Understanding Misinformation and Disinformation in the Media and their Impact on Black Youth in Peel Region: Final Report

Peel Anti-Black Racism Project:
A project by the Peel Institute of Research and Training –
Family Services of Peel

Table of Contents

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Introduction

The Peel Institute of Research and Training (PIRT) conducted this project to document the existing expertise of individuals and community organizations regarding misinformation as it relates to racism in the media, particularly on social media, and to encourage and identify innovative responses to build awareness and change attitudes. The project had three main objectives: (1) to address misconceptions online regarding racism and conceptualize ways to combat them within Peel Region; (2) to assess the level of misinformation on social media and other alternative news platforms; and (3) to assess individuals' susceptibility to believing information based on their primary news sources. Specifically, the project assessed how misinformation impacts individuals' views and perspectives on racism and racialized individuals.

This project exclusively took place in and focused on Peel Region, one of Canada's most racially diverse regions. The target population was Black youth between the ages of 15-29 (Statistics Canada), as they are strongly connected to the online world and thus highly susceptible to misinformation. This project utilized quantitative and qualitative approaches, including a literature review, demographic analysis, 200 survey responses, seven stakeholder interviews, and a training seminar on Anti-Black Racism leadership.

Methodology

The methodology of this project was guided by the Family Services of Peel (FSP) Framework of Anti-Racism, Anti-Oppression, and Equity and the intersectionality of multiple social determinants of health. This included proximal factors, such as behavioural and environmental aspects, and intermediate factors, such as community infrastructures, systems, and resources. Distal factors, such as the historical, social, political, and economic influences, were taken into consideration, as they influence the inclusion and exclusion of individuals and populations in society.

"Intersectionality" refers to the interaction and combined impact of two or more social determinants on the individual (for example, sex and race). Intersectionality also refers to how systems of privilege and oppression, resulting in various inequities, intersect at the macro-social-structural level to maintain disparities. To determine someone's overall health and well-being, one must understand simultaneously the multiple determinants that affect the individual. The interaction and intersection of characteristics, circumstances, and experiences of the person who has come face-to-face with racial discrimination must be taken into consideration.

A literature review produced various recommendations, which were expanded on through data collection and analysis, and survey results. The findings of this review helped to develop questions which were used in stakeholder interviews, an Anti-Black Racism (ABR) survey, and subsequent analysis of data collection sources. Findings from the literature review, the demographic analysis, survey data, and stakeholder interview data, were used to create an Anti-Black Racism training workshop to develop Black leaders for advocacy.

Demographic Analysis

We conducted a demographic analysis to determine Peel Region's existing demographics, looking specifically at visible minorities and the Black population.

Methodology

We examined census data on the Black population residing within Peel Region and how those numbers increased from 2016 to the 2021 census. Further, we used several secondary sources of information to analyze critical areas such as housing, employment, education, policing, and mental health in the Black community.

There is relevant data related specifically to the Black population that has not yet been released from the 2021 Canada Census, for which we acknowledge limitations. Also, the variety of methods used in different secondary sources of information has limited the generalization of the analysis.

Outcomes

In relation to the analysis of secondary sources of information, reports on experiences with housing in the Black community indicate that landlord discrimination against Black tenants is a common barrier to adequate housing (Public Health Agency of Canada (2020). The data for race and employment in Peel was limited. Yet, we found that Black Canadians experienced more workplace discrimination and had limited occupational choices (Government of Canada, 2020). The data also showed that Black people earned less than most other groups (Government of Canada, 2020). An interesting finding was that Black youth in Canada have higher educational aspirations than others yet lower levels of educational attainment (Statistics Canada, 2023a). Further, within Peel Region, most participants felt discriminated against by police (Peel Police Board, 2021a). Despite these findings, the Black population demonstrated higher resiliency and optimism than the rest of the Canadian population (Government of Canada, 2020).

We selected three figures to show the most significant findings pertaining to the region's Black population.

