The Effects Of Ontario’s Safe Schools Policy On Racialized Students  
(2000-2013) 

By 

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore how Ontario’s school safety policies influenced the educational experiences of racialized students between 2001 and 2013—a time period during which Ontario’s school safety policies underwent a philosophical shift from more punitive measures toward a more progressive discipline approach. To fulfill this purpose, I conducted a systematic policy analysis of the Safe Schools Act (SSA, 2000), Progressive Discipline and School Safety Act (PDSS, 2007), Keeping Our Kids Safe at School Act (KOKSS, 2009), and the Accepting Schools Act (ASA, 2012). I also engaged the voices of 20 self-identified racialized youth from Ontario’s two largest metropolitan areas (Toronto and Ottawa) who were suspended and/or expelled from Ontario public schools between 2001 and 2013, half of whom were excluded from school prior to and half after PDSS went into effect on February 1, 2008.

Drawing from multiple data sources, findings indicate that, although safe schools legislation in Ontario changed from a punitive approach employed between 2000 and 2007 to a progressive discipline and restorative practice approach between 2008 and 2013, there was still disproportional suspension and expulsion of racialized students. The number of students being suspended and expelled from Ontario schools has decreased since PDSS (2007) was put in place (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013a, 2013b). However, far too many students who experience exclusion from schools under these policies become increasingly disengaged from education.

Racist, sexist, ableist, and homophobic ideologies still occupy the social structures in which racialized students, teachers, school administrators, school safety
policymakers, and safe schools legislation all exist. These ideologies have historically resulted and continue to result in the inequitable treatment of racialized students in Ontario’s public education system, as seen through the eyes of 20 self-identified racialized students who participated in this study.
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What an amazing roller-coaster ride! This beautiful journey would have been impossible without my faith in a Being that is larger than me and this Earth we occupy. While this dissertation is mine, the doctoral degree that accompanies it truly belongs to my family, who have done everything in their power to help me manage to the finish line—with my passion, humour, and humility intact.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my Family. “Love, like the ocean, is vast and forever” (JG).

Daddy would be proud of us.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ............................................................................................................................... i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .......................................................................................................... iii
DEDICATION ............................................................................................................................ vii
TABLE OF CONTENTS ........................................................................................................... viii
LIST OF TABLES ................................................................................................................... viii
LIST OF FIGURES ................................................................................................................ xiv
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................... 1
  Purpose and Research Questions ......................................................................................... 2
  Rationale of Study ................................................................................................................ 2
  The Researcher ..................................................................................................................... 5
  Definition of Key Terms ...................................................................................................... 6
  Approach to Policy in this Study ......................................................................................... 7
  Overview of the Study ......................................................................................................... 8
CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK ........................................................................... 10
  Social Constructionism ....................................................................................................... 13
  Realism ............................................................................................................................... 16
    Social Values ..................................................................................................................... 18
    Justified Judgments and Subjective Realities ................................................................. 20
  How the Conceptual Framework Works in this Study ....................................................... 23
CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW ...................................................................................... 27
  Mechanisms to Address School Safety Concerns ............................................................ 28
    Surveillance Systems ........................................................................................................ 29
    Prevention Programs ........................................................................................................ 31
    Policies ............................................................................................................................. 34
School Experiences of Racialized Students .......................................................... 36
Educational Outcomes ......................................................................................... 37
Disciplinary Experiences ..................................................................................... 41
Creating Safer Environments for Racialized Students ....................................... 46
Examining Safe School Policies ......................................................................... 47
Speaking with Racialized Students ................................................................. 49
Summary ............................................................................................................ 52

CHAPTER 4: METHOD .......................................................................................... 54
Research Design ................................................................................................. 54
Phase I: Ontario Ministry of Education Safe Schools Policy Analysis .................. 57
Data Sources ..................................................................................................... 58
Policy Analysis .................................................................................................. 58
Phase II: Youth Interview Analysis ..................................................................... 61
Data Sources ..................................................................................................... 62
Data Collection .................................................................................................. 75
Data Analysis ..................................................................................................... 78

CHAPTER 5: ONTARIO MINISTRY OF EDUCATION SAFE SCHOOLS POLICY ANALYSIS ..................................................................................................................... 83

Historical Analysis of Safe Schools Legislation in Ontario (2000-2013) ............... 84
Safe Schools Act (SSA, 2000) ......................................................................... 85
Progressive Discipline and School Safety Act (PDSS, 2007) ............................ 88
Keeping Our Kids Safe at School Act (KOKSS, 2009) ..................................... 89
Accepting Schools Act (ASA, 2012) ................................................................ 91
Content Analysis ................................................................................................. 92
Addressing Research Question # 1 Using Bowen’s (2009) Model ..................... 93
CHAPTER 8: DISCUSSION ................................................................. 190

Addressing Research Questions ..................................................... 191

Research Question 1: What has been the nature and state of school safety policies in Ontario between 2000 and 2013? ................................................................. 191

Research Question 2: How might have school safety policies influenced the educational experiences of racialized students who were excluded (i.e., suspended and/or expelled) from school during the time such policies were in effect? ........... 193

Research Question 3: How might have the suspension and expulsion experiences of racialized students influenced school safety policymaking and development in Ontario? ................................................................. 198

Discussion: Multiple Contexts .......................................................... 200

Political Context ........................................................................... 201
Economic Context ......................................................................... 204
Social Context ............................................................................... 207
Educational Context ..................................................................... 211

Emerging Issues ........................................................................... 217
Definitions of “Racialized” ............................................................... 217
Use of Swear Words ....................................................................... 220
Nature of Knowledge ..................................................................... 223

Implications of the Study ............................................................... 228
Implications for Policy ................................................................. 228
Implications for Practice .............................................................. 230
Implications for Research ............................................................ 232
Final Thoughts......................................................................................................................... 234

REFERENCES .......................................................................................................................... 236

APPENDIX A: CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT FOR TRANSCRIBER............... 257

APPENDIX B: RESEARCH ETHICS CLEARANCE ............................................................... 258

APPENDIX C: CALL FOR PARTICIPANTS ................................................................. 259

APPENDIX D: LETTER OF INFORMATION FOR YOUTH PARTICIPANTS ...... 260

APPENDIX E: CONSENT FORM FOR YOUTH PARTICIPANTS ........................... 262

APPENDIX F: INFORMATIONAL TAKE-AWAY INFORMATION ABOUT COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS (TORONTO) ................................................................. 264

APPENDIX G: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR YOUTH PARTICIPANTS ...................... 266

APPENDIX H: YOUTH PARTICIPANTS’ VERBATIM QUOTES FROM CHAPTER 6 ................................................................................................................................. 267

APPENDIX I: YOUTH PARTICIPANTS’ VERBATIM QUOTES FROM CHAPTER 7 ................................................................................................................................. 271
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Target Groups or Populations ..........................................................48
Table 2: Method .................................................................................................55
Table 3: Sub-Themes in Policy Documents....................................................... 61
Table 4: Youth Participants Suspended and/or Expelled Pre-2008 ................... 64
Table 5: Youth Participants Suspended and/or Expelled Post-2008 ...................70
Table 6: Sub-Themes in Interview Data from Youth ...........................................78
Table 7: Sub-Themes in Researcher Journal .....................................................81
Table 8: Sub-Themes across Data Sets .............................................................82
Table 9: Comparing Five Elements across Four Policy Documents ..................94
Table 10: Pal’s (2006) Elements of Policy Content ...........................................105
Table 11: Contexts and Sub-Themes in the Four Policy Documents ................110
Table 12: Youth Participants Pre-2008 ............................................................127
Table 13: Youth Participants Post-2008 ..........................................................160
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework Diagram .................................................................25

Figure 2: Student Expulsions in Ontario’s Public Schools (2000-2004) .........................87

Figure 3: Student Suspensions in Ontario’s Public Schools (2000-2004) .......................88
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

School safety is an ongoing concern in Ontario (Fitzgerald, 2010; Kitchen & Bellini, 2013; Kovalenko, 2012; Mosher, 2008; Raby & Domitrek, 2007; Safe Schools Action Team [SSAT], 2008; Toronto Catholic District School Board [TCDSB], 2015; Winton, 2012a, 2013b) and internationally (Casella, 2010; Chiu & Chow, 2011; Mayer & Furlong, 2010; Osher, Bear, Sprague, & Doyle, 2010; Sewell & Mendelsohn, 2000). Consequently, school discipline policies have become a major focus in school safety research. Moreover, evidence pointing to the disproportional effects school discipline and safety policies have on sub-populations (especially racialized groups) of students has been found across international borders (e.g., Benbenishty & Astor, 2005; Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010; Joong & Ridler, 2006; Skiba et al, 2011; Vavrus & Cole, 2002; Way, 2011).

