as a process which, as the dropout literature (e.g. Dei et al, 1997; Rendon et al, 2004; Swail et al, 2003) indicates, is not only reflective of his experiences, but also of the extent to which the access program as it exists within the current university structure, was responsive to the needs, concerns, interests and aspirations of students like Ewart. In this regard, I argue that while access programs provide welcomed opportunities for marginalized students to gain entry to universities and colleges, the desires of these students to 'seize the opportunity,' combined with the encouragement of university personnel, high school teachers, parents and significant others for them to do so, can sometimes operate as a disadvantage or liability more than an asset.

Accordingly, this article explores Ewart's experiences in the Bridging (access) program, and within the university generally, giving attention to how his familial circumstances, expectations and experiences, as well as his early educational, occupational, social and community experiences influence his university performance and his process of disengagement. I acquiesce to Ewart's explanation of his difficulties in his university program to be a reflection of his 'non-readiness' (for to discuss how we assess the 'readiness' of a potential student is not for me to decide here). Indeed, he insisted that he was quite capable and able to meet the academic requirements of a university program; and he cited his good high school grades as evidence. (We could ask: how might we assess high school programs and grades in an effort to know the kinds of supports that particular students might need if they are to keep engaged in university? This question is beyond the scope of this paper). But to the extent that this one case study can be used to examine the many questions of students' disengagement from university, the guiding or

compelling question for me here is: What are the particular experiences of a racialized student like Ewart within a university access program; and what role did his racialized identity play in his negotiation, navigation, disengagement and eventual departure from a program that he understood would provide the opportunity he sought to achieve his educational and career aspirations?

That I acquiesce to Ewart's reading of his situation is in keeping with the story-telling or personal narratives approach that I take in this paper. This approach is also part of the tradition of Critical Race Theory (CRT) which holds that stories are key to understanding not only the experiences of racial minorities, but the structural racism that shapes those experiences. As Fernandez (2002) puts it, CRT offers a methodology that can "direct us to capture the stories, counter-stories, and narratives of marginalized people" (p. 47). Such an approach suggests "that we must recognize and address the lives of students of color who are often the objects of our educational research and yet are often absent from or silenced within this discourse" (p. 47). Fernandez also notes that while educational research can address the educational conditions affecting racialized individuals "they seldom incorporate students' own perspectives on their education. Moreover, they do not acknowledge how these students cope with or respond to these educational conditions" (2002, p. 47). Further, the emphasis on 'voice,' according to Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995), "provides a way to communicate the experience and realities of the oppressed, a first step on the road to justice;" and a requirement "for a complete analysis of the educational system" (p. 58). Referencing Delpit, Ladson-Billings and Tate also make the point

that that "one of the tragedies of education is the way in which the dialogue of people of color has been silenced" (p. 58).

CRT, therefore, provides a useful lens through which to examine the experiences, story, voice and actions of Ewart in an effort to understand how the university and schooling structures, through institutional policies, procedures and practices, have operated to maintain a system of inequity that requires the introduction of access programs. CRT also exposes how the taken-for-granted or liberal notions of colour-blindness, equality of opportunity, democracy, merit, and cultural neutrality (Henry & Tator, 2009; James, 2009; Stanley, 2006; Knaus, 2009; Yosso, 2007) fuel the discourses that negate the existence of racism as a reality in the lives of students of colour and as inherent in the structures in educational institutions. This negation serves to justify the exclusion of racial minorities from full participation in society including their access to its institutions. Those who gain access to universities experience a system in which their success is more a product of their ability to navigate a white value system rather than their academic or intellectual prowess (Knaus, 2009).

From the perspective of CRT, racism is not simply individual attitudes which are manifested in a series of isolated acts, but an ideology that structures the beliefs, policies and practices upon which educational institutions (often unacknowledged) operate, significantly upholding the privileges of white middle class students and subordinating the needs, interests and aspirations of racial minorities. Ewart's story is of a racial minority whose life has been shaped and silenced by oppression. Through his story, we gain insights into how he navigated and negotiated the pervasive structures of racism which paradoxically served to limit his attainment

of the necessary academic requirements for entry to university, but was also 'understood' as a barrier which the university was attempting to address through its access program. Through a comprehensive examination of his experiences with the structures of the university, we are able to gain an understanding of what access to democratic participation in universities might mean for systemically excluded members of the society (Knaus, 2009).

I use data from Ewart's application to the program, his life story interviews and common hour² conversations with the other eight program participants. The interviews were conducted prior to students' entry into the program and at the end of each academic year. The story as told here is an interpretative account of Ewart's family, educational and community life. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) assert that "all research is interpretive; it is guided by a set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied" (p. 19). Moreover, individuals use discourses with which they are familiar and which are available to them in understanding their condition or situation. As such, individuals' understanding of issues and/or recollection of past events will be selective and different; for as Polkinghorne (1995) points out: "The significance and meaning of the event in the present may differ from its effect at the time of the original experience. Also, respondents do not have full access to those aspects of the experience that did not achieve awareness or to the complexity of their motives in undertaking an action" (p. 20).

² The "common hour" was a regular meeting time that Bridging students were required to attend and were facilitated by a research assistant, Leanne Taylor. During meetings, students shared their ongoing experiences at university, as well as their evolving perceptions, expectations and aspirations for school and life. Not only was the common hour a place of collective support, as students came to know and help each other, but it was also an important part of the research program that allowed researchers to gather information about and 'track' the progress of students throughout their ongoing studies.

Errande (2000) writes that "all narratives whether oral or written, personal or collective, official or subaltern, are 'narratives of identity' ... [and] are representations of reality in which narrators also communicate how they see themselves and wish others to see them (p. 16). Hence, stories are not about truths, but about how participants understand and relate their lives to us. In this regard, "stories, like the lives they tell about, are always open-ended, inconclusive and ambiguous, and subject to multiple interpretations" (Denzin, 1989, p. 81); for in the telling of their stories, individuals modify them and create new ones (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994). Therefore, this story of Ewart is about his understanding and interpretation of events in his life, and what he chose to tell us. As such, truth is not a concern, for as the Personal Narratives Group (1989) argues, even though people may exaggerate, forget, become confused or lie about their lives, they are still revealing truths.

These truths don't reveal the past 'as it actually was,' aspiring to a standard of objectivity. They give us instead the truths of our experiences We come to understand them only through interpretation, paying careful attention to the contexts that shape their creation and the world views that inform them (Personal Narratives Group, 1989, p. 261).