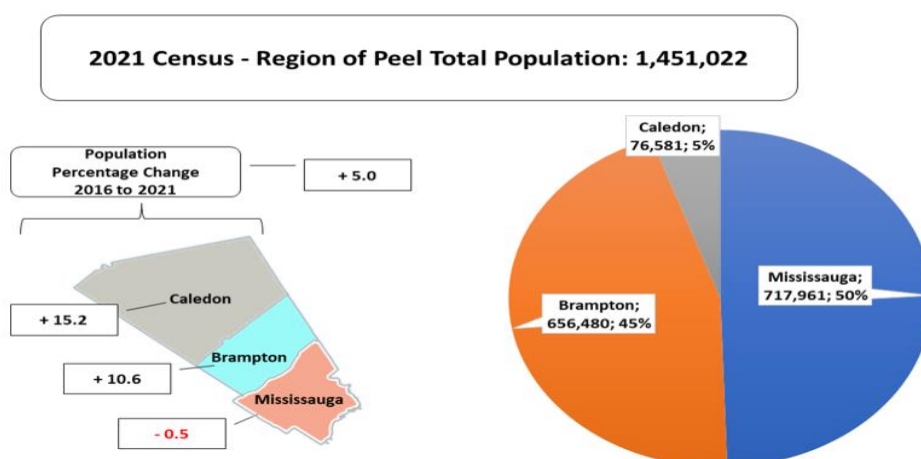**Figure 1: Total Population Growth**

Figure 1 summarizes the general population growth in Peel Region as a whole, and in Mississauga, Brampton, and Caledon in absolute numbers. The 2021 census showed that the population of Peel Region had increased (+5.0) in relation to the 2016 Census population (Statistics Canada, 2022). There are variations among the cities and the town that make up Peel Region, indicating positive population growth in Brampton (+10.6%) and Caledon (+15.2%) and a slight decrease in population in Mississauga (-0.5%) (Statistics Canada, 2022). In analyzing this data, we can draw two conclusions. Firstly, the population is increasing, which means that Peel Region is becoming an attractive community for people to live in, specifically in relation to the significant positive growth in the Town of Caledon. Also, the slight negative growth in Mississauga reflects the urban transformation of this city that is less affordable, especially for vulnerable people.

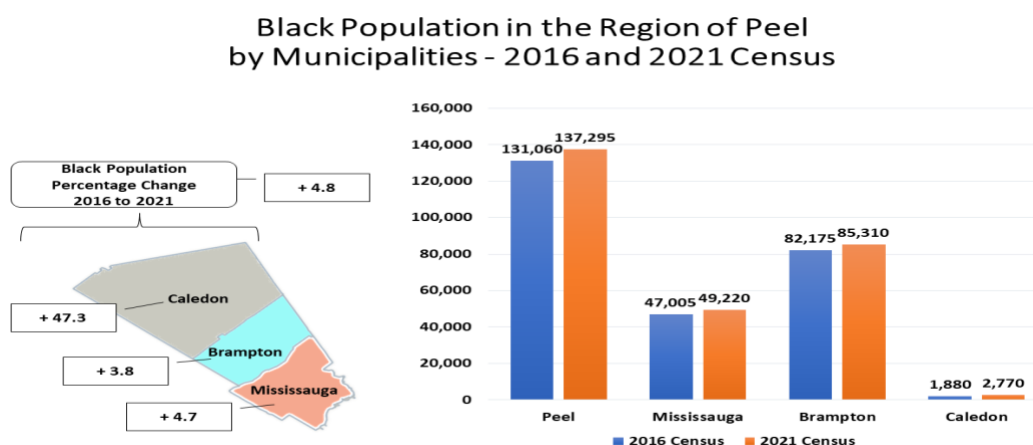**Figure 2: Black Population Growth**

Figure 2 represents the total Black population in Mississauga, Brampton, and Caledon in absolute numbers, according to the 2016 and 2021 Censuses. It shows that the Black population had a total positive growth of +4.9% in Peel Region, compared to the 2016 Census (Statistics Canada, 2022). In addition to the municipalities' overall growth, Mississauga, Brampton, and Caledon each demonstrated an individual positive increase in their Black population (Statistics Canada, 2022). The two main points we can draw from the above figure are that the Black population is increasing at a higher pace in Mississauga and Caledon, and that Brampton has the highest Black population. It reflects the settlement process of the Black population over the last five years (from 2016 to 2021). This can help us anticipate the direction of growth of the Black population in the coming years.

Literature Review

A comprehensive literature review was completed to analyze the impact of racial microaggressions on Black youth in Peel Region. It focused on six key areas: (1) the media's influence on microaggressions; (2) gender differences within stereotypes; (3) educational, public, and social microaggressions; (4) mental and physical health impacts and access to services; (5) educational, economic, and social impacts of microaggressions; and (6) coping mechanisms.

The review was conducted utilizing peer-reviewed articles, other scholarly sources, and grey literature, including theses and dissertations, government and organization reports, and social media platforms, including Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. Scholarly and grey literature were collected through keyword searches using Humber College and Yorkville University's libraries and the Google Scholar Web Search engine. Inclusion criteria for articles included (a) scholarly or grey literature from reputable sources that focused on microaggressions and the impacts of racial discrimination on health, social, education, and economic well-being; (b) articles published between 2017-2023; (c) social media posts including videos, photos, short stories, news articles, tweets, and memes demonstrating microaggressions and subtle racism toward the Black community; and (d) articles and social media posts published in English.