In examining the effects of school discipline and safety policies on particular sub-populations of students, substantial attention should be given to how students’ social contexts impact their experiences pertaining to school safety, discipline, and violence (e.g., Chiu & Chow, 2011; Gregory et al., 2010; Henry, 1994; Kitchen & Bellini, 2013; Mosher, 2008; Williams, 2005). With social contexts as my main focus, I examined Ontario’s school safety policies and the ways in which they might have influenced the educational experiences of racialized students who attended public schools in two large metropolitan cities in Ontario between 2001 and 2013—a time period during which Ontario’s school safety policies underwent a philosophical shift from more punitive measures toward a more progressive discipline approach.
Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore how Ontario’s school safety policies influenced the educational experiences of students between 2001 and 2013. To fulfill this purpose, I had two goals: (a) to examine the provincial safety policies (2000-2013) and (b) to engage the voices of racialized youth (18-25 years old) who were suspended and/or expelled from schools while those policies were in effect.

My research questions encompassed:

(1) What has been the nature and state of school safety policies in Ontario between 2000 and 2013?

(2) How might have school safety policies influenced the educational experiences of racialized students who were excluded (i.e., suspended and/or expelled) from school during the time such policies were in effect?

(3) How might have the suspension and expulsion experiences of racialized students influenced school safety policymaking and development in Ontario?

Rationale of Study

Racialized students across the world are disproportionately affected by school safety and discipline policies (e.g., Bracy, 2011; Daniel & Bondy, 2008; Gregory et al, 2010; Osher et al., 2010; Raby & Domitrek, 2007; Skiba et al., 2011; Vavrus & Cole, 2002). This effect extends to Ontario; according to a report commissioned by the Ontario government, one group of racialized students in particular was experiencing the most exclusion from school as a result of the Safe Schools Act, 2000 (Safe Schools Action Team [SSAT], 2006). Largely as a result of this SSAT (2006) report, Black male students in Ontario have been put in the spotlight. While this spotlight has led to further
research and program and policy endeavours geared towards improving the educational experiences of Black male students in Ontario (e.g., Black-focused schools; Dei, 2005), the spotlight may have also contributed to stigmatization and criminalization of this group (Daniel & Bondy, 2008; Kovalenko, 2012; TCDSB, 2015). My initial rationale for the study rested on examining the lived experiences of this one group of students, Black male students, with respect to school discipline in Ontario.

However, by focusing on the educational experiences of racialized students (males and females) more broadly, as opposed to only Black male students’ experiences, I realized I would be able to delve more deeply into the social context of students affected by discipline policies by exploring beyond their socially-derived race and gender. With this approach, I developed a more complex understanding of the experiences of particular sub-populations in Ontario. While it is important to study the experiences of Black males in Ontario, “simply categorizing students into a racial group fails to capture the complexity of their social locations, which are also shaped by their gender, social class, home language, ethnicity, and generation” (Feuer, 2009, p. 241). Therefore, it was important for me to go beyond a racial and gendered analysis of one particular group and focus on exploring the experiences of diverse racialized populations, including two participants who approached me self-identifying as both racialized and White.

To explore how safe schools legislation and practices disproportionately excluded people of marginalized intersectional identities, as opposed to solely focusing on racial identities, I borrowed the multifaceted definition of ‘racialization’ from the Canadian Race Relations Foundation’s (CRRF) Glossary of Terms and used it to guide my use of the term ‘racialized’:
The process through which groups come to be socially constructed as races, based on characteristics such as race, ethnicity, language, economics, religion, culture, politics, etc. That is, treated outside the norm and receiving unequal treatment based upon phenotypical features. (CRRF Glossary of Terms, 2005)

Using this definition of the term ‘racialized’ acknowledges that racial boundaries are fluid (i.e., they change with social interactions, politics, and economics) and social facts (i.e., made racial through positioning and discourse) as opposed to being biological facts. The idea that race and ethnicity are social facts derives from critical race theory (Ladson-Billings, 1999). Multiple ethnic groups exist within each racial category, with each ethnic group having its own history and relationship to the larger society (Feuer, 2009).

To comprehend the disproportionate exclusion of Black males and other racialized students under Ontario’s school safety policies, it is important to understand its underlying cause. To do so in this study, there was a need to explore how social facts about phenomena such as school safety, discipline, and violence work together with social facts about racialized students to promote and perpetuate this state of affairs. Acknowledging the role of social values in determining thoughts, actions, and inactions allowed me to understand how and why people operate with different social values, although they live in one physical world. I gained insight into how values shared by particular groups of people are formed and preserved. In acknowledging the role of social values, I was also able to interrogate the social values from which I operate.

My focus on the Ontario context was purposeful, as Ontario’s policy shift from what some refer to as a zero tolerance philosophy (Daniel & Bondy, 2008) to that of a progressive discipline (Bill 212, 2007), one might demonstrate how policy changes have influenced, and are influenced by, the experiences of racialized students.
The Researcher

Following a constructivist (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Schwandt, 1994) approach, I believe that the researcher cannot and should not be disentangled from research participants in the activity of inquiring into social phenomena. We each speak and write from a particular space, time, culture, and historical experience (Hall, 1988), and “culture and context are critical shapers of social research processes, interpretations, and judgements” (Symonette, 2008, p. 279). While I acknowledge that I’ve followed a constructivist approach to an extent, I also acknowledge that in my work I interrogate my own values and judgments, recognizing the problems with some of those values and judgments.

I self-identify with being a Guyanese-Canadian Brown immigrant woman of mixed races. I was born and raised in Guyana until I was an adolescent. Although I am officially a Canadian citizen and have lived in Canada for the past 21 years, I still identify as an immigrant because I lived elsewhere before my family settled in Canada and because of how I am treated in certain social systems in Canada. I am a Brown woman of mixed races because I am biologically female, I subscribe to gender norms of a woman, the pigmentation of my skin is brown, and my mother is of Portuguese and East-Indian descent while my father, now deceased, was of Scottish and East-Indian descent.

My interest in school discipline and safety is rooted in personal experiences in high schools in Georgetown, Guyana and Ontario, Canada. The most significant difference between my Guyanese and Canadian experiences was my interaction with the corporal punishment system that was practiced in schools in Georgetown but not
practiced in Toronto. After immigrating to Canada, I recognized that there were a variety of understandings of what constitutes school safety, discipline, and violence.

**Definition of Key Terms**

Since there may be multiple understandings of certain terms used in the field of school safety research, here is a list of key terms that I employ in this study.

- *Progressive discipline* (Eaton, 2009) refers to giving more attention to the causes of incidents and implanting restorative programs as opposed to exclusionary and punitive consequences.

- *Racialized youth* (CRRF, 2005) include those who are constructed as a race and may experience differential treatment on the basis of race, ethnicity, language, economics, religion, culture, politics, etc. *For the purpose of this study, racialized youth refer to youth between 18 and 25 years old who self-identify with being racialized.*

- *School discipline* (Raby, 2012) refers to a system of rules, punishments, and strategies (including policies) that manage students’ behaviours in schools to ensure order and safety are maintained.

- *School safety* (Benbenishty & Astor, 2005; Skiba, Ritter, Simmons, Peterson, & Miller, 2006) refers to having a teaching and learning environment that is free from weapons, homicides, school shootings, and victimization.

- *School violence* (Benbenishty & Astor, 2005) refers to intentional behaviour that harms or intends to harm the physical and emotional state of people and their properties in schools and on school property.
• *Zero tolerance* (Daniel & Bondy, 2008) refers to an intolerance of violence and weapons in schools. It encompasses punitive consequences for actions including suspensions, expulsions, and full expulsions (excluded from all Board schools).

**Approach to Policy in this Study**

At the basic level, the term “policy” is understood as a general guideline that shapes decisions and actions (Young, Levin, & Wallin, 2006), whereas public policy is often viewed as a course of action or inaction chosen by governmental authorities to address a problem or a set of interrelated problems (Howlett, Ramesh, & Perl, 2009; Pal, 2006). Policy definitions have several common elements: policy is a formalized act; has pre-agreed objectives; is approved and sanctioned by a government, community, or institutional body or authority; and provides some kind of standard for measuring performance (Delaney, 2002). For the purpose of this study, Jenkins’ (1978) definition of public policy is used:

> A set of interrelated decisions taken by a political actor or group of actors concerning the selection of goals and the means of achieving them within a specified situation where those decisions should, in principle, be within the power of those actors to achieve. (p. 15)

Social problems and opportunities are the impetus for public policymaking (Pal, 2010). Furthermore, a social problem is actually a set of interrelated problems, such that it is important to identify and understand the social problem(s) that motivate the policy to improve the policy goals and outcomes (Pal). As such, social problems are usually determined and defined based on social values (Sabatier, 2007). Values are at the heart of the process of policymaking (Stout, Tallerico, & Scribner, 1994).

Traditionally, the process of policymaking was thought of as a set of interrelated stages through which policy issues and deliberations flow in a more or less consequential
fashion from inputs (problems) to outputs (policies; Howlett et al., 2009). In other words, it was perceived as top-down, “stages heuristic” (Brewer & DeLeon, 1983; Lasswell, 1956) framework. However, policymaking is hardly a linear, rational, or sequential process, as identification of problems and development of solutions often manifest through very ad hoc and idiosyncratic processes (Howlett et al, 2009; Stone, 2002). Pal (2006) also acknowledged that the idea about stages in the policy process needed to be further developed to communicate the complexity of the process.