Within this context, the story that I construct of Ewart's life is one interpretation among many others, and necessarily contains contradictions, ambiguities and inconsistencies. Moreover, Ewart's voice as captured in this story likely represents many others, and as such might open up opportunities and possibilities for such individuals and alert us to the needed systemic and institutional changes if access to university is to be a reality for people like Ewart.

In what follows, I present a review of the literature pertaining to university access and students’ disengagement from schooling; then proceed to tell Ewart’s story – his family life, high school experiences, aspirations, and his experiences in and disengagement from university. I conclude noting that Ewart’s life at university was a constant struggle since he was unable to muster the needed support from, not only the members of the institution, but also his family.

Access Programs, Minority Students, and the Process of Disengagement

In his analysis of data from the federal *Youth in Transition Survey*, in which he compared the educational pathways of First Nation, African, Asian and European Canadian youth, Thiessen (2009) found that East Asian youth (Japanese, Chinese or Korean) were the most likely to pursue a post-secondary education. In addition to these youth’s high academic aspirations and expectations, university-preparatory math and language classes also played a significant role in facilitating their move to post-secondary education. The study indicated that First Nations youth had the lowest likelihood of attending a post-secondary institution, followed by Canadian-born African and Latin American youth. And in their study which explored the link between postsecondary education and family income of Ontario school students’ applicants, Dooley and his colleagues (2009) established that the number of applications to Ontario universities from students in English public secondary schools in the highest and second highest income groups increased, while the applications from students from the two lowest income groups remained flat, amounting to a 13 per cent difference (p. 39).

Almost three decades ago Anisef and his colleagues (1982) in one of few such Canadian studies had established that social class "most significantly affects post-secondary participation and is the hardest to alter" (p. 119). Evidently, not much has changed over the years, for as Livingstone and Stowe (2001) found in their examination of inter-generational class patterns and educational attainment, young people from Canadian "professional/managerial families remain more than three times as likely to attain a degree as those from working class origins" (p. 1) and that "the education gap between those from less educated and more educated families seems to be increasing" (p. 7). Further, based on his study of immigrant students who attended York University between 1996 and 2000, Grayson (2004) showed that racial minority students tended to have lower grade point averages, particularly those for whom English was their second language and even for those whose education was mostly in Canada. Grayson noted that the overwhelming predictor of how well you do in university is how well you do in high school.

Louie (2007) suggests that the success of an individual in negotiating the educational system, both K-12 and postsecondary is influenced by a range of inequalities that are inherent in the schooling processes created in those contexts. Louie also points out that even with seemingly supportive programs within high school, students still experience marginalization – an experience that affects students' degree of preparedness for postsecondary education. Consequently, she writes, "those individuals who have the greatest need of the returns to higher education today are often the ones who have the fewest opportunities to tap into them" (p. 2224). Part of the challenge, according to Louie, is to understand "how students are situated and situate themselves in schools" (p. 2227); for as Louie explains, "the two processes are not necessarily

the same, especially for those students who are disadvantaged due to class, race, or gender. This is because schools are themselves sites of contradiction: they offer promise of social mobility for students, but nonetheless often end up reproducing existing social inequalities" (2007, p. 2227).

It is within this context that access programmes have been initiated to provide postsecondary educational opportunities to those students who otherwise would not make it to university (see Brathwaite, 2003). But as Morley (1997) suggests with reference to her study of equity and access programmes in Britain, "where politics and statements do exist, it is questionable how much impact they have had on employment practices, organizational culture, epistemology, curriculum development, dominant academic discourses and pedagogy" (p. 232). Furthering this argument, Rassool contends that "equal opportunity policies, whether liberal or radical in their conception, remain ameliorative and thus anchored in the superficial perspective of racism and sexism which neglects to address the structural and institutional determinants of social inequality" (Rassool in Morley, p. 232). Morley goes on to argue that market forces have gradually "changed the consumer base of some universities. While consideration of diversity in populations was once framed in discourses of equity and social justice, now it is the logic of the market that influences the broadening of the consumer base. Universities now need to market themselves, and compete to attract new groups of consumers" (p. 236). In Canada, the new market or potential university participants are a diverse group of first and second generation Canadians – many of them racial minorities. But the fact that universities are going after these potential students, does not necessarily mean that university personnel recognize the benefits of diversity among their student population. Universities seem indifferent to the education that an

ethnically and racially diverse student body might allow – alternative perspectives, new theoretical frameworks, and inclusive and democratic models of education. They tend to see the increase in the number of students, hence the money that might come into the institution (see Noon, 2007). But insofar as the university, as Morley suggests “not only defines what knowledge is, but also defines and regulates what a *student* is,” that it is not enough to attract students to higher education. Rather, how institutions understand access and participation need to be restructured taking into account the specific needs of students in ways that ensure their success (completion of degree).

In their study of an Ontario university access program, James and Mannette (2000) observe that access programs at Canadian institutions structured by the liberal ideology of multiculturalism and the myth of meritocracy, are merely a product of tinkering with admissions processes, while the inequitable university structures remain. As a result, marginalized students who gained entry to university as a result of them having identified as both “victims” (to qualify for access) and “survivors” (to tell how, regardless of their experiences, they were able to succeed) of the system – we refer to this as “voluntary marginal differentiation” (p. 78) -- do so at great cost. Some of the costs include their likely re-experience with racism, classism, sexism, ethnocentrism, marginalization and discrimination, while bearing the burden of educating peers and professors alike of their legitimate presence in the institution. This situation exists because the structural reforms – policies, programmes and curriculum – that access programmes promise, are not in place, hence students’ marginalization on the basis of race, ethnicity and socioeconomic status, and in relation to their abilities, performance, achievements, possibilities

and actions – the very constructs that gained them entry – continue to operate to their disadvantage (see Brathwaite, 2003; James 1997; James & Haig-Brown, 2001). Indeed, “access is more than just gaining entry into university; for, once in university, students must be provided an academic environment in which the curricula, pedagogy and social relationships are conducive to their learning, welcoming of their participation in all areas of university life and responsive to their needs, interests and expectations” (James & Mannette, 2000, p. 86).

A more recent study by James and Taylor (2008) reveal that students seek out post-secondary education because they believe in the promise of meritocracy and that that education will provide them with opportunities as long as they are able to ‘get in’. However, as James and Taylor (2008) point out with reference to marginalized and racialized students, sometimes education only gets you so far or, as one student put it, it only gets you “to the station” – that is entry into university, but once there, there are the enduring racializing and marginalizing structures that will have to be negotiated, and which first generation university students may not be familiar with, prepared or equipped for. This situation sometimes or often leads to disengagement – in other words the beginning of the dropout process. The point is that dropout does not just happen, it is “a process of progressive academic disengagement that often traces back to children’s earliest experiences at school” (Alexander et al, 2001, p. 763). These experiences are influenced by a range of environmental or contextual factors – including community, family, school, friends and so on; as well as “how children come to think of themselves in the student role (attitude) and how they enact that role (behavior) are key

mechanisms through which the press of the broader institutional context gets routed" (Alexander et al 2001, p. 763).