Media's Influence on Microaggressions

To understand the impact of microaggressions on the well-being of Black youth, we examined mainstream and social media portrayals, the influence they have on racial microaggressions, and how they specifically affect Black youth in Peel Region. Further, we looked at the differences between stereotypes seen in mainstream media versus social media, regarding narratives and varying power dynamics. This determined how great an influence the media has on an individual's susceptibility to believe stereotypes about groups of people, including, for this study, Black youth. While the existing literature on mainstream media's portrayals of Black youth is more widespread than Peel Region, as much of the literature relates to Toronto, the Province of Ontario, and Canada, it can be assumed with certainty that Peel residents view the same national and international media. The existing literature in Peel, combined with the social media posts, supported this notion.

Mainstream and social media platforms were analyzed separately to determine the types and levels of stereotyping we see as a society, and they were found to vary. We found gender differences within stereotypes and examined how they systemically impacted Black boys and girls. The literature and social media posts provided important information about how racial microaggressions impact the treatment of Black youth within the school system. Media portrayals provoked an influence on incidents of discrimination outside the school system and affected Black youth engaging or attempting to engage in social and recreational activities.

Educational, Public and Social Microaggressions

Racial microaggressions were found to occur in academic, public, and social areas of life. These included teachers and guidance counsellors assuming Black students were not intelligent, were violent, athletic, or only fit for stereotypical career paths (Briggs, 2021 & McPherson, 2022). Teachers and guidance counsellors were found to discourage Black youth from pursuing higher education; they provided fewer educational resources and attention, which was worse for Black females; and they were found to stereotype Black youth as criminals (Briggs, 2021; George, 2020; McPherson, 2022 & McPherson, 2019).

In public and social realms, Black youth struggled with microaggressions. The most common instances where Black youth experienced microaggressions were being subjected to unfair hiring practices, being dismissed from their jobs, having negative interactions with police, and

experiencing negative treatment in health services (Cénat, Hajizadeh, Dalexis, Darius, Kogan, & Guerrier, 2022). Two other significant areas were housing and being considered for bank loans (Cénat et al., 2022). In social settings, Black youth were often asked if people could touch their hair, or they were asked where they came from (Symonds, 2017). Overall, Black youth in Peel are constantly subjected to unfair stereotypes and low expectations.

Mental and Physical Health Impacts and Access

The literature found two significant issues regarding the impact of racial microaggressions on the mental health of Black youth. Racial microaggressions were found to have minor to severe impacts on their mental health and demonstrated that even the smallest microaggressions create stress (McPherson, 2019). Other mental health effects include self-doubt, isolation, self-hatred, and a loss of self-esteem (Houshmand, 2017; York University, 2017; McPherson, 2019; Briggs, 2021; Briggs, 2019; Briggs, 2018; Sanni-Anibire, 2022). Educational neglect, in particular, includes a lack of guidance, low expectations, and limited to no support; it can alienate youth and their pathways to employment, which can worsen their isolation (Briggs, 2018 & Briggs, 2019). Additionally, anxiety, depression, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and suicidal ideation were common in those who experienced persistent microaggressions (Williams et al., 2022; Sanni-Anibire, 2022; Houshmand, 2017; Cénat et al., 2022; Briggs, 2021; Briggs, 2018; McPherson, 2019; George, 2020). The literature found the experience of racial discrimination to be associated with high blood pressure, cardiovascular diseases, chronic pain, and a higher mortality rate (Williams et al., 2022; Houshmand, 2017; Cénat et al., 2022; Briggs, 2018).

Accessing mental health services was another barrier faced by Black youth when coping with racial microaggressions (Peel Region, 2021). The stigma within and outside the Black community, combined with limited culturally relevant and sensitive services available in the region, results in unaddressed mental health issues (Peel Region, 2021). These factors exacerbate the isolation felt by Black youth, while attempting to deal with their mental health issues. Another barrier for Black youth is the criminalization of mental health by various community organizations, such as the police (Anucha, Srikanthan, Slad-Togane, & Galabuzi, 2017).

Educational, Economic and Social Impacts of Microaggressions

The literature exposed various microaggressions faced by Black youth within the Peel District School Board (PDSB). Significant supporting evidence was discovered, showing that these microaggressions lead to severe systemic consequences. Across the PDSB, Black students have been subjected to academic streaming, overrepresentations in suspensions and expulsions, harsh disciplinary measures, low expectations held by guidance counsellors and teachers who push them toward precarious work, police involvement over trivial matters, and children leaving the PDSB, as it was unsafe for them (Chadha et al., 2020; Newport, 2020; Raza, 2022; InBrampton, 2020).