Policy scholars often view policymaking in the form of a policy cycle (Howlett et al., 2009), recognizing that problems are not solved in a systematic or linear manner. Furthermore, there is a need to differentiate the broadest space of policymaking that houses all policy actors as the policy universe from any subset of the policy universe that is involved in discussing options to resolve a specific policy issue as a policy subsystem. Therefore, policy analysis approach in this study recognizes the usefulness of understanding various stages of policy development, including an exploration of the political, economic, social, and educational contexts that are relevant to safe schools legislation in Ontario between 2000 and 2013. The analysis of Ontario’s safe schools legislation in my work recognizes the multifariousness and complexity of this process. This approach also allowed me to simplify a complex process to provide insight into the role of various actors in different moments during the policy cycle.

Overview of the Study

In Chapter 1, I explained that school safety is an ongoing concern internationally and in the Ontario context. Moreover, Chapter 1 provided the reader with the purpose, research questions, rationale, researcher background, and a list of relevant definitions of
terms used in this study. In Chapter 2, I provide the reader with my conceptual framework and explain how I draw from social constructionism and realism to explore the nature of knowledge and, in so doing, frame my research design, data collection, and research analyses. Chapter 3 is a review of relevant literature that examines various mechanisms that have been used to address school safety concerns, discusses the school experiences of racialized students, and provides an understanding of the efforts that have been so far made to create safer environments for racialized students. In Chapter 4, I provide details about the research design, data collection methods, and the policy and interview analyses used in this study. Chapter 5 provides a systematic analysis of the four pieces of safe schools legislation (Safe Schools Act, 2000; Progressive Discipline and School Safety Act, 2007; Keeping Our Kids Safe at School Act, 2009; and Accepting Schools Act, 2012) in Ontario between 2000 and 2013. Chapter 6 presents the findings from the interview data collected from 10 self-identified racialized youth who were suspended and/or expelled from Ontario schools between 2001 and 2008 (prior to February 1, 2008), while Chapter 7 presents the findings from the interview data collected from 10 self-identified racialized youth who were suspended and/or expelled from Ontario schools between 2008 (after February 1, 2008) and 2013. In Chapter 8, I provide a summary of the findings from policy and interview data sets incorporated with the literature reviewed, identify emerging issues, mention implications for policy, practice, and research, and share my final thoughts about the findings and research process.
CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Policy analysts have employed various theories to examine the policymaking and development processes related to public policies (Sabatier, 2007). According to Pierce et al. (2014), one of the key theories used in public policy analysis, relevant to this study, is social construction theory [SCT] (Schneider & Ingram, 1993a, 1993b). The central tenet of SCT as it relates to public policy is the understanding that policymakers’ jointly created understanding of target populations/groups influences all stages of the policy process. Target populations are groups of people that are purposefully defined by policymakers and chosen for policy impact based on the problem definition and the goals of the policy (Ingram & Schneider, 1991). There are four general categories of target populations: advantaged, contenders, dependents, and deviants—target populations are further explained in Table 1 found in Chapter 3. Schneider and Ingram (1993b) recognized the usefulness of SCT in public policy analysis to help explain why some historically disadvantaged groups of people in society remain disadvantaged under public policies that are supposedly put in place to serve the needs of everyone in society. In this regard, SCT has substantially contributed to a critical understanding of the public policy process across various sectors (e.g., health, education, housing, immigration; Pierce et al., 2014).

Schneider and Ingram’s (1993a, 1993b) theory about socially constructed target populations in the public policy process has been especially useful in this study, as it helps me to examine how racialized students in Ontario might have been targeted as belonging to the deviant target population by safe schools policymakers through the legislation. Given that safe schools policymakers’ determination of target populations is
largely based upon social constructions of groups of people, and that SCT has been criticized for being unclear about the primary motivator in the construction of target populations (deLeon, 2005), I found it necessary to explore the knowledge and social understandings that produce social constructions. To do so, it was necessary to explore the nature of knowledge itself to help me investigate what changes are necessary for racialized students to be able to move from the deviant category to another category that would allow them more political power and privileges.

In thinking about knowledge and how it relates to systemic discrimination through public policies, I questioned how we know people as human beings and not something other than human beings. I started to think about the implicit understandings of people, places, and things that each of us has, myself included, meaning beliefs that we assume in deliberation and practice but which we do not always articulate and may not even know that we possess. As I pursued what I think is a deeper question of human experience, I found that SCT was limited in addressing such a question because it is based in social constructionism (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) as an understanding of knowledge.

Social constructionists’ understanding of knowledge is not fully congruent with my understanding of knowledge because their understanding of knowledge is rooted in social institutions, and not in physical and social facts. In other words, social constructionists explain knowledge entirely in terms of social practices and beliefs and not, as I prefer, in terms of facts about how the physical and social world actually are (independently of beliefs and practices). Since this study involved making judgments about my biases and the biases of others, I presupposed a position of radical critique of
my own values and those of others. I have made judgments about social values and understandings as if it is possible to know how such values and understandings could be better. Therefore I am presuming knowledge where social constructionists, for the most part, deny knowledge, namely, as regards values. I was uncomfortable with using strictly a SCT framework in this study because this theory presupposes that truth is rooted only in social constructions, whereas I am presupposing in my critique of my own biases and values that truth is, at least occasionally, rooted in actual experience of social facts, as opposed to beliefs about social reality.

The social constructionist framework in the realm of policy studies acknowledges that frames are alterable through argument and can, therefore, serve as a means to change political support for various policies (Weimer & Vining, 2015). However, this study argues that, to change these frames, we need a better understanding of their roots, including social values and expectations. While social constructionism has been dominant in the field of public policy analysis (Pierce et al., 2014), realism provides a philosophical conception of knowledge that is more congruent with my own conception of knowledge. Philosophical realists have argued that knowledge is justified judgments rooted in physical and social facts, not merely judgments. Using a realist standpoint about knowledge better explains how I have conducted my study of school safety and the experiences of racialized students in Ontario.

In this study, I explored the strengths and limitations of SCT and identified elements of a realist view of knowledge that more adequately explains how I answered my research questions. However, I recognized that I do not have a philosophical background that enables me to defend realism in its entirety in this study. The literature
on this question in Philosophy is enormous, and my purpose here is not so much to defend the view as to indicate that it can be defended and to identify relevant consequences. Taking this limited scope into consideration, I explored realism to an extent for the specific purpose of examining the nature of knowledge and its relationship with human experience and social understandings, as they influence political change. To fulfil this purpose, I drew from John Searle’s (1995; 2010) realist standpoint that all social understandings are rooted in physical reality. Searle (1995) argued that social understandings are maintained by tradition and habit. In examining social understandings, I appreciated the emphasis that Searle (1995; 2010) placed on context (particular time and place that contribute to circumstances) in which social reality (rooted in physical reality) exists. The remainder of this chapter discusses elements of social constructionism and realism that are relevant to this study.

**Social Constructionism**

Social constructionists claim that knowledge/truths are created by people, not discovered, such that human beings’ interpretations of the world produce social realities (Ingram, Schneider, & De Leon, 2007). The social constructionist framework was applied for the first time in policy studies by Schneider and Ingram (1993b) to more carefully examine who constructs policy issues, how they construct issues so that policy actors and the public accept particular understandings as “real,” and how social constructions of problems and knowledge manifest themselves and become institutionalized into policies that perpetuate and disseminate social constructions. Although interpretations might differ among individuals, mutual compromises are often made and shared understanding develops. Shared understandings frequently lead to the formation of rules, norms,
identities, concepts, institutionalized routines, and institutions (Schneider & Ingram, 1993b). Social constructions are often so hegemonic that they are perceived to be accepted norms (Schneider & Sidney, 2009).

Several researchers who draw from a social constructionist framework have concluded that the phenomena of school safety, discipline, and violence are social constructions as definitions of each of them are subjective and influenced by one’s social location, cultural experiences, and school context (Astor & Meyer, 2001; Borum, Cornell, Modeleski, & Jimerson, 2010; Cornell & Mayer, 2010; Delizonna, Alan, & Steiner, 2006). They argue that school safety largely depends on discipline (Osher, Bear, Sprague, & Doyle, 2010). If there is a breakdown in school discipline, the school environment becomes more susceptible to incidents of teasing, bullying, and physical violence.

While school safety researchers point to unexplored or minimally explored explanations for differential treatment of racialized students, the general public continues to be bombarded with messages from mass media and corporations that treat safety as a commodity in the form of surveillance, security equipment, and electronic programs (Casella, 2010; Vavrus & Cole, 2002). By creating a set of beliefs (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) through the use of language (e.g., the term ‘school violence’) in mass media, safe schools legislation, and the general rhetoric used in schools, education as an institution legitimizes its explicit purpose of maintaining safe schools for optimal learning and its implicit purpose of producing obedient citizens to fulfill the broader purposes of society.

In a democratic society, public policies are supposedly designed and implemented to address the needs of the majority of people living in that society (Stone, 2002). These needs and/or desires are influenced by various sources, such as media and political
pressure. These sources often seek to inform their audience of what “problems” and “crises” exist in society (Schneider & Ingram, 1993b).