Much of the research on dropouts tends to be about high school students. But connections can be made between the processes of dropping out of high school and dropping out of university or college. As such, the literature about dropping out of high school provides insights into factors that contribute to students dropping out of university. Based on their study of high school students, Tanner and his colleagues (1995) report that students' reasons for dropping out of high school can be separated into three categories: school related, employment related, and personal reasons. School related reasons are often cited as the most common factor for dropping out and include areas such as a dislike of school, lack of interest in what is being taught, and boredom. Interestingly, these are mentioned more often than difficulty with course material. The students most likely to drop out were males, individuals from lower socio economic backgrounds, those doing poorly in school, those in lower academic streams, those stating that they were more alienated from school and less interested in education in general, those working an excessive number of hours while attending school, and those living with single parents. So as these researchers explain, dropping out of school is not as much related to personal characteristics (i.e. young people dropout because they are not motivated – a matter of "blaming the victim"), as to structural factors that include characteristics of schools, curriculum contents, and the changing character of the labour market (pp. 14-15). They advocate that any focus on individual factors must be balanced with structural factors that may lead young people toward dropping out of school. Essentially, the researchers suggest that the "precursors to dropping out, the decision to

dropout, the process of dropping out, the responses to dropping out, and consequences of dropping out all result from a complex interplay of personal, social, situational, structural, and contextual factors" (p. 22). Earlier, Fine (1991) made the point that dropping out of school takes place within a context where the "structures and social arrangements, carved through capitalism, institutionalized racism, sexism, and handicapism guarantee unequal outcomes – despite and through public education" (p. 78)

Dei and his colleagues (1997) make a similar point to Fine (1991), specifically saying that poverty, Eurocentrism, white male privilege, teachers' inabilities to deal with race, teachers' arbitrary exercise of power, and discrimination account for the dropping out or disengagement of Black students from Toronto schools. According to Dei et al. (1997), experiences of racism (explicit and implicit) were constant themes in his research participants' dropout narratives: they also mentioned that lack of encouragement and differential treatment by teachers and school administrators, a school climate that seemed to construct them as underachievers, and feeling alienated and pressured contributed to difficulties, stress and anxiety in school. In such a context, as some students explained, their leaving school prematurely was the actualization of a "desire to be in charge of their own destinies" (p. 178). The words of one student were:

I believe high school, especially, is a processing plant. You walk in there and you're about to be processed and in the end you come out a product, for lack of a better word.

Any Black youth will tell you the school atmosphere lacks respect, principle, values, and invades everything about one's character.... And I just couldn't deal with that. I could not deal with that. I felt, grade after grade, level after level, something was being chipped

away and what was being replaced wasn't great enough. And personally, I just figured I wasn't going to let it happen to me. I could not speak to anyone about it..., not anyone who had the means to do something. And so I left" (Dei et al, 1997, p. 178).

Added to these issues were the students' problems at home, including lack of encouragement from parents, and having to work to support their families or having to help parents. Therefore, insofar as their home situation and the education structure failed to meet their needs, it seems logical that despite these Black students' high educational aspirations, they would come to believe that such aspirations were unattainable in the school system (see Dei et al, 1997).

A pan-Canadian study of first year college students (December 2008) using data from College Entry and End of Term found that students experience similar issues in college as in high school. Specifically, it was found that racial minority students experienced a higher degree of difficulty in both academic and social contexts – they were less engaged in their studies, more financially concerned, less confident in their abilities, and less likely to agree that the college staff were caring people. The study concluded calling for more support services in order that students may gain a better understanding of postsecondary options and preparation streams (also see Frenette, 2007).

Ewart: His Family, Schooling, and Aspirations

Twenty-one year old Canadian-born Ewart is the son of Jamaican-born immigrants and was living with his mother, 8-year old brother, and grandmother in a house in the west end of

Toronto.³ Having moved into the house during the summer, it was expected that Ewart would help renovate the basement so that it could be rented "in order to ease some of the financial burden" (September, 2002). But as Ewart explains, he was unable to do as his mother expected because he was in university. Ewart seemed quite close to his mother and often expressed his immense respect and admiration for her, especially as he recalls that at age 17, she was pregnant with him, refused to have an abortion, as his father expected, and chose instead to come to Toronto to live with her older sister who sponsored her. His father soon followed but due to differences and issues of abuse, his parents separated but his father never offered support.

Talking about his mother's commitment to him, Ewart said:

After she came here she struggled with me by herself.... Her youth was wasted on myself she really didn't do anything with her life so a lot of her youth was invested in me so it's like an investment that she made in myself so I kind of want to make something of my life and make her feel as if she didn't waste her time and stuff.

He later added:

The reason I have so much respect for my mom is because she's strong; because certain things my mother had to go through. My aunt didn't have money... my aunt who sponsored my mom...made the best of herself; and when my mom came here she was a nurse's assistant for a while...

³ At about age 11, when his mother was experiencing some family problems, Ewart went to live with his aunt (his mother's sister) and uncle whom he regarded as a father figure. His uncle died shortly after Ewart entered university.

This history of his mother, combined with the fact that she had had a "serious operation" during that summer, and as a result was at home sick, made Ewart reflect with concern on how much he had not been helping her.

My mother doesn't really have anyone.... I'm not perfect sometimes. I don't help my mother as much as I could but I have my times when I have to go by myself because I'm trying to get somewhere so I can't do everything my mother would want me to do so I'm not perfect. I'm not always there for her but I try and I know in the long run I'll be able to give her back something, you know what I mean?...

I want her to know that.... I want to be able to take care of her when she's older maybe, you know, treat her with the same care that she treated me with and I want be able to pay her mortgage and her rent to make her feel comfortable. Give her back you know the satisfaction as her son....

Added to this concern is the fact that his brother's father, his stepfather, left without providing needed support to his brother. In light of his stepfather's failing as a father, Ewart seemed to feel that he has a responsibility for his brother; and was at times disapproving of his brother spending time with his father. Ewart's concern for his family's financial situation was illustrated in his decision at age 12 to get a job. He said that he tried to get a "permit for work from the agency," but he was turned away because he "was too young." However, he was able to get "a lot of odd jobs," pulling weeds from people's backyards. He saw this as working for his mother – not "sitting around doing nothing."