As teachers and guidance counsellors significantly limit the higher educational and non-precarious career opportunities of Black students, it has a profound impact on their ability to thrive in their economic and social lives (Briggs, 2021). Black youth face huge barriers regarding making a

liveable income and obtaining a pension (Briggs, 2021). These factors lead to greater anxiety among Black youth and experiencing more microaggressions, because of their position in society (York University, 2017). The literature found that those struggling with these specific economic difficulties have personal and family challenges, while also experiencing poor housing and inadequate social networks (Briggs, 2021). Overall, there is a clear path from the media's portrayal of Black youth to their educational and social opportunities. This results in limited career opportunities, which therefore decreases their social networks, life satisfaction, and overall well-being (Briggs, 2018; Briggs, 2021; York University, 2017).

Coping Mechanisms

Given the harsh consequences faced by Black youth because of microaggressions, we examined the literature to determine the coping mechanisms they utilize. Our findings showed a high prevalence of positive coping mechanisms. Different forms of coping with racial microaggressions were identified by one author, Houshmand (2017), who particularly examined which problem-focused strategies Black individuals most often utilized when experiencing racism, which were linked to better psychological outcomes. She recognized seven themes under resilient responses to racial microaggressions. Fostering a sense of belonging was one of the most effective coping mechanisms (Houshmand, 2017).

Despite the negative aspects of social media, the literature found that Black youth used it as a tool to cope with their reality, by allowing themselves to filter through the content they wanted to see and avoid viewing negative representations of themselves (McPherson, 2019). Further, safe spaces have been created online to engage Black youth in topics that impact their lives while helping them resist negative narratives and representations (McPherson, 2019).

For the full literature review, please see the following link: https://fspeel.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Final-FSP-ABR-Literature-Review-1.pdf

Survey Analysis

The following section outlines some of the key findings that came out of the survey responses.

Methodology

To obtain further information about the three project goals, a survey was conducted. An anonymous online survey was performed in February 2023, and 200 people living within Peel Region responded. 99% of the survey participants were Black youth, with nearly 90% between the ages of 20 to 29. The survey covered general demographic characteristics, perceptions about anti-Black racism in Peel, opinions on how to combat racism in the region, and their experiences with anti-Black racism in school and in the community.

Survey Outcomes
Education

Most participants' highest level of completed education was a college, CEGEP, or other non-university certificate or diploma. The second highest was a university certificate or diploma below

bachelor level, followed by primary school, then high school. Zero participants had a Ph.D., only four had a master's degree, and seven had a bachelor's degree. When asked if they had experienced or were aware of overt or subtle racism in the Peel District School Board, over 75% of participants said "yes". Additionally, 54 participants said that school was where they most often saw racism occurring, while most participants (109) said that racism was most experienced within the community. Some notable quotes that stood out regarding Black youths' experiences in school within the PDSB were as follows:

- *"I feel like when you're black you have to go the extra mile whereas if you're white your route is a lot easier not to mention the favouritism that happens in school is disgusting just because of your ethnicity or background skin colour but it is what is it's never going to change."*
- *"I wish there was more inclusion and more guidance provided in school."*

Despite these quotes, many students shared highly positive stories about their experiences in the PDSB. Opinions included:

- *"The critical thinking skills I developed in school have been essential in my future decision-making processes."*
- *"Participating in entrepreneurship projects in school helped me develop an entrepreneurial mindset which has influenced my future career choices."*

Most quotes were positive and discussed the skills, experiences, and opportunities these students had developed during their time in the PDSB. However, the negative quotes discussed how much more work needs to be done to dismantle racism. They revealed how students' personal experiences of being bullied have motivated them to advocate for social justice.

Employment, Housing, and Policing

Participants were asked about employment, housing, and policing. They found overt and subtle racism in all areas, with housing and interactions with the police being the most common. The results showed that racism is highly prevalent and deeply embedded within Peel Region institutions.

Main Expressions of Racism

Participants were asked where they most frequently see racism, and 150 replied "in-person", while 50 chose "online". Regarding in-person interactions, microaggressions were the most common, followed by exclusion from social groups or activities. Direct racism was less common, and racial profiling and implicit/unconscious bias were rare. Microaggressions were also the most common online, yet direct racism was the second most common, likely because of the anonymity that social media provides. Exclusion was significantly less common online yet more prevalent than implicit/unconscious bias and racial profiling. Participants were also asked if they saw more racism on mainstream or social media, and the majority (166) said mainstream media, including movies and television.