Shared understandings of what constitutes school discipline and the pivotal role it plays in promoting school safety unite the public in its fight against school violence. According to Berger and Luckmann (1966), such shared understandings are based on the social world created by the institution of education that was passed on by past generations. As such, the institution of education (like many other social institutions that have been inherited by generations) is viewed as unalterable by social constructionists because it is rooted in shared understandings. According to a social constructionist framework, this type of institutionalization (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) means that the members of the public will be unlikely to question the reasoning on which education was previously built, and they normalize the actions of persons with collectively accepted predetermined roles.

Yet school safety policy changes in Ontario have been largely provoked by the public’s outcry about the disproportional exclusion of racialized students (SSAT, 2006). The public’s initiative to file a human rights complaint with the Ontario Human Rights Commission is incongruent with Berger and Luckmann’s (1966) claim that the public tends not to question the institution of education. In fact, effective educational reform, when it has occurred in Canada, has been informed by public input that is grounded in genuine concern for human beings’ well-being.

Berger and Luckmann (1966) do not believe that social constructionism and realism are in opposition—hence, concepts can be constructed rather than discovered, and still maintain that they correspond to something objective/real in the world. It is
problematic that social constructionism claims that truth cannot exist without humans creating it (Bury, 1986; Schwandt, 2003). According to Schwandt (2003), there are a few philosophers like Gadamer and Taylor who support social constructionism but understand that truth, in fact, exists. However, they do not believe that truth is discovered; they believe that truth is created in interpretative practices (Schwandt, 2003), in opposition to how truth is thought about in the realist framework upon which I have been drawing. Although the term “realism” is sometimes a controversial one, I use it in this study to examine the nature of knowledge as discussed by Searle (1995, 2010), Mannheim (1936), and Shotwell (2011). As suggested above, a large body of literature in Philosophy, going back centuries supports this view. It would be beyond the scope of my study to explore this literature in depth. The authors I discuss provide an indication of why, for my purposes, such a philosophical perspective is explanatory.

**Realism**

School safety researchers have discussed the need to employ a thoughtful approach to combine useful extant multidisciplinary understandings about school discipline, safety, and violence to examine their policy effects on racialized students and provide a multifaceted list of solutions to remove the differential treatment of racialized students under school safety and disciplinary policies (e.g., Astor, Guerra, & Van Acker, 2010; Benbenishty & Astor, 2008; Furlong & Morrison, 2000; Skiba et al., 2004). Such an approach would entail researchers seeking to understand how school safety policies affect students by examining how students perceive their worlds and understand how students feel about their perceptions. Additionally, researchers should conduct empirical research into the actual circumstances and conditions that exist in schools.
To recognize the growing worldwide phenomena of school safety, discipline, and violence and to acknowledge school safety researchers’ call for more thoughtful approaches in exploring these phenomena, this conceptual framework uses a realist conception of knowledge (Mannheim, 1936; Searle, 1995, 2010; Shotwell, 2011). A realist conception of knowledge recognizes that knowledge is explained by facts about the world as it exists independently of our subjective understandings of people and things. For the purpose of this study, I hold a realist view about knowledge, taking for granted that when we refer to “knowledge” we are referring to beliefs that are true (independent of our believing them). Some beliefs constitute knowledge but, when realists refer to knowledge, they are referring to beliefs that are true, not just beliefs that are believed to be true.

Alexis Shotwell (2011) builds on extant literature in feminist philosophy by explaining that, when knowledge is produced, it is intimately tied to the social and political positions of the knower. Feminist and anti-racist research is grounded in critiquing social understanding. While each person conducts her or his own life based on social values, we exist together (with different social values in different circumstances) in the same (physical) world. Shotwell (2011) noted there are two forms of knowledge: (i) propositional knowledge (things we say, claim, or test) and (ii) implicit understanding (things that are typically unspoken; things that we know but are unaware of how we came to know them or even that we know them). According to Shotwell (2011), “For something to be unspoken, perhaps unspeakable, is for it to be inaccessible in a significant way—and not only to conventional Western philosophy” (p. xv). Relevant to my study, “Racialization, racism, and racial formation involve significant implicit
understandings; the non-propositional is important to forming the background of ‘race’” (Shotwell, 2011, p. xv).

Understanding that knowledge in itself is not dialectical, but that the process of acquiring knowledge is dialectical, I now provide some insight into social values and justified judgements as discussed by Searle (1995, 2010), Mannheim (1936), and Shotwell (2011).

**Social Values**

Knowledge, in the realist view, can only be achieved when we acknowledge that our thoughts, actions, and inactions are rooted in social values that pre-exist us (Mannheim, 1936). Social values can be explained by social reality, including human reality occasionally. Social values can be wrong or they can be right. My study presupposes the rightness and wrongness, not just difference, of social values. Social values are not static, but are, in fact, susceptible to changes and often do change (Searle, 1995). Understanding the important role that social values play in our thoughts and actions/inactions encourages a rich examination of school safety policy development that took place between 2000 and 2013 under the power of different political parties making decisions that were rooted in particular social values. When we work towards political change or examine political changes, we need to consider the strong relationship between knowledge and political change (Shotwell, 2011). “Implicit understanding can create the conditions for political transformation, but it can also block such transformation” (p. xviii). Furthermore, implicit understanding operates in relation to holding knowers accountable for their thoughts and actions/inactions:

If classist, racist, and sexist practices implicitly define a field, being comfortable in that field involves deploying and benefiting from those practices. The implicit
is significant even—perhaps especially—when it remains implicit. Implicit understanding always moves in relation to power. (Shotwell, 2011, p. xviii)

Shotwell (2011), Mannheim (1936), and Searle (1995) talk in different ways about the nature of knowledge, and they all point out that it is a dialectical, social process, necessarily involving values. The existence of social values does not mean that knowledge, in the realist sense, does not exist; the dialectical character of knowledge is such that, when we do possess knowledge, it is because of social values (Mannheim, 1936). For instance, if we do not have a set of standards that we are able to follow to treat people fairly, we would be unable to determine when certain groups of people are being treated unfairly. It is possible that such standards of fairness come about through implicit understandings of actual fairness, as experienced by ourselves or others, combined with social understandings.

In this study, I use realism as a philosophical view to obtain a critical perspective that benefits the exploration of the nature of systemic racism. When racism is systemic, it is sometimes not even realized as such by those experiencing it or those being oppressive (Fanon, 1952). However, it does not matter if people who are being racist think of themselves as racist (Searle, 2010):

If people are genuinely treating people of different skin color as having a different deontic status [moral duty or obligation]—as having different rights and responsibilities for that very reason—then they have a system of institutional facts. The fact that they do not think of themselves as racist is irrelevant because they are in fact assigning a deontic status to members of the community based on race. (Searle, 2010, p. 118)

For instance, racial stereotypes that sustain White supremacy in societal structures seep into the psyches of many of us and become implicit beliefs, without us even realizing or questioning them. More problematic is that, if our thoughts and actions are based on
social values that are harmful and we are benefitting from our thoughts, actions, and the poor conditions of others to which we contribute, we are less likely to make any changes. To examine a deeply embedded systemic issue such as White supremacy, it is necessary to presume a realist conception of knowledge regarding values, because it is necessary to examine the world as it is, as opposed to how we believe it to be. In the same way, I used a realist standpoint to examine the disproportional exclusion of racialized youth from schools under Ontario’s school safety legislation.

**Justified Judgments and Subjective Realities**

Mannheim (1936) argued that there is no single way to view reality and that social scientists had to be “interpretative” to be useful and insightful. While, as Mannheim noted, we know the world as we do because of social conditions, it is impossible to completely transcend arbitrary biases based on ideology (i.e., ideas that obscure the present by attempting to comprehend it in terms of the past) and utopia (i.e., ideas that go beyond the present and are preoccupied with the future) to know the world. The most we can do is acknowledge and understand those biases that explain our beliefs and theories, and use that understanding to shape our thoughts and actions. Mannheim (1936) acknowledged various people’s points of view of reality and the need to discriminate between better and worse beliefs and theories by identifying whether or not beliefs are rooted in justified judgments (facts existing independently of human beings). For this reason, he defended a kind of realism.

Like Mannheim (1936), Searle (1995) emphasized the possible existence of justified judgments regarding how the social world is in fact, instead of how it is believed to be. In explaining the concept of justified judgments, Searle talked about “brute facts”
and “institutional facts.” Brute facts are not themselves knowledge; brute facts merely explain knowledge. Searle emphasized the interrelationship between justified judgments and subjective realities that created invisible structures of social reality (i.e., taken-for-granted understandings of the world). Institutional facts (dependent on humans and their interests and practises) are sometimes based on brute facts (not dependent on the existence of humans) of some sort or other, implying that reality is not solely constructed by human beings. For example, when we go outside and see a bus, our ability to identify the bus as a bus does not make the object of the bus less present. We recognize the bus because we are creating the image of it in our mind based on its presence and prior understanding of what a bus looks like. When we identify the bus as a bus, this process of identification is based on our ability to categorize—categorizations are dependent on the existence of institutions, created through social practices that create expectations (Searle, 1995), but whatever categories we use do not change the reality of the bus. According to the realist view I am using in this study, our experience of a bus, regardless of how we categorize it, provides an opportunity to revise and make better our understanding of buses.