But there were the occasions when Ewart did not fulfill his mother's expectations. Most notably his failure to apply himself in high school, and by his own admission, he went, like many Black young men, from one high school to another to play basketball (see James, 2005). In fact, Ewart went to a new school each year, attracted to each school by basketball. And as he said, "to make a long story short, I maybe got one credit and then I figured nothing's happening this school year. Obviously, my skills everything had increased with basketball but [academically] I wasn't moving anywhere" Because of his poor academic performance in grade 10 at the high school with a renowned basketball team, Ewart, at 17 years old, was not going to be allowed back. In his words,

I did poorly at [Rolson High School] so much so that my mother had to come herself and beg them to let me in for the next year. And the only reason they would let me in is because they knew I played basketball for their school and nothing else interested them. I played basketball for their school the year before and that's the only thing they spoke about for most of the meeting and nothing academic. My mother had to beg them and at one point they said they wanted to let me back but my grades were so bad that they couldn't.... And then my mother had left me outside to sit in the lobby and... I could hear her crying to them and she was bawling....

Ewart was given "a chance" and returned to Rolson High School; and as he said, "there was so much pressure on me that I was playing basketball again." He eventually left the school after one semester and went to Oswald High School (his second high school which he left in grade 10). He started off "doing a little better" – getting good grades – but after a while he

became disinterested. He explained that he needed money; and it was "very hard" for him being almost 18 years in grade 10 with "a lot of 15 and 16 year old boys" who were talking "about a lot of nonsense and the material seemed to be very easy for me at that time because it was under my level." He remembers "hurting" and feeling "very embarrassed" being in a school where everyone his age was in grade 12. As a result, and saying that "the pain got," Ewart approached the guidance counselor asking if it was possible for him to "do some tests" that would enable him to move on to grade 11 classes since he was covering the same course materials for the third time, having been in grade 10 now in three different schools. His request was not allowed, but the head guidance counsellor of the school recommended that he go to night school. He wanted to take calculus and physics, but the guidance counselor recommended against doing so, saying that it would be "too much" for him. In the end, Ewart left that high school and completed his grade 10 English and mathematics at night school. He credits that Oswald guidance counselor for his achievements. As he stated: "She had a big impact on me. Most of the things ...I accomplished I probably couldn't have done it without her because she was my coach.... She'd check up on me a lot and she'd make sure everything was fine for me" (see Landsman and Lewis, 2006.)

While completing his grade 10 credits at night school, Ewart stayed at home, and later found a full-time job working nights (11:30 pm-7:30am) in an automobile plant where he was "making good money." But the commute was a challenge; as a result he borrowed his mother's car to get to work and eventually got his own. And while he had some thoughts of attending a local college nearby, he had not considered the possibility of university at this time. However, he

started to consider returning to school after he received encouragement from his supervisor at work. As Ewart told it, his conversation with his supervisor was an important turning point for him. This is demonstrated in his recall of the conversation; for this reason, it is worth quoting him at length.

I was in the warehouse and there was a Black gentleman, he is a supervisor, very nice guy. And he'd see me working hard every night and would come and talk to me and ask me, "how come you're here?" ... He would always watch me I see him just standing there watching me and I would just look at him. I respect him because he's a big manager in the place and he's a black guy and you don't see that in this industry. There's a lot of those Caucasian guys and other people of different race working as foremen; but he was a main supervising man and I reported to him. One day he took me aside and he said: 'You should be at home sleeping getting ready for school,' it was like 3 o'clock in the morning. And I said: 'Sir, school's not working out for me.' And he told me: 'Listen, when I first came into this industry ..., when I started working here, I was 17.' He was the same age as me. And he said: 'Now, I'm 53, and I've been working here for over 30 years and I've increased in pay, maybe about \$25; but my knowledge academically, I'm at the same level as when I came in here. And yes, I can support my family and I have money; I can do certain things, but inside I know I've wasted a life time and I could have done some things with my life.' And he said, I would suggest to you strongly – he really said that – 'I don't really want to see you here. I want you to go to school.' He said: 'I see you're a young man, you work very hard; you seem to catch on very quickly. And I want to see

you do something else.' He didn't know me and he said that to me. And he said, 'I want to see you try to get yourself in school as soon as possible. He said: 'I'm going to try to see what I can do here to accommodate your shift and see what's possible.' It was really incredible....

At least four times in his full comment, Ewart mentioned this "Black gentleman" who started work at age 17 like him, saying, "I want to see you get yourself into school" because he was afraid that Ewart would make the same mistake like he did. This seemed to be the push that Ewart needed; so within weeks he enquired about returning to Oswald – the last school from which he had dropped out. But he recalled that the school administrators had told "my mother they weren't going to let me in again because I had messed up." Besides he was then 19 years of age, and was living outside the school boundary.

As a consequence, Ewart entered adult school where he struggled when he first arrived. He explained that the environment was much different from what he was used to: as he put it, it was a "very big change. I was around a very serious environment. The whole school was quiet all the time. It was clean all the time. There was no fights and arguments." These differences plus Ewart's half-hearted approach to his schooling – he said that he was taking things "half seriously because I still had the mindset that I wasn't capable" – and the faster pace of adult school (seven-week courses), contributed to his struggle with school and his eventual drop out after "a couple of sessions." However, he returned to school within a few months.

At the time of his return to adult school, Ewart had only 11 high school credits and he needed 30 to graduate. He received an additional two credits for the year that he worked –

something that the school did once the student was over 18 years old and provided a resume – and 4 PLE (Prior Learning Equivalent) credits, as he said, for “outstanding performance.” Ewart saw this as the teachers “trying to help me out.” As a result, he applied himself to his work, taking things seriously and getting good grades. This, he said, led to his reputation as someone who is academically capable and an “intellectual” – someone to whom his peers would consult about academic matters. Understandably, the respect Ewart gained through this reputation ‘boosted his confidence’ (see Milner, 2007). He recalled one significant instance when he was doing well in his grade 12 math and English courses and the vice-principal took the time to publicly acknowledge this. Ewart vividly recalled the occasion, even the weather, which made a difference in his life. “I was outside on the break, he said, “it was a sunny day, and the vice principal came up, he never spoke to me before, I never met him before...., I was outside at the front of the school just relaxing with my friends; and he came and he said, ‘I heard a lot of good things about you.... You are doing very well.... So he came in front of everyone and shook my hand and says, ‘Young man, I have never seen someone jump from 50s.’ I was getting 100s in all my tests. Every test was 100, my math test, my English test.” Such outstanding achievement, according to Ewart, prompted the vice-principal to say that he expected Ewart to go to university. From then, Ewart started to think of university as a possibility. Support also came from the school secretary who was responsible for keeping attendance. She seemingly understood that his consistent lateness was because Ewart had to travel a long distance to school, hence “would keep me straight” and “would always watch my back.”