These two quotes demonstrate how microaggressions occur in the daily lives of Black youth in Peel Region:

- *"I've seen in school in college that where some teachers would outright help some students more than others one teacher once during the exam when most of the students had finished their exams helped and gave one girl the answers to the test which is, of course, unfair but some teachers favour some students more because of their skin colour or ethnicity it's just life."*
- *"My sister had a teacher of hers told her she would not become a nurse when applying to post-secondary schools. I'm not sure if that was racism but I feel that was very inappropriate to tell a student that."*

Anti-Black Racism in Peel Region and How to Combat It

Interestingly, less than a quarter of the participants selected 'Yes' when asked if they believed anti-Black racism is a pressing issue in Peel Region. Most participants (137) said, 'Somewhat'. Further, most participants were somewhat optimistic about their future (133) or very optimistic (30). The description by most participants regarding their overall health and mental health as being "excellent" or "very good" partially supports this data.

Although anti-Black racism in Peel Region was cited mostly as 'somewhat' of an issue, nearly 60 participants shared their ideas about combating it. Their answers were significantly diverse. This shows the need to address racism in all of Peel's institutions, to encourage individuals to educate themselves, and to have them challenge their implicit biases. Specific recommendations included better community supports; engagement and open dialogue; safe spaces for marginalized communities; diversity and inclusion training; education on Black history and the negative impacts of racism; and encouraging advocacy. Recommendations were made to encourage individuals to challenge stereotypes, misconceptions, and the concept of privilege. It was suggested that people educate themselves and speak out against racism and discrimination.

Stakeholder Analysis

The following section outlines key findings that arose from the stakeholder interviews.

Methodology

Seven stakeholder interviews were conducted to collect participant data through open-ended questions about the experiences of Black youth in Peel Region, particularly about anti-Black racism. Stakeholders were selected from a list of the leading community organizations within the region.

Outcomes of Stakeholder Interviews

Exclusion and Discrimination

Exclusion and discrimination were found across Peel Region institutions and, also, online. The three main exclusion areas where Black youth felt a sense of not belonging, were on mainstream and social media, in society, and among peer relations. The overarching theme resulting in

exclusion and discrimination was the media's representations of Black youth. Specifically, youth struggled to come to terms with their own identities, that do not match the media's stereotypes. The occurrences of microaggressions toward Black youth in the region are a form of exclusion and discrimination. Microaggressions influence how Black youth see themselves. Examples of these microaggressions included people touching their hair, calling them names, and questioning their worth because they were not athletes or models, which are commonly considered stereotypes.

Further, there are notable differences between mainstream and social media. Mainstream media is dangerous, as individuals in power determine the narrative about groups of people. Dagma Koyi, Founder and Director of REST Centres, talks about the impact of mainstream media on Black youth:

> *So, I think it just trickles on society on the whole because of the way it's highlighted through mainstream media. And so, it gives everybody this perceived notion that all Black people are maybe criminals, if you will. And again, because of all the work and the advocacy that has been done against Anti-Black Racism, when you have the knowledge, you begin to see the role of mainstream media and the role it plays in enforcing those negative narratives about the Black community...If you're not knowledgeable about it, you will not see it or you will not know it.*

However, social media allows any individual who wants to publicize their opinion the capability and the platform on which to do so. The risk is that Black youth are assaulted with millions of opinions, many of which are discriminatory and ignorant, just by logging onto their socials. This can result in youth realizing that they are treated differently because of their skin colour and are held to different standards for the same behaviour. If Black youth see that most of society is saying something about someone who looks like them, they can find it hard not to take it personally. Social media was also found to help youth feel that they fit in or reinforce that they do not. However, social media is a further issue because there is no regulatory body to determine what is racist and no one to pronounce that racism is unacceptable on their platform.

Since the stakeholder interviews focused on the experiences of Black youth, most of the conversation focused on incidents within schools. Nevertheless, the stakeholders disagreed with the notion that most racist incidents occurred in schools. Although exclusion, microaggressions, and occasionally blatant racism, occur in schools, these are also seen in broader society. In schools, there were stories of children being told not to associate with Black children and of Black children being isolated, looked at, and associated with differently, which affected their relationships with their peers. In broader society, exclusion showed up in different ways. For example, when seeking mental health support or attending parenting classes, Black people found themselves not being represented in what was being taught. This often results in feeling missed out, ignored, invisible, or not belonging in those spaces. Usually, it is not blatant, which is best summed up in this quote from Afia, who works for the Free For All Foundation:

I wouldn't say it's blatant racism. I think it's not being included but not be included. Nobody's saying you can't join in because you're black, they're not considering your context. So, it's like the standard is like the white standard, and they haven't considered anything outside of that.