Physical and mental brute facts are required for the construction of social realities. For instance, the social reality of a high mountain is created by the existence of the mountain (physical brute fact) and one’s judgment (mental brute fact) of the height of the mountain. The construction of social reality is an activity governed by rules. The main form that rules take is, ‘X counts as Y in C’ where X is the brute fact, Y is the institutional fact, and C is the context in which they exist (Searle, 2010). Mental brute facts can be intentional or unintentional; intentionality depends on whether or not such
facts are directed at or refer to a person, place, or thing. Intentionality in the philosophical sense should not be confused with intending/wanting to do something. Instead, “intentionality” refers to the contents of a mental state. For example, a belief in heaven has ‘heaven’ as the intentional matter. As another example, grief has as its intentional matter what the grief is about. Thus philosophical intentionality is aboutness.

An intentional mental fact may be recognized by only one individual or by many individuals. When the latter happens, the intentional mental fact becomes a social fact. Collective intentionality creates social facts. We can say that beliefs are objectively true when they are explained by facts and not just by beliefs about facts, although beliefs can be objectively true also when they are explained by other beliefs that are objectively true, or by values rooted in actual experience, as in the example of fairness above. For instance, some commonly held beliefs about racism possess objective content when they are explained by existing racist circumstances and conditions, and are not just a matter of opinion.

When social facts exist based on social institutions, they are called institutional facts. Searle (1995) defines institutions as social practices giving rise to rights, roles, and responsibilities. Institutional facts can be motivational in the sense that they play a role in how we identify ourselves and our personal aspirations. Governments and marriages are examples of institutional facts.

Collective intentionality, as discussed by Searle (1995), refers to people’s engagement in cooperative behaviour; it involves the sharing of intentional states such as beliefs, desires, and intentions. It is the power of this collective intentionality, as well as an induction process, that allows influences such as the media to shape individual action.
Apart from entities, like media, that blatantly influence our thoughts and ultimately our actions, our conscious and subconscious (implicit) categorization of people, places, and things are loaded with judgments, and an awareness and examination of these judgments are necessary in understanding actions and social problems. In a paper critiquing philosophical liberalism and how it undermines humanist truths, Babbitt (2014) explained the importance of examining how we judge entities to constitute a unity:

Non-identical entities form a unity, like two books are the *same kind* of entity even though they are different colours, shapes, sizes. How we judge entities to constitute a unity, to be a sort of thing, is important because such judgments determine what we understand and how we act in the world. (p. 2)

Individuals sometimes believe that they have made an isolated objective decision without realizing and recognizing how the context (C) has transformed brute fact (X) thereby creating institutional fact (Y)—not only does the subjective experience depend on the objective but the objective is also shaped by the subjective. I return to this point later on, in some brief remarks about how the nature of knowledge is relevant to my work.

**How the Conceptual Framework Works in this Study**

Applying a realist framework to this study allows me to examine implicit understandings (Shotwell, 2011) and social values (based on both brute and institutional facts; Searle, 1995) that work together in four pieces of Ontario’s safe schools legislation, which ultimately influenced the school exclusion of historically disadvantaged populations in Canada. Additionally, a realist framework allows me to examine the experiences of racialized youth who experienced exclusion from schools in Ontario under the four pieces of safe schools legislation. My examination of such experiences involves making judgments about those experiences. So I am presuming the possibility of
identifying justified judgments and social understandings that lead to approximate truth. A realist framework explains the legitimacy of my judging the social values as communicated in the four pieces of legislation and the social values and judgments of racialized youth as communicated in their interviews in this study, identifying justified judgments and unjustified judgments. I recognize that my judgments are also based on implicit understandings combined with propositional knowledge. However, my awareness of all these complexities allows me to provide a radical critique of my own values and those of others. I am not claiming that my judgments are always right; I am arguing that the fact that I make such judgments, in the way that I do, based also upon values, does not rule out the possibility that my conclusions are justified.

Figure 1 depicts the conceptual framework used in this study, specifically the interactions and relationships among brute facts, context, institutional facts, policies, and racialized students. This framework provides an understanding of the roles of multiple stakeholders in policy development, implementation, and outcomes.
Figure 1. *Conceptual Framework Diagram.*

Context is central in Figure 1 because context is always present during the formation of mental brute facts and institutional facts. Brute facts (both physical and mental) influence context and institutional facts. Brute facts are required for the existence of institutional facts. Context is partly comprised of media and target populations (Ingram & Schneider, 1991). Context and institutional facts influence each other in a recursive manner. For example, mainstream media outlets that continuously report school shootings and frame incidents as if school violence is increasing in Ontario schools, feed into the fears of parents and the general public; these fears lead to an increased public interest in school safety policies. Policymakers react to this public need that is shaped by a “crisis.” Policies are not directly influenced by brute facts; rather they are influenced by institutional facts that are initially based on brute facts before being transformed by context. In turn, it is possible for policies to influence institutional facts. The educational
experiences of racialized students are directly influenced by policies and context. For instance, policies are created using institutional facts that may be laden with stereotypes about racialized students, with these policies then potentially being a vehicle for discrimination against racialized students. Racialized students can also influence policy development and context by either perpetuating/reinforcing or challenging stereotypes.

In light of the complexities related to studying systemic racism, a realist conception of knowledge is drawn upon to better understand how institutional facts affect the way racialized students and policymakers perceive themselves and others with a stake in school safety. It is equally important to explore both what people perceive and why they perceive what they perceive. The question of why they perceive what they perceive rests on an examination of the nature of knowledge. Why do we know the world in the way that we do and how have we accessed what we know (and how do we even know we know something)? We need to explore these questions to better understand and work towards transforming all stakeholders’ implicit understandings that govern their thoughts and actions. It is through increased awareness of their implicit understandings about race, gender, class, sexuality, and ability that provincial government leaders, policymakers, school board administrators, and members of the school community, should be able to positively impact safe schools policies, practices, and educational outcomes for racialized students in Ontario.
CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

School safety, school discipline, and school violence are social constructs that can be interpreted in different ways (e.g., limited ways, holistic ways) by individuals, policies, and/or the larger society. Not only does the perceived level of school safety, discipline, and violence influence students’ educational experiences, but it is also influenced by the values, beliefs, and behaviours of all members of the school community, and the social, economic, and demographic context where the school is located (Black, 2010; Chiu & Chow, 2011; Cohen, 2006; Loukas, 2007; Winton, 2012a). Additionally, perceptions of school safety, discipline, and violence are influenced by media (Insley, 2001; Mayer & Furlong, 2010; Sewell & Mendelsohn, 2000).

This media attention reinforces the story of helplessness and control. Additionally, national surveys present conflicting findings because what constitutes “safety” differs from place to place with no uniform method of data collection and ways of recording suspensions and expulsions (Mayer & Furlong, 2010). Furthermore, incidents of low-level school violence (e.g., teasing, bullying, harassment, and assault) are being reported more due to policy requirements (Demaray, Malecki, & DeLong, 2006; Mayer & Furlong, 2010). According to Demaray and colleagues, most media outlets are grouping both types of violence (extreme and low-level) under the same umbrella of school violence.

However, statistical analyses of school data are less conclusive than are media reports. For example, while victimization of adolescents decreased between 1992 and 2005 in the United States, 86% of public schools still reported at least one violent
incident during the 2005-2006 school year (Dinkes, Cataldi, & Lin-Kelly, 2007).

Similarly, the prevalence of physical violence in Canadian schools increased between 2002 and 2006, but then significantly decreased in 2010 (Pickett et al., 2013), based on analysis of the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) survey.

Whether or not extreme and low-level types of violence in schools are decreasing, both types of violence in schools are unacceptable because feeling safe is necessary for effective teaching and learning to take place. Stories of terror resembling the recent incidents at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut in 2012 and Don Bosco Catholic Secondary School in Etobicoke in 2014 indicate that students’ safety in schools should still be a pressing concern among educational researchers, policymakers, members of school communities, and the general public. According to Hazler and Carney (2006), the public’s intolerance of violence on the whole has increased. However, it is important to keep in mind that the public’s perception of violence can also be complex.

**Mechanisms to Address School Safety Concerns**

Over the last two decades, concerns about school safety have been on the agenda for policymakers on the national, provincial/state, and school district/board levels along with news coverage by popular media outlets. Three primary mechanisms have been put in place to address these concerns: surveillance systems, prevention programs, and policies. Surveillance systems include metal detectors, cameras, and police presence in schools. Prevention programs are geared towards increasing students’ pro-social behaviours and curbing anti-social behaviours. School safety policies have been developed to establish the importance of school safety as it relates to overall student
success, and provide standards and guidelines to respond effectively to discipline and safety concerns.

**Surveillance Systems**

Surveillance systems have been proposed as a means to increase school safety and reduce school violence (Balfanz, Spiridakis, Neild, & Legters, 2003; Joong & Ridler, 2006; TCDSB, 2015). The use of such systems is becoming wide-spread. For example, in the 2007-2008 school year, 69% of students between the ages of 12 and 18 in the United States reported having police (in uniform or undercover) present at their schools, 55% of all schools and 77% of high schools used security cameras to monitor the school, and 11% of high schools used metal detectors to check for weapons possession (Bracy, 2011).