With his good grades – he even “got perfect on a difficult final math test”, being recognized by his teachers and vice-principal for his academic success, and encouraged to consider going to university, Ewart started to think that attending university was possible, as he said, “I figured I could handle it and the marks would come.” Before then, Ewart had planned on working with cars and possibly attending college, but with his success in mathematics, he thought that he should pursue medicine instead. “Since I was a young boy,” he said, “I had interest in medicine but I never really thought I had the brain to pursue it. I never really thought I had the patience to pursue medicine and the work ethic and the time management.” He acknowledged that he had to be realistic and put in the ‘necessary efforts’ if he were to get support from people (see Frenette, 2007). Having heard about the Bridging program, Ewart’s teachers figured that he would be a good candidate and encouraged him to, as he put it, “cram everything in” (get all his credits), so that he could enter the program before it ended (as that was its last year). In reflecting on trying to meet the entry requirements, Ewart hypothesized that if he had taken his time, like taking one credit rather than two each seven week period, like most students did, he might have received better grades. But, this would have meant another year (January the earliest) before he would have completed his high school credits.

Life in University: Expectations, Plans, Aspirations and Outcome

For Ewart life at university began like every other student, except for the fact that he entered via the Bridging program, participated in a required Social Science course and the

weekly common hour session with other members of his cohort. He was free to take four other courses and major in any discipline of his choice. Given his interest in medicine, and believing that he had the necessary science credits, Ewart elected to major in science. He was registered in four courses: chemistry, biology, calculus, and social science which was required for students in the program. He dropped calculus during the first semester year. His courses were required courses in the first year science program; although, according to Ewart, he was not interested in these foundation courses but instead, wanted to pursue more of the 'applied' aspects of science like biology. As for the future of work course, he was the only science and Bridging student in his tutorial section – something that made him feel somewhat removed from his Bridging cohorts, as well as unable to engage with the course materials as the social science students were able to.

It was not long into the first semester that Ewart's struggles with his courses became evident. In a common hour, Ewart shared with others that he did not feel prepared for the level of study, despite his recent success in his OACs in adult school. As he explained,

I went to the tutoring, help program. And I went to the professor and I asked him to help me with some questions. And he's telling me to go over it myself. And I just came out of this chemistry program two months ago [referring to summer school at the adult high school]. So I just learned chemistry. It's not like it's been a while. And the units and everything that they are using are totally different than what I learned. So the main units... I have never been introduced to.... And I've taken OAC chemistry..... So I feel it's very tough for me. The other people who

were in the help room, like 10 people, I asked if they've been introduced to these units before and all of them said they have in regular high school, except myself and a couple of my other friends who came from the same school I came from. So these units, I have no idea what these are. And tomorrow I have a test and I tell you the honest truth I don't know how to do anything. It's ridiculous. Lecture notes, nothing is helping. Nothing!

In another common hour conversation Ewart explained that in his adult high school, he did not have the experience of doing labs. Rather they did 'dry labs' that were "all theoretical work." While he said he liked those labs and found they suited him at the time, now in university "where you're doing labs, all of a sudden it's very different." He also suggested that 'having to squish everything into seven weeks' (the way it was at his adult high school) was not very helpful. "So for OAC chemistry, for example," he elaborated, "I did no labs whatsoever. Now here I'm doing a lab every week or every other week"

Even though Ewart was only taking two science courses (recall he had dropped the calculus and health courses), he had major problems keeping up with his studies. He recalled that in his first chemistry test he did not do too well and in the second test he received an A. But fearing that he might not do too well in the third test he stopped taking the course without officially dropping it so he received an F. In the second semester, he took another chemistry course and found the first test quite difficult, so for the second test, as he said, "I slept at school and studied for two days." He studied with a friend and slept on the table of the study lounge. He explained that he "was just determined" and said to himself "You're going to sit your butt here

and just study." He saw this as his "mission." But unsure of the mark that he would get on the course, after taking the test, Ewart dropped the course because he "did not want another F" on his transcript. However, he received an A on the test and tried to re-enroll into the course, something that he was unable to do, as he said, "the computer wouldn't let me."

After Ewart dropped his chemistry course, he petitioned and received permission to enroll late in a health course. He chose the course because he thought that he might be able 'to get an A and boost his average.' However, he received only 58 percent on the mid-term test which he wrote without getting the books and admittedly, without having studied – "I didn't have the books, didn't study, I just went off on my own" (Common Hour discussion). Ewart eventually dropped the course because it did not meet his objective of a high grade and no "headache." But by the time Ewart dropped this course, the refund period had already passed and as a result he was charged for the course. This was a common problem for Ewart.

There's like three courses where that happened to me. There's like \$1500 in school fees that's due right now for courses I'm not even benefiting from. So there's Health, Chemistry's another, and I have to pay \$50 or so for Calculus. And there's another one. I don't remember now. I think there's three courses that will end up costing me and I'm not even benefiting from them.

Given this experience in the first year of his program, Ewart resolved that he "can't mess around" with the drop dates of courses, and that once he gets into a course, he will "have to give it everything because it's costing money" (also see Frenette, 2007).

Ewart also did not do well in his social science course, due in part, as he rationalized, to the fact that he was 'a science person' and hence unfamiliar with the discourse of social science. As he explained, "like I just came out of biology and we were talking about genetic diversity and then I jump into... and it's not really fitting in." And it did not help that he received only 60 percent on his first assignment and was unable to complete the second assignment "because of certain circumstances." The circumstances, were, as he later told Leanne, the facilitator of the common hour, that he was in police custody for about six days charged with driving with a suspended license. He claimed that he was stopped by police, not because he was speeding, but because he looked like a "suspicious Black youth."⁴ When Ewart returned to school, he approached his social science professor requesting the he be given a chance to hand in his assignment late and do a make-up test, but instead of granting his request, Ewart was advised, about the third time now from this professor, to drop the course since he was so far behind. Interestingly, this advice was from the only professor who was aware of the program in which Ewart was participating.

This experience with the social science professor seemed to also have motivated Ewart to question the idea of having a mandatory course.