Services need to be developed with various perspectives and life experiences in mind. One of the most considerable barriers is that very few people in leadership roles have conversations about this.

Systemic Issues

In Peel Region, nearly all stakeholders mentioned systemic issues as one of their biggest concerns. While excluding and discriminating on an individual level and in media is exceptionally harmful, decisions made at a systemic level result in belief systems held by individuals about Black youth. Additionally, systemic oppression has more significant consequences, which can be more challenging. It can result in life-threatening barriers for Black youth, that reduce the quality of life and ability to succeed in society. Systemic issues that were repeatedly brought up included barriers to healthcare, the child welfare system, problems in school, and housing.

Discussion was held about the disproportionate disadvantages encountered by Black people in Peel Region's healthcare system. A major concern was the lack of Black healthcare service providers. There is a fear surrounding Black people seeking treatment and worrying they will not get the services they need because of systemic risk. Andre Rose, Director of the Walnut Foundation, stated:

And for me personally, too, as you were alluding to earlier, asking me is that when I've gone to the hospital and I've seen other faces than my face, sometimes it worries me, like, oh my God, am I going to get the kind of care that I am supposed to get?

He further emphasized this point by demonstrating how underrepresented the Black community is within Peel by saying:

We realize that there is only one black urologist in Ontario.

The child welfare system is another area that not only diminishes the quality of life for those within it, but also exposes them to additional exclusion and discrimination, including microaggressions. Parents of Black youth who are trying their best to support their children and who attend parenting classes while their children are in the system, are still disadvantaged, despite doing everything they are told. Within the child welfare system, children experience racism from their service providers and caregivers. Being put in places where their cultural identity or upbringing is not understood, being treated differently because of their skin colour, experiencing blatant racism and microaggressions, and being over-represented in the child welfare system, result in Black youth developing layers of trauma, leading to severe mental health issues.

Another significant systemic issue brought up during interviews was within the school system. According to the stakeholders, the reason that racism remains prevalent within the PDSB is that

those in leadership positions, those creating the curriculum, and those teaching Black youth are mostly non-Black individuals who do not fully comprehend Black history or Black experiences. Over-policing in schools is another barrier that creates an unsafe environment for Black youth and results in severe consequences. Further, statistics show that Black male youth are not graduating high school at the same rate as other students, and they lack access to post-secondary education. This happens because the knowledge of how to achieve these educational goals is often limited for them.

Finally, it was repeatedly mentioned that being Black and having black skin was a significant barrier for Black youth. Housing was one area where that was very obvious. Many landlords refused to rent to Black youth, despite the active involvement of REST Centre, an organization that helps youth secure housing. Landlords feared that Black youth were involved in gangs or drugs or were inherently violent. These systemic issues may be related to stereotypes seen on mainstream and social media. Black youth are portrayed negatively in a manner that significantly diminishes their opportunities and impacts the way they are perceived, even when they do not fit those stereotypes.

Mental Health and Barriers

The final theme found throughout the interviews was mental health issues due to experiencing racism, which is also related to the second theme of systemic issues. The first significant concern regarding mental health is that poor mental health is prevalent among those who experience racial discrimination and blatant racism on both systemic and individual levels. The second issue is that within Peel Region, there is a lack of services for Black youth; and the existing services are either underfunded, cannot address Peel's Black community's mental health needs, or those seeking help have had traumatic experiences within the system. Nikima from REST Centre referred to a conversation held with a youth client who had become severely mentally depressed:

> *We had a client recently who asked literally, how do they expect me to survive if they are withholding and making my allowance so difficult to access. He literally asked that question, what do they expect me to do? And this is a youth who has made serious strides in improving his social situation. But then he asked, based on the systematic barriers that he's facing, what is the expectation? How can you not expect me to fall back where I'm coming from?*

Regarding mental health services, the issue is not simply the lack of services, but the lack of culturally sensitive services in Peel Region. When Black youth and their parents seek services to help them improve their mental health or quality of life, there is often a waitlist for a Black therapist or service provider. Similarly, some stakeholders debated the idea of sending their clients to drive two hours away to seek proper help. It was also mentioned that it is common for clients to specifically request Black clinicians to work with them, due to negative past experiences. Black individuals want to see someone who looks like them while seeking support, as they do not have to teach or explain their lived experiences with their service provider. Nikima summed this up:

> *Well, I think we have recognized struggles in terms of mental impacts of just having to navigate services which they come upon barriers simply because of being Black. So, while you might not have a direct racist remark, etc., because of the experiences that you would have faced on account of being Black, it then leads to those situations where they are suffering from different levels of poor mental health. Right. So, we are seeing that and increasingly so because the structures are not in place to allow clans like ours to easily navigate what they're facing.*

ABR Training Workshop

Methodology

We held the FSP Black Youth Innovation and Advocacy Project Training Workshop at Family Services of Peel on April 1, 2023, from 10 AM – 4 PM. The workshop was primarily developed to train Black youth interested in leadership and advocacy, but other community stakeholders and a few staff members from FSP also attended. We created an Eventbrite page to advertise the training workshop and also promoted it within FSP. We actively recruited participants from Celebration Square, and used our own networks. The number of tickets was limited to 50 to ensure an intimate and selective audience. PDSB students and staff comprised the majority of our nearly 50 participants, with some of our stakeholders in attendance as well.