To uncover students’ perceptions and better comprehend their interactions with various modes of surveillance, Bracy (2011) conducted an ethnographic study in two high-security public high schools located in the mid-Atlantic region of the US, situated 20 miles apart. Cole High School’s student population consisted mainly of White middle-class students, with 11% of students from low-income families. Vista High School, in contrast, consisted of 75% White students and 20% Black students, with 41% of its student body belonging to low-income households (households were identified as low-income if, according to school records, students who belonged to them qualified for the Free Breakfast program). Data were collected from observations within the school environment over time with 26 individual face-to-face interviews being conducted at each school (52 total): the police officer, five teachers (approx.), all school administrators (number not provided), all disciplinary staff (number not provided), 10 students (approx.), and five parents (approx.). Corroborating findings from Vavrus and Cole’s
(2002) study in the US mid-West, most students at both schools in this study believed that their schools were safe places and thought that many security strategies were actually unnecessary, while teachers tended to see security strategies as a positive and necessary measure. Surveillance had a negative impact on Black male students in particular by alienating them and stigmatizing them as being untrustworthy and dangerous (Bracy, 2011).

In response to a report about violence and harassment inflicted on students by in-school police officers, Kupchik and Bracy (2010) addressed the general tendency of the general public to neither question nor oppose inviting the criminal justice system (in the form of an armed police officer) into the realm of education through a study in four public high schools in two US states (southwestern and mid-Atlantic). In each state, two schools were chosen as sites: one school had a large low-income and racialized population, while the second school largely consisted of White middle-class students. Data comprised on-site observations that took place three times a week over a six-month period and interviews with more than 100 people across the four sites. While many students reported that they felt safer with a police officer present in their school, they also talked about ‘knowing your place’ (i.e., being aware that the police officer is the one who possesses power and authority, and knowing how little power students have). Police officers at the schools acknowledged students’ legal rights during situations that involved potential criminal consequences, but this acknowledgment was often done in a very calculated manner that did not benefit students nor was congruent with the spirit of the law as intended.
On the other hand, the Toronto Police Service and student representatives appearing before the Advisory Panel commissioned by the TCDSB in 2015 argued against implementing metal detectors and random searches at the two schools that were the focus of the inquiry, explaining reasons around practicality, legalities, and societal concerns. The Advisory Panel did not list metal detectors or random student searches in their list of recommendations. However, the Advisory Panel recommended the TCDSB’s endorsement of the School Resource Officer (SRO) program of the Toronto Police Service in schools.

Despite the ongoing school disciplinary policy reform in public schools worldwide, high security schools and strict punishments for problem behaviour do not seem to be curbing the number of violent incidents that occur in schools (e.g., Balfanz et al., 2003; Blake, Butler, Lewis, & Daresbourg, 2011; Gregory et al., 2010; Joong & Ridler, 2006). Reports about the ineffectiveness of high security schools and strict punishments for problem behaviour are mainly based on statistics from national studies conducted in the United States. These questionnaires only manage to measure the extent to which respondents are conscious of their behaviour and experiences—and/or the extent that respondents are able to admit to their experiences (Joong & Ridler, 2006). As a consequence, the efficacy of surveillance systems in improving school safety remains an issue of debate.

**Prevention Programs**

Either in conjunction with other initiatives (such as surveillance systems and policies) or separately, prevention programs have been considered as useful in improving school safety. In a three-year longitudinal mixed-methods study conducted in a mid-
Western city in the US, for example, Lassen, Steele, and Sailor (2006) found that discipline policies were more effective when combined with a whole-school Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) program. Data were collected at one urban inner-city middle school in a low-income neighbourhood between 2000 and 2003. Based on the eligibility of students for a free/reduced price lunch, 80% of the school population were economically disadvantaged. The PBS program entailed the professional development of teachers and school administrators, a reward system for students who demonstrated positive behaviours, and collaborative endeavours among students, parents, and teachers that fostered healthy relationships and positive behaviours. While test scores decreased from baseline (2000) to Year 1 (2001), they increased each year from Year 1 to Year 3. Also, students with fewer office discipline referrals (ODRs) scored higher on math and reading tests. Findings of this study were enhanced because, at the beginning of the study, researchers visited classrooms and communicated with teachers and school administrators to better understand the organizational structure at the school and its unique culture.

Another longitudinal study monitored the impact of the PBS program on students’ aggressive behaviours and math and reading test scores and found that the program contributed to an improvement in student behaviours and test scores across a five-year period (Bradshaw, Mitchell, & Leaf, 2010). Data for the study were accessed from the Schoolwide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) randomized controlled effectiveness trial, examining program impact from 37 public elementary schools (21 intervention schools and 16 comparison schools) in Maryland (US). The majority of students at comparison schools were White with less suspensions and better
reading skills (Bradshaw et al., 2010). Similar to Lassen et al.’s (2006) study on PBS programs, the school community’s collaboration with students’ parents/guardians was instrumental to establishing closer and stronger relationships that aided the improvement of the school climate.

Considering students are the ones who are most impacted by school disciplinary policies and practices, their perspectives and those of their parents/guardians should be included in the policy development process and program design that support such policies (Fitzgerald, 2010; Joong & Ridler, 2006; Raby & Domitrek, 2007). Based on the International Youth Survey (2006), Fitzgerald (2010) analyzed the relationship among youth violent delinquency, parental monitoring, and delinquent peers in 149 Toronto schools (i.e., public schools in the Toronto District School Board and private schools in the Toronto metropolitan area, except Catholic schools) using data collected from 3184 students in Grades 7 through 9. Students were more likely to be violent and/or delinquent if they received little or no monitoring from their parents/guardians, and if parents/guardians were largely disengaged with their students’ educational experiences. Although parental monitoring can be helpful in deterring violent delinquency among youth, it is still imperative that school climates support positive behaviours through policies and programs (Fitzgerald, 2010; Lassen et al., 2006).

In 2012, education policy developments in Ontario related to improving inclusivity in schools encouraged teachers and administrators to support students who were interested in forming a Gay Straight Alliance group. Since then, several secondary schools in Ontario have created Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) groups that sought to support and improve the safety of sexual minority students. In a mixed-methods study of
GSA facilitators (consisting of mostly teachers (85.4%), social workers, educational assistants, and child and youth workers) from high schools and middle schools across Ontario, online surveys were completed by 41 GSA facilitators, 14 of whom were interviewed individually (Kitchen & Bellini, 2013). Based on the surveys (interview data were not reported), over 78% of GSA facilitators rated the overall climate of their schools as safe generally, while over 56% rated their schools as safe for sexual minority students. Two key recommendations were proposed in this study: (i) explicit encouragement and support along with ongoing professional development should be provided for teachers, and (ii) policy direction from above is critical. Although this study examines the perspectives of GSA facilitators, it does not provide information on the efficacy of GSAs.

Policies

Policies are a third mechanism used to address school safety concerns. The Columbine High School Massacre in April 1999 in the United States and another school shooting at W. R. Myers High School in Alberta, Canada that same year plagued the media and the public instilling great concern in the public at large, with policy designs following to address the public’s concerns (Stone, 2002). This push for a blanket solution to a growing social problem allowed policymakers to put together a convincing story that enabled Bill 81 to be passed in Ontario in 2001 to become the Safe Schools Act. That story seems to be congruent to the story of helplessness and control (Stone, 2002) in policy analysis. The story of helplessness and control allows analysts to examine the crisis factor of a situation. Situations that are viewed as crises create windows of opportunity for policymakers (Stone, 2002).
The government of Ontario implemented the *Safe Schools Act* (2000) to respond to the perception of increased school violence in the 1990s. The *Safe Schools Act* (2000) gave way to progressive discipline as a policy focus in the early 2000s due to public and government inquiries regarding the expulsion and suspension of disproportionate numbers of racialized male students and students with exceptionalities (SSAT, 2006).

In a critical policy analysis, Winton (2012a) analyzed how the safe schools policy in the Toronto District School Board changed over time in relation to relevant developments in the area of school safety in the international, national, and provincial/state contexts. While the school board safe schools policies were influenced by international, national, and provincial/state policies, practices, and events, the school boards still had significant agency in policymaking and implementation. The Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) was a key policy actor in the area of school safety in communicating the concerns of the general public and particularly marginalized groups of people.