Ewart: ...I know that the director or the coordinator of the project... had a specific reason for us taking a common course but I disagree with that personally, not just because I'm in

⁴ Ewart said he did not know that his license was suspended because he had not received a license renewal notice in the mail as expected. He said that he spent about 48 hours in a dark cell with minimal food causing him to lose weight. He said that he hired a lawyer. This incident caused him much stress.

a situation where it's affecting me, so I'm not being self-centred. But I'm also thinking that in your first year things are hard enough and to take a course that's mandatory for students makes it more difficult. Like in your first year you want to have the choices that would make you feel comfortable, but when you have something that's mandatory, [it's hard] to make your own decisions that would make you feel more comfortable. The other thing is that everyone has a different...like I just spent 2 hours in my social science] tutorial and I participated the entire time but to be honest I was disinterested in most of the things that was taking place because I have limited time to study for my science courses... so right now I have some tests coming next week and I more want to concentrate on my studies and I feel that it's a burden on me, this course. So when I come into this course I feel so out of place...I feel so out of place.... But the course is good for certain..., it would work with some students, but for me it poses a problem.

Ewart's advice was that we who constructed the program should have weighed the negatives, just as we had "weighed the positives" taking into consideration the different or diverse needs, interests and aspirations of the students coming into the program (Hinchey, 2008).

That is not all that Ewart had to say about what he expected from us who work in university. In fact, influenced by his high school experiences in which he was able to get assistance from his teachers, he complained that professors were too busy "doing their own thing" and did not "take the time to help" students. He talked of one professor who was an exception; one took the time to discuss "theories on quantum mechanics" with Ewart. But for the most part, as he described, "You see professors in their room or their private offices and you try

to go and talk to them and they're all too busy and they're always directing you somewhere else"

This issue was part of the common hour conversation at one time. Here is how the conversation evolved with his peers.

Ewart: Like, I would go to a professor and I would see he is doing nothing in his office and I said could you help me with something he's like 'I'm economics or I'm this...etc'.

Laura: But professors usually want an appointment made

Ewart: Some of these guys are laying back in their chair. They aren't doing anything. I just want to find someone who I can share my ideas with. Someone I can interact with.

Facilitator: Maybe that's one way of approaching it is to call or email them [professors] and ask them for an appointment, and ask if you can come in at a specified time when it's convenient for them.

Laura: To them it's a job...it's not their responsibility.

Ewart: I just want to find someone who doesn't hate their job

Laura: They want to be approached in a professional manner, so they want their time [with you] to be by appointment ...

Ewart: If that's the person or the kind of person they are I don't want to be here. I want someone who actually takes the time who actually takes the initiative being there for students. I want to find someone spontaneously one day who I can just find a link with.

Amy: Do you have TAs you can ask?

Ewart: It's not really a TA that I'm looking for; more for a professor. 'Cause I know of some of my friends in other universities who have found a professor to link with and it's given them motivation.

Laura: Like a mentor

Ewart: Yeah someone to help them? ...

Stephanie: Do you have tutorials?

Ewart: Yeah, but my tutorials are the same big classes like my lectures – 600 people....

Even as he struggled with university – his assignments, not getting the help he expected from his professors, not finding courses that were of interest to him, unable to effectively negotiate the administrative requirements so that he did not end up getting Fs on his transcript and owing the university, and unable to avoid parking tickets at the metered parking he used (he drove to school each day) – Ewart also struggled with his home life. He reported that his mother and extended family members did not understand why he spent so much time in school and doing work. He feels that they did not understand the demands of his program and just assumed that he would do well. As a consequence, they were pressuring him to fulfill his family obligation. And it did not help that Ewart did not attend the Seventh Day Adventist church with his mother, a devout Christian. (He pretended to be sleeping in on Saturday morning to avoid going to church). As a result, his mother, according to Ewart, told him that he would “never do well if he doesn't take Christ into his heart.”

For Ewart, university gradually grew to be too much of a challenge. But despite the lack of support, and despite the academic, social, familial and administrative challenges he faced,

Ewart seemed reluctant to blame the educational system and upheld a meritocratic view that, with individual effort, one can succeed in this institution as it exists (see James & Taylor, 2008). Rather, he framed his lack of success and difficulties on his personal situation. As he stated toward the beginning of his second year, "School for me is just wack. It's wack. The school work I think is easy; it's not hard. Sometimes you put in the work you get the marks. School is not the problem whatsoever. I find school came at a bad time with everything I had to go through. I think university is there and the program is good and the professors are good. And there's the possibility to get good marks...." At the same time he admitted, during the interview at the end of his first year, that he might have gone through his adult high school program too quickly, and perhaps then, he "wasn't really ready" for university. But his readiness for university was only one part of the story. Ewart also related that in fact, he had wanted to attend a university with a medical school and a "teaching hospital on campus." He felt that attending the university he had in mind would have made a difference because he would have been "out of the city" and away from the "many distractions [and] many friend and things."

Mid-way through the fall semester in his second year of university, Ewart stopped attending the common hour sessions. But we remained optimistic thinking that he might have taken a break from the sessions. Our optimism was based on the fact that during one common hour session earlier in the semester, Ewart had expressed quite clearly that he had made some mistakes and had learned from them. "I think it's more like a learning process," he said. "No one goes in knowing everything. I think you go in and you learn from your mistakes. That's the best way to learn.... For me, I usually learn best the hard way." Ewart went on to explain that the

situation in which he found himself during the year meant, "it wasn't the right time.... Things happened that I had no control over so I don't see them happening again. There are just some things that are not meant to be.

When asked if he was optimistic about the coming year, he answered "very optimistic."

Nevertheless, by late October when we had not heard from Ewart, the project coordinator called his home and was told by Ewart that he was accepted at a university in eastern Canada and would start there that coming January. His aspirations were still the same – to pursue medicine. We gathered that he did not indicate in his application that he already had a year of university studies. A year later when we called Ewart's home, we learned from his brother that Ewart had not moved east as he had indicated earlier. We have since lost contact with Ewart and are not sure if he continued university.

Concluding Discussion: The Struggle to Belong, Fit In and Succeed

What comes through in Ewart's story is his constant struggle to be accommodated in educational systems that are more responsive to the needs and interests of middle class and white students while subordinating those of working class, immigrant and racialized students. That he sought out a new high school each year on the basis of his interest in basketball, might suggest that he was not as much interested in academics as much as athletics; or that school, as far as he was concerned, was boring, alienating and more concerned about his athletic skills and ability than his academic needs. In this regard, it is understandable that Ewart

would emphasize his basketball prowess in order to gain access to the school, to fit in as he expects teachers and possible peers would expect of him, and to develop a sense of belonging. Having met these expectations, it is possible that Ewart reasoned that he would have been able to turn his attention to getting the education he needed to fulfill his obligation and commitment to his mother, other family members, and the "Black gentleman" who admonished him to return to school (familial capital⁵) – as is often the case with racialized minority children especially those of immigrant parents (see James & Taylor, 2008; López, 2002; Yosso, 2007). It is poignant that Ewart never settled into any of his high schools or university. Going from school to school, and dropping and picking up courses at university suggests that he was always in a process of starting over. That his starting over strategy did not work, likely has to do with the fact that while he might have had the aspirational capital – "the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers" (Yosso, 2007, p. 77) – to help him through his education processes, he did not have the navigational capital – the skills and "ability to maneuver through institutions not created with Communities of Color in mind" (Yosso, p. 80).