We developed three modules using the FSP Framework of Equity, Anti-Oppression and Anti-Racism, and the intersectionality of the social determinants of health. Module One focused on distal factors, specifically racism, colonialism, and sexism, in addition to Black history and contemporary Black leaders. Module Two examined institutional and systemic racism as intermediate factors. This module analyzed how a chance historical event led to a rigid social system comprising white control over Black individuals, discriminatory laws, poverty, lack of education among Black people, and cultural prejudices. It looked at the barriers Black people face in home ownership, banking, employment, healthcare, immigration, and education. Finally, Module Three looked at proximal determinants, particularly the impact of microaggressions. It discussed what microaggressions are, how to respond to them, mainstream media's depictions of Black people, and microaggressions on social media. It also demonstrated the impacts of microaggressions on mental health, the existing barriers regarding accessing mental health services in Peel Region, and how to cope with them.

We also created quizzes and activities for each module. The quizzes were intended to test the participants' knowledge of the material, and the exercises helped the participants build skills. The first activity focused on intersectionality by having participants address their intersecting identities. The second activity asked participants to find what Black struggle they were most interested in fighting, to identify their leadership qualities, and to get acquainted with another person in the room to share their ideas and to network. Finally, the third activity focused on having the participants set SMART goals for what they would like to accomplish in the first month of their activism and to develop ways to take care of their mental health during that time.

We also created printout resources for each participant that included a land acknowledgment, copies of the activities, Black leadership funding and grant opportunities, documents on how to respond to microaggressions, a handout for mental health and Black-focused organizations and services, and a QR code to our project's webpage to view the reports we created. We also provided each participant with a certificate of completion and $50 compensation.

Outcomes

The execution of Module One was primarily lecture-based. We conducted a quiz with the audience and then explained the activity, allocating enough time for the participants to complete it. Module Two began in lecture format and finished after an hour-long discussion led by the audience. The discussion focused on the most critical areas for advocacy within the region. It included how to combat racism within institutions, as well as on an individual level. The discussion was rich, with so many different perspectives, and it had to be cut short.

Module Three opened with an emotional video of a study of how young children already internalized racial stereotypes about beauty, worth, and goodness. This was followed by a debriefing discussion, focusing on the participants' feelings about the video. Then, we presented how microaggressions were defined. Once we discussed how to respond to microaggressions, another hour-long discussion ensued with diverse opinions on how and when to respond to different forms of racism and what is considered appropriate in different situations. Once again, we had to cut the discussion short. We ended the module by briefly covering the impacts of mental health, accessing mental health services, and coping mechanisms. The conversation replaced the second and third activities, which became even more relevant to our audience.

Once the modules were complete, three poems were read which touched on the themes of racism and resilience. This led into our Collective Creation Workshop, which was facilitated by two dancers who were hired from Etnias Collective. The facilitators instructed the participants to get into four groups and create a dance based on the poems to demonstrate their impact. The dancers provided props that were culturally representative of Afro-Caribbean culture. After they had practiced, each group performed their dance for the audience. The workshop ended with cake and sparkling juice, and the participants received their certificates and cash.

The outcome of the workshop was extraordinary. The PDSB students used this workshop as a networking event. The PDSB teachers and staff found it very useful and discussed being able to apply what they had learned in their schools. We received very positive feedback, and the facilitators were approached by several participants asking for a follow-up workshop to continue their learning. Further, the most complimented aspect of the workshop was the safe environment, in which everyone felt comfortable to express their unique viewpoints.

Recommendations

We have developed recommendations to help prevent the spread of misinformation and disinformation in Peel Region. These recommendations are largely based on the data gathered from our stakeholder interviews and survey.

Firstly, we recommend that a two-step process take place within schools and organizations across Peel Region. Education on racism is crucial, yet it is hard to see actual change without a real-world application. For example, applying the knowledge of how racism particularly impacts racialized individuals in programs and services, ensures that they meet the needs of those for whom they are developed. We suggest that when creating policies, programs and services, the individuals they are being created for are consulted, to ensure they accurately address their needs. Genuine consideration of feedback from communities can guarantee that policies, programs, and services will produce strong results and help develop a healthy rapport with the people they seek to serve, thus creating trust and real change.