Disciplinary policies in schools are largely based on exclusionary punishments, such as suspensions and expulsions (Blake et al., 2011; Cornell & Mayer, 2010; Raby & Domitrek, 2007). Punishments that exclude students from their school community tend to add to their feelings of disconnectedness, lessen their motivation, and increase their likelihood of involvement in law-breaking activities (Bracy, 2011; Gregory et al., 2010; Kovalenko, 2012; Vavrus & Cole, 2002). In particular, although initially implemented to promote school safety, policies based on zero-tolerance philosophies often seem to promote exclusionary punishments that alienate and de-motivate students (Blake et al., 2011; Gregory et al., 2010).
According to ‘labelling theory,’ there is an increased likelihood for youth who are disciplined at school to become delinquent as a result (Nicholson-Crotty, Birchmeier, & Valentine, 2009). The youth who are suspended and/or expelled may become stigmatized by their peers and their communities. This stigmatization often encourages stigmatized youth to spend more time with others who are anti-social (Nicholson-Crotty et al., 2009). Furthermore, labelling youth as ‘deviants,’ ‘delinquents,’ or ‘offenders’ can greatly impact and alter their understanding of themselves, especially since significant identity formation takes place during one’s teenage years (Bernberg & Krohn, 2003; Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Veddar, 2006). Moreover, Nicholson-Crotty and colleagues (2009) highlighted how students who are unfairly disciplined in schools can develop negative understandings about structure, power, and authority. Schools that disproportionately suspend and/or expel racialized students can thereby contribute to a self-fulfilling prophecy (i.e., racialized bodies become disproportionally labelled as delinquent in schools and are disproportionally represented in prisons compared to White bodies; Nicholson-Crotty et al., 2009). Therefore, it is crucial to examine the school experiences of racialized students when working to understand the effectiveness of safe school policies.

**School Experiences of Racialized Students**

There is no paucity of empirical evidence highlighting the school challenges faced by racialized students in North America in comparison to their peers belonging to the dominant group (Abada, Hou, & Ram, 2009; Balfanz et al., 2003; Nunn, 2011; Raby & Domitrek, 2007; Ruck & Wortley, 2002; Way, 2011). Negative educational outcomes disproportionately experienced by groups of racialized students range from poorer
academic outcomes (Abada et al., 2009; Nunn, 2011), early school leaving/drop-out (Ruck & Wortley, 2002; Way, 2011), low attendance (Balfanz et al., 2003; Ruck & Wortley, 2002), and poorer grade retention (Balfanz et al., 2003). Additionally, racialized students tend to receive school suspensions and expulsions more than their non-racialized peers (Blake et al., 2011; Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010; Kovalenko, 2012; Mosher, 2008; Raby & Domitrek, 2007; Ruck & Wortley, 2002; Skiba et al., 2011; Vavrus & Cole, 2002; Williams, 2005).

**Educational Outcomes**

Historically, many racialized students have experienced poorer educational outcomes in schools than their White peers. Racialized students should not however be thought about as a homogenous group because they have unique histories and various identities (e.g., gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and ability) and circumstances (e.g., socio-economic status, family status, and geographical location). In a quantitative study based on a national survey of 3300 youth ages 25-34, Abada et al. (2009) explored the educational attainment of Canadian immigrants, highlighting a variety of ethnic experiences among racialized students across Canada. With the exception of Blacks and Filipinos, racialized immigrant students academically outperformed their White peers (Abada et al., 2009). Fathers’ educational attainment significantly predicted children’s post-secondary education aspirations and university completion rates. Well-educated parents were generally able to financially afford to assist with their children’s post-secondary education along with affording the time (non-monetary) to support them. More than 50% of racialized youth reported feeling out of place or excluded during their high school education. Feeling excluded or having little-to-no sense of belonging sometimes
led to an anticipation of disadvantages, which served to either discourage or motivate students to complete high school and pursue post-secondary studies (Abada et al., 2009). In this study, there was no clear racial and ethnic breakdown of the populations across Canadian provinces and territories; a clearer breakdown of the demographics would have provided a better understanding of the social landscape and strengthened the contextual analysis.

Racialized students’ sense of belonging has often been identified as a primary contributor to their academic achievement. Similar to Abada and colleagues (2009), Nunn (2011) discussed how racialized students’ sense of belonging is imperative for their academic achievement especially when they are also experiencing language barriers in a fast-paced, English-speaking learning environment. In a one-year (2005-2006) qualitative study that included a three-week (consecutive) classroom observation of six classrooms and individual student interviews, the experiences of 57 racialized students in three American high schools (high-performing, low-performing (alternative), and average-performing—based on School Accountability Report Card) in California were explored. Racialized students felt the least sense of belonging particularly in the high-performing high school, where it felt like a White space for them. The low-performing (alternative) school “is the only one [school] that fosters attitudes that associate school success equally with African Americans, Latinos, Asians, and Whites alike” (Nunn, 2011, p. 1243). According to Nunn, the majority of students who attended the low-performing (alternative) school were likely coming from a middle-school where they had performed poorly academically; therefore, they were less academically competitive at their high school. Using the first-hand accounts of racialized students together with classroom
observation data from each of the three schools strengthened the findings of Nunn’s study, but the researcher’s presence at the front of the room for three weeks taking notes could have impacted the classroom dynamics and furthermore influenced the individual interviews she had with students from those same classes.

Nunn (2011) and Ruck and Wortley (2002) similarly understood the importance of exploring the school climate as related to students’ experiences within it. While Nunn (2011) conducted classroom observations, Ruck and Wortley (2002) included several questions on their student questionnaires in a quantitative study examining students’ perceptions of their schooling experiences in Toronto. For their study, 1870 students from Grades 10 and 12 at 11 randomly selected Toronto schools from a racially and ethnically diverse school district completed questionnaires. The likelihood of racialized and ethnically diverse students perceiving discrimination in the school setting was significantly higher than their White peers. Students’ perceptions of discrimination were shaped by other variable such as socio-economic status, age of immigration, gender, and views of school climate. At the time that this study was conducted, statistical data about race and ethnicity were not being compiled by schools; the presence of those statistics would have strengthened Ruck and Wortley’s (2002) findings.

Students’ perceptions of being differentially treated because of their race and/or ethnicity in schools often leads to frustration and disengagement, which can contribute to their decision to leave school early/drop-out (Ruck & Wortley, 2002; Way, 2011). Additionally, students are more likely to behave defiantly if they perceive their teachers to be unfair, uncaring, and disrespectful (Way, 2011). A national longitudinal study, based on US student, school administrator, teacher, and parent surveys collected in 1988
and 1990 by the National Center for Education Statistics (Way, 2011), examined students’ perceptions of classroom discipline. While 25,000 students were included in the 1988 data set, only 17,424 of those students remained two years later, because of attrition rates resulting from expulsions, early school leaving/drop-outs, or missing teacher and parent/guardian surveys that accompanied the student surveys. The students who were largely excluded from the 1990 surveys were Black and Hispanic living in lower-socioeconomic households with other siblings without one or both biological parents. Furthermore, these same students tended to perform less well on the Grade 8 achievement tests and already experienced disciplinary measures by Grade 8.

Both Ruck and Wortley (2002) and Balfanz and colleagues (2003) corroborated Way’s (2011) findings suggesting that students’ academic performance can sometimes predict their classroom behaviours including attendance and grade retention. Furthermore, a longitudinal (1995-2000), mixed-methods study conducted by Balfanz et al. (2003) in a large mid-Atlantic city in the US found that low academic achievement often resulted in grade retention, low attendance, defiant behaviours often having violent outcomes, and students’ increased contact with the justice system and incarceration. Racialized students disproportionally experienced all of these outcomes.

In a qualitative study examining the relationship between Ontario’s high school graduation rates and students’ suspension and expulsion rates, Winton (2012b) conducted a policy analysis of Ontario’s Safe Schools Act (2000), the Progressive Discipline and School Safety Act (2007), and the Student Success/Learning to 18 (2003) amendment to the Education Act, and relied on interview data she had collected from Ontario high school teachers (n=6) in 2009. In her interviews with teachers, she inquired about their
perceptions of the *Progressive Discipline and School Safety Act* (2007), which had been in effect for over a year at the time of the interviews. Winton (2012b) found that graduation rates increased after the *Student Success/Learning to 18* (2003) was implemented, the primary goal of the amendment. Simultaneously, suspension and expulsion rates decreased significantly across high schools in the province, Winton suggested that the *Student Success/Learning to 18* might have been more responsible for impacting the rates of student suspensions and expulsions than safe schools legislation. She highlighted the importance of examining policies that support safe schools legislation when evaluating the effectiveness of it.

**Disciplinary Experiences**

Although school safety research contains a number of grey areas in regards to differing definitions of school safety and discipline, and social context should always be considered as important, existing empirical evidence shows that racialized students are suspended and expelled more from schools, overrepresented in alternative schools and programs, and under more surveillance than their peers in schools who belong to the dominant group.

In exploring the moments that result in student suspensions, Vavrus and Cole (2002) conducted an ethnographic study in two science classrooms of a multiethnic high school located in a large metropolitan area in the US Midwest. While it was a five-year long study that began in 1996, the researchers only analyzed data from one year: 1997-1998. Data sources included videotaped recordings of interactions in the two classrooms, field notes from classroom observations, and interviews conducted with teachers, administrators, safety personnel, and students. This study examined how multiple
understandings (among students, teachers, administrators, safety personnel, and policymakers) of disruption (as outlined in disciplinary policies) encouraged a subjective decision-making process with respect to suspensions. For instance, teachers who decided that students had disrupted the classroom and sent them to the office to be suspended were greatly influenced by their own cultural understandings and experiences. Unclear understandings and/or disagreements about what constituted disruption led to excessive suspensions of racialized students. Teachers were largely influenced by race and gender biases that were not addressed in school discipline policies. Moreover, understandings among teachers and students of school safety differed. Disciplinary moments and decisions appeared to be ultimately shaped more by the classroom context involving the co-construction of that particular moment than they were by discipline policies. While the researcher should be commended for relying on multiple data sources that enriched this study, generalizability of findings should be avoided because this study only examined data from two classrooms within a one-year time period.