Interestingly, on the one hand, Ewart's reasoned that his failure to make it at university has more to do with the fact that he "wasn't really ready" and that "it wasn't the right time" – a reflection of how much he was solely responsible for what is happening to him. On the other hand, he identified that his professors were not very helpful, seemed unapproachable, and 'hated their job.' Indirectly then, he was alluding to the fact that it is not all his fault. He tried to reach

⁵ Yosso (2007) writes of familial capital as the supports that racialized students get from family and community members as they go through the educational system.

out to professors and to get help but that was not forthcoming. This idea of trying to get help as he negotiated school was something that had worked for him at Oswald High School where the teacher encouraged him to attend night school, and at the adult school, where the principal, teachers and secretary worked to support him. Evidently, then, it was much more difficult for Ewart to form a relationship with university personnel – particularly at times when he needed their support. For instance, when he returned to school after being in police custody, the professor used the opportunity to suggest, for a fourth time, that he drop the course. And it did not help that some matters – such as dropping and registering for courses – were mainly done through technology. So not having the navigational capital made it difficult for Ewart. In fact, it contributed to some of his financial worries. I know that the dean under whose portfolio the access program fell, did intervene and assisted Ewart with some of the financial cost that he unknowingly or inadvertently incurred.

Ewart’s aspiration to become a doctor, and in this regard do sciences and mathematics at high school and university is a very important part of his story. Recall that he was praised by his teachers and principal for doing well in his science and math courses, he got As on his tests, and at times was referred to as an “intellectual.” With this profile of ‘success,’ Ewart gained the needed confidence to pursue university. Being a ‘Black, working class, science student’ likely added to the confidence that Ewart developed hence his determination to stay in science even though, by his own admission, he was not well prepared for the university science program. So too, Ewart seemed to have subscribed to the elitist idea of the hegemonic relationship of science to other disciplines. This was quite evident in the common hour conversations where he would

complain of his social science course and his difficulty in finding meaning in what he was learning to his life. And when he complained about his science courses, and his peers would offer suggestion, Ewart would say to them that they did not understand because science is different. This response reflects one of the many contradictions of Ewart – he was the only science student, the only Black person and the one who seemed to struggle most with his university experience. Still he would not relinquish his commitment to science since it is through science that he gained validation as a capable academic student – something that was contrary to the Black student athlete he was in his early high school years. It is understandable, then, that Ewart would feel much pride in his achievements and celebrate the fact that he was a science student. As such, his identity as a student and a Black male was linked to this discipline, making his life in university one of constantly ‘crossing borders.’

In his article, “border crossing into the subculture of science,” Aikenhead (1996) makes the point, referencing Phelan et al, that there are four types of transitions that take place in border crossing: “congruent worlds support smooth transitions, different worlds require transitions to be managed, diverse worlds lead to hazardous transitions, and highly discordant worlds cause students to resist transitions which therefore become virtually impossible” (p. 14). Aikenhead also discusses, using Costa, the five categories of science into which students fall and while Ewart does not clearly fit into any, two that seem to apply to him are “I don’t know student” and “Outsider.” “I don’t know” student refers to a student whose “worlds of family and fiends are inconsistent with the worlds of both school and science.” For such students their education is based on their classroom work since their life outside of the classroom is unrelated to science.

According to Aikenhead, "border crossing into school science poses real hazards, but these students generally navigate successfully around those hazards. They learn to cope and survive" (p. 17). But while Ewart tried to cope and survive, he was unable to do so for he was an "Outsider" – a student whose "family and friends are discordant with the worlds of both school and science," and who typically views "scientists as experts who are always right, drab, and boring" (p. 17), unlike Costa's construct of Outsiders, Ewart wanted to be an insider hence, despite the odds, he tried his best to learn about the subculture in order to enter and fully participate in it but he lacked institutional (professors and other university personnel), peer and familial supports. This would place Ewart in the category of "Inside Outsider" – a bring student with interest in science but is inhibited from crossing the border into the subculture of university science because of the institution's "abject discrimination" (Aikenhead, p. 18), colour-blindness, and professed cultural neutrality.

Unlike the African American females in Costa's study who were identified as being in this category, and for whom border crossing into the subculture of their school science was "almost impossible," Ewart was able to at least get to university believing in his ability at science. But we might wonder about his preparation for doing science at university. What attention did his well-intentioned high school teachers give to his "unconventional" live, his family situation, his experiences as a Black male, and the inherent inequity and racism in educational institutions – something to which his professors at university gave little attention? So while Ewart might have received the necessary credits required to enter university (interestingly this was still requirement even of the access program), the academic preparation needed special

attention particularly for someone whose main interaction with science largely came through his school activities. Furthermore, while access program, and the common hour in particular, might have been important resources for students like Ewart, the fact that the university structure – the disciplinary programs, the professors, the curriculum and all the points of Ewart's interactions with the university – remained rooted in white supremacy constructs of inclusivity, objectivity, fairness, and equal opportunity (Back, 2004), then it should be little wonder that students like Ewart will eventually leave if they are to maintain their constructed sense of hopeful optimism and possibilities. Interestingly, trying not to give in to defeat, and still holding on to the belief in the meritocracy of the education system, Ewart decided to try another university. And as if to hold on to his hard-won high school "success" – such as it was – he declares that in fact, the university he really wanted to attend, was one with a medical school located outside of Toronto.

Ewart's story indicated the need for institutional changes at all levels of the education system. It would be good not to have access programs to enter university but if they are to exist and be useful to students, then there has to be diverse approaches if all students are to benefit. In the absence of supports, something like the common hour, in which Ewart and colleagues participated, seems like a welcome initiative, but as in the case of Ewart, while it might have been helpful to the Arts students in the program, it seemed to have been yet another space on campus where Ewart felt alienated or which created some pressure for him. The fact is, there needs to be different approaches that will be responsive to the diverse needs, interests and aspirations of students taking into account their differences. Moreover, as Ewart's story suggests, high aspirations and determination do not necessarily or always translate into opportunities that

facilitate the desired outcomes, "particularly for students who are disadvantaged by the confluence of race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status" (Louie, 2007, 2232). If then, these disadvantaged students are to be effectively and equitably served by schools and universities then efforts must be made to account for the failure of students, not as an individual and family matter, but something to which all educational institutions, in the absence of structural changes, have played and continue to play critical roles.