A primary concern cited by one of our stakeholders was that non-racialized individuals typically run projects intended to help or work with racialized individuals. Often, they do not fully understand the experiences of the people they serve. Therefore, we recommend that the government assist in making services more accessible, and that funding is provided for culturally sensitive services. Firstly, one of the most significant issues raised was that when Black and other racialized individuals sought support from services, they were traumatized due to not receiving culturally sensitive services. Whether they were seeking social or child welfare assistance or were attending parenting classes, Black and other racialized individuals found they were excluded from the content or had their concerns and needs dismissed by those providing the services. Thus, we suggest that more Black and racialized individuals are provided opportunities through funding, education, and programs that improve their ability to enter prominent community positions to serve those in need.

Similarly, the organizations and services already run by Black and racialized individuals are often severely underfunded. They could accomplish significant positive work, with more funding. Further, building partnerships with stakeholders should be promoted. Partnering with organizations run by racialized individuals can ensure that programs and projects benefit those for whom they are intended.

Another recommendation applies specifically to youth and the PDSB. As misinformation and disinformation are prevalent in mainstream and social media, which youth engage with significantly, it is crucial to have education within the school system that challenges stereotypes and holds those accountable who use microaggressions and other forms of racism against Black and other racialized youth. We recommend that this education teach why racial stereotypes are wrong. It should educate youth on how to avoid online negativity. It should also demonstrate the short and long-term consequences of racial microaggressions and encourage inclusion and learning

about other cultures and races. Further, we suggest increasing the number of programs within schools run by individuals with specialized knowledge of the unique challenges and life experiences of Black and other racialized individuals. Often, teachers and other school staff do not know how to engage with racialized children; therefore, these children are pushed toward community services or receive harsh disciplinary consequences. This places a significant strain on the parents and caregivers, and often they do not have the time or have already had traumatic experiences from these services and feel lost as to what to do. Increasing the number of Black and other racialized teachers, guidance counsellors, and program staff can help these students feel seen and heard and reduce any challenging issues they may experience in school.

Finally, we recommend that more funding be provided to anti-racism workshops that develop leaders within vulnerable communities. We also recommend workshops that educate non-racialized individuals on the history of racism, on microaggressions, and on other forms of racism, to help them challenge stereotypes and promote inclusivity. Similarly, funding for safe spaces for vulnerable communities is suggested. These spaces can help individuals from vulnerable communities have a place where they can engage with like-minded individuals, while challenging stereotypes, building their confidence, and strengthening their cultural identity.

Conclusions

This project highlighted issues faced by Black youth in the Region of Peel stemming from media portrayals of Black people resulting in microaggressions, stereotyping and systemic discrimination. The Region of Peel is highly diverse and racialized, yet this is the first in-depth review of microaggressions in the Black community. As the Black population represents Peel's second largest visible minority, we were able to gather rich data across social media and in the academic literature on the frequency and severity of microaggressions. In addition, we collected demographic data about the Black population in Mississauga, Brampton, and Caledon's which can help determine the locations for culturally relevant services that will reduce accessibility gaps, particularly in mental health services.

Mainstream and social media produced significant misinformation and disinformation about Black individuals in the Region of Peel. Currently, there are no adequate measures to reduce or combat racist rhetoric or discourse online. Systemic issues were cited as one of the biggest concerns faced by the Black community. In comparison to other communities in the Region of Peel, the Black community faces challenges with housing, employment, education, and health in addition to police discrimination.

Similarly, the misinformation and disinformation in media directly impact Black youth's opportunities when seeking higher education and employment opportunities. These media portrayals result in Black youth experiencing racial microaggressions, stereotyping, exclusion and discrimination, impacting their success opportunities. Despite these vulnerabilities, the Black community continues to grow, demonstrating resilience and optimism.

A wealth of resources including this literature review are available that can guide institutions at all levels in making the appropriate changes to create equity for the Black community. However, these resources are rarely consulted when developing programs and services for Black people. A lack of knowledge integration results in the needs of Black individuals being disregarded, unintentionally or intentionally.

It is our hope that this project contributed to the awareness on the types of misinformation and disinformation within the media so that individuals can recognize and combat harmful stereotypes as they see them. Additionally, we hope those within the education system and other regional institutions implement training and education to better educate about microaggressions and hold those who use microaggressions against Black youth accountable.

To conclude, the information we gathered is a significant starting point for further research, workshops, and initiatives that will continue to provide education, challenge stereotypes, and increase the inclusion of Black youth within society.

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