References

- Aikenhead, G.S. (1996). Science Education: Border crossing into the subculture of science. *Studies in Science Education*, 27, 1-52.
- Alexander, K.L., Entwisle, D.R., & Kabbani, N. (2001). The dropout process in life course perspective: Early risk factors at home and school. *Teachers College Record*, 103(5), 760-822.
- Anisef, P., Okihiro, N., & James, C. (1982). *Losers and winners: The pursuit of equality and social justice in higher education*. Toronto: Butterworths.
- Back, L. (2004). Ivory Towers? The academy and racism. In I. Law, D. Phillips & L. Turney (Eds.), *Institutional Racism in Higher Education* (pp. 1-6). Trent, UK: Trentham Books.
- Brathwaite, K.S. (2003). *Access & equity in the university*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press.
- Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (1994). Personal experience methods. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (pp. 413-427). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Dei, G. J. S., Holmes, L., Mazucca, J., McIsaac, E., & Zine, J. (1997). *Reconstructing "Drop-Out": A critical ethnography of the dynamics of Black students' disengagement from school*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Denzin, N.K. (1989). *Interpretive interactionism*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Denzin, N.K., & Lincoln Y.S. (Eds.). (2000). *Handbook of qualitative research*. (2nd ed.). California: Sage Publications Inc.

Dooley, M.D., Payne, A.A., & Robb, L.A. (2009) *University participation and income differences: An analysis of applications by Ontario secondary school students*. Toronto: Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario.

Errande, A. (2000). “But sometimes you’re not part of the story”: Oral histories and ways of remembering and telling. *Educational Researcher*, 29(2), 16-27.

Fine, M. (1991). *Reframing dropouts: Notes on the politics of an urban public high school*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Frenette, M. (2007). *Why are youth from lower-income families less likely to attend university? Evidence from academic abilities, parental influence, and financial constraints*. Ottawa: Business and Labour Market Analysis: Statistics Canada.

Grayson, J.P. (2004). Language background, ethno-racial origin, and academic achievement of students at a Canadian university. *International Migration*, 47(2), 33-67.

Henry, F. & Tator, C. (2009). Theoretical perspectives and manifestations of racism in the academy. In F. Henry & C. Tator (Eds.), *Racism in the university: Demanding social justice, inclusion, and equity* (pp. 22-59). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Hinchey, P.H. (2008). *Finding freedom in the classroom: A practical introduction to critical theory*. New York: Peter Lang

James, C.E. (2009). “It will happen without putting in place special measures”: Racially diversifying universities. In F. Henry & C. Tator (Eds.), *Racism in the Canadian university: Demanding social justice, inclusion and equity* (pp.128-159). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

James, C. E. (2005). *Race in play: Understanding the socio-cultural worlds of student athletes*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press.

James, C.E. (1997). Contradictory tensions in the experiences of African Canadians in a faculty of education with an access program. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 22(2), 158-174.

James, C.E. & Haig-Brown, C. (2001). “Returning the dues:” Community and the personal in a university-school partnership. *Urban Education*, 36(2), 226-255.

James, C.E. & Mannette, J. (2000), Rethinking access: The challenge of living with difficult knowledge. In G.S. Dei & A. Calliste (Eds.), *Power, knowledge and anti-racism education: A critical reader* (pp. 73-92). Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.

James, C.E. & Taylor, L. (2008). ‘Beating the odds,’ and making their way in university: The case of three females of immigrant parents.” *Interchange*, 39(2), 221–244.

Knaus, C.B. (2009). Shut up and listen: Applied critical race theory in the classroom. *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, 12(2), 133-154.

Landsman, J. & Lewis, C.W. (Ed.). (2006). *White teachers/Diverse classrooms: A guide to building inclusive schools, promoting expectations, and eliminating racism*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.

Livingstone, D.W. & Stowe, S. (2001). *Class and university education: Intergenerational patterns in Canada*. (NALL Working Paper #36). www.nall.ca

López, N. (2002). Race-gender experiences and schooling: Second-generation Dominican, West Indian, and Haitian youth in New York City. *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, 5(1), 67-89.

Louie, V. (2007). Who makes the transition to college? Why we should care, what we know, and what we need to do. *Teachers College Record*, 109(10), 2222-2251.

Milner, H.R. (2007). African American males in urban schools: No excuses – teach and empower. *Theory into Practice*, 46(3), 239-246.

Morley, L. (1997). Change and equity in higher education. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 18(2), 229-240.

Noon, M. (2007). The fatal flaws of diversity and the business case for ethnic minorities. *Work, Employment and Society*, 21(4), 773-784.

Personal Narratives Group. (1989). Truths. In Personal Narratives Group (Eds.), *Interpreting women’s lives: Feminist theory and personal narratives* (pp. 261-264). Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Polkinghorne, D. E. (1995). Narrative configuration in quantitative analysis. In J. Amos Hatch & R. Wisniewski (Eds.), *Life history and narrative* (pp. 5-23), London & Washington DC: The Falmer Press.

Rendon, L. I., Jalomo, R.E., & Nora, A. (2004). Theoretical considerations in the study of minority student retention in higher education. In J. Braxton (Ed.), *Reworking the student departure puzzle* (pp. 127-156). Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press.

Stanley, C.A. (2006) Coloring the Academic landscape; faculty of color breaking the silence in predominantly white colleges and universities. *American Educational Research Journal*, 43(4), 701-736.

Swail, W.S., Red, K.E., & Perna, L.W. (2003). *Retaining minority students in higher education: A framework for success*. In A. Kezar (Ed.), *Higher Education Report*, 20(2.). San Francisco: Wiley Subscription Services.

The Learning Policy Directorate, Strategic Policy and Research. (2008). *Pan-Canadian study of first year college students - December 2008*. Gatineau: Human Resources and Skills Development Canada Publications Centre.

Tanner, J., Krahn, H. & Hartnagel, T. (1995). *Fractured transitions from school to work: Revisiting the dropout problem*. Toronto: Oxford University Press.

Thiessen, V. (2009). *The pursuit of post-secondary education: A comparison of First Nations, African, Asian and European Canadian youth*. Ottawa: Canadian Labour Market and Skills Researcher Network, Working Paper No. 19.

Yosso, T.J. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community wealth. *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, 8(1) 69-91.