In a quantitative study that explored the discipline experiences of 9364 female students (Black, White, Hispanic, and other) in approximately 44 schools in one urban school district in a mid-Western city in the US, “Black girls who receive exclusionary discipline practices pose significant risk for teenage pregnancy and juvenile delinquency” (Blake et al., 2011, p. 101). Black girls were nearly four times more likely to receive in-school suspension than their non-Black peers, and twice as likely to receive out-of-school suspension. The disproportional suspension of Black girls was largely attributed to teachers’ and school administrators’ treatment of Black girls that was rooted in stereotypes of Black girls being unfeminine and defiant because they did not model
behaviours congruent with mainstream femininity. Black male students across the school district were disproportionally suspended as well by teachers and school administrators whose actions appeared to be based on racist stereotypes of Black males being dangerous.

Similar to the findings in Blake et al.’s (2011) study, Skiba et al. (2011) conducted a quantitative study across the US and found that the majority of teachers in the public school system at all levels were White females who operated from racial and cultural biases that fed into their differential treatment of racialized students. Drawing from School-Wide Information System (SWIS) records from the 2005-2006 school year from 272 (K-6) and 92 (6-9) schools, Skiba et al. (2011) did not access information about student infractions prior to 2005-2006 to enhance their understanding of disproportional suspension of racialized students. Also, Skiba et al. (2011) mentioned that they were unable to test the influence of students’ socio-economic status on relationships.

Understanding the importance of testing the influence of socio-economic status to understand teacher-student and peer relationships, Joong and Ridler (2006) purposefully sampled schools in economically diverse neighbourhoods and urban and rural settings across three school districts in Ontario. Questionnaires containing closed-ended and open-ended questions were administered to 100 students and 12 teachers in 12 middle (Grade 6-8) schools and 100 students and 25 teachers in 12 high (Grade 9-12) schools in 2004. While teachers and students similarly perceived their schools as being safe, more teachers (66%) than students (48%) perceived that the school administration had been effectively responding to violent incidents. The policy solutions for school violence were deemed ineffective by the researchers, who suggested that more collaborative efforts
among students, parents, teachers, and school administrators should be made to develop students’ life skills that could prevent violent incidents from occurring.

In an unpublished master’s research paper, Kovalenko (2012) provided a historical account combined with previous empirical research findings that supported the understanding that Ontario’s Safe Schools Act (2000) combined with explicitly stated or implicitly communicated zero-tolerance school district policies have been working together to produce a “school-to-prison pipeline” for racialized immigrant youth. According to Kovalenko (2012), more needs to be done to empower racialized youth in schools to succeed instead of addressing their behaviours with exclusionary measures that ultimately force them into the criminal justice system, where they are already disproportionally represented. More school programs that address aggressive behaviours in schools was among the recommendations made. Both Kovalenko (2012) and Winton (2012a) highlighted the Toronto District School Board’s responsibility to enforce disciplinary policies that were less punitive and discriminatory than the existing ones.

Policing certain racialized bodies in schools can contribute to the criminalization of those bodies once they are out of school in the larger society (Kovalenko, 2012; Nicholson-Crotty et al., 2009). In the Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB) Safe Schools Inquiry Report (2015), a racialized youth who had been previously expelled explained how his expulsion from school resulted in him being perceived as a criminal because school expulsions are often linked with criminal behaviour. It did not help matters around criminalizing students who were expelled when the Safe Schools Action Team (appointed by the Ontario Ministry of Education) disclosed that one of the reasons
that the Safe Schools Act was being reviewed was because expulsions were viewed as making the entire community less safe (Brent & Rogers, 2007).

While Balfanz et al.’s (2003) study did not include data about racialized youth who were expelled from school prior to incarceration, their findings indicated that the majority of the incarcerated youth surveyed displayed defiant classroom behaviours that often led to violent outcomes, although the consequences of these behaviours were not discussed. However, there is no shortage of studies about racialized students who disproportionately experience exclusionary measures that address perceived defiant behaviours (e.g., Blake et al., 2011; Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010; Kovalenko, 2012; Ruck & Wortley, 2002; Skiba et al., 2011; Vavrus & Cole, 2002; Williams, 2005).

Even though many studies (e.g., Blake et al., 2011; Bracy, 2011; Bradshaw et al., 2010; Cornell & Mayer, 2010; Daniel & Bondy, 2008; Fitzgerald, 2010; Kovalenko, 2012; Mosher, 2008; Skiba et al., 2011; Williams, 2005) summon attention to the relationship between school disciplinary policies and the negative effects they have on particular cultural groups and genders, Benbenishty and Astor (2005) determined that culture impacted the frequency of violent incidents, not the relative social rankings of behaviour (i.e., what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable behaviour). For instance, racialized students, for the most part, understand and even agree with dominant cultural ideas of what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, but they still participate more in violent incidents (as perpetrators and victims) when compared with other students belonging to a dominant group. These implications raise the question: what makes it possible and almost necessary for racialized groups to partake in violence?
While several national and international studies examining school safety policies have been conducted over the past two decades, caution is needed in interpreting and comparing the findings from such studies because there are unclear understandings about: what constitutes school safety, discipline, and violence across studies; and the difference across instruments used to measure these social phenomena from study to study even when the results are replicated to a large extent (Skiba et al., 2011). Furthermore, study samples may differ greatly in population, culture, and economic conditions (Joong & Ridler, 2006; Nunn, 2011).

Creating Safer Environments for Racialized Students

All students have a right to quality public education in Ontario, and school safety is a prerequisite to overall student success, including academic achievement (SSAT, 2006). Over the last two decades, the Ontario Ministry of Education has demonstrated a commitment to creating policies to ensure the safety of all students; however, some of those policies have contributed to the differential treatment of racialized students and students with exceptionalities (Bhattacharjee, 2003; Mosher, 2008; Raby & Domitrek, 2007). Although school safety policies in Ontario have been revised over the last decade making way for less punitive approaches to school discipline, and suspensions and expulsions have reduced post-2008, racialized students are still experiencing disproportional suspensions and expulsions under newly revised policies (Kovalenko, 2012; Winton, 2012b).

Although students are now being suspended and expelled less in Ontario schools, racialized students still disproportionally represent those who are suspended and expelled (Kovalenko, 2012; Winton, 2012b); this statistic is concerning since racialized
populations in Ontario are rising (Cole, Hutt, & Stokes, 2012). Therefore, to improve the educational outcomes of racialized students, existing policies need to be examined and revised to actively address differential treatment of racialized students. Furthermore, several researchers (Mosher, 2008; Skiba et al., 2011; Vavrus & Cole, 2002; Williams, 2005) have concluded that students’ voices should be given more weight in the school safety policymaking process.

**Examining Safe School Policies**

A critical first step to create safer environments for racialized students through better policies is the examination of current policies. Such an examination must consider the variety of perspectives aligned with the policy. During the policymaking process, particular target groups’ social values and interests may be prioritized (Ingram et al., 2007). Target groups or target populations refer to groups of people chosen by policymakers to receive benefits and/or burdens through the different stages of policy design (Ingram & Schneider, 1991; Schneider & Ingram, 1993b). Policies are not likely to have the desired effects, unless target groups make decisions and take actions consistent with intended policy purposes. According to Schneider and Ingram (1993), there are four types of target populations: the advantaged group, the contender group, dependents, and deviants (Table 1).

Target groups are chosen carefully by policymakers based on the problem definition and the goals of the policy (Schneider & Ingram, 1993b). However, it would be naïve to believe that policies are designed solely to achieve the policy goals or social problems outlined in policy documents (Ingram et al., 2007) without considering the
personal agendas of elected officials, agents, and targets that are often not explicitly

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target Groups or Populations</th>
<th>Political Power and Status</th>
<th>Stereotypical Characteristics</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advantaged group (e.g., scientists, veterans, and the elderly)</td>
<td>- have the most political power of the four populations&lt;br&gt;- seen as deserving of many rights and privileges</td>
<td>- majority belongs to the upper-middle class population&lt;br&gt;- have a sense of entitlement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contender group (e.g., Wall Street investors, savings and loan executives, illegal immigrants, and gay and lesbian activists)</td>
<td>- have a lot of political power&lt;br&gt;- seen as undeserving of certain rights and privileges</td>
<td>- greedy and self-involved</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dependents (e.g., children and persons with intellectual and/or physical exceptionalities)</td>
<td>- seen as good people who are deserving of very specific rights and privileges</td>
<td>- are oblivious to their rights and privileges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deviants (e.g., criminals, drug dealers, sex offenders, child abusers, flag-burners)</td>
<td>- have the least amount of political power&lt;br&gt;- seen as undeserving of any rights and privileges</td>
<td>- dangerous and evil</td>
</tr>
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Although examining policies provides one lens for understanding how safe school policies can be interrogated for their contribution to the differential discipline outcomes experienced by racialized students, few studies have used this perspective. For example, Winton’s (2012a) critical policy analysis of the Toronto District School Board’s Safe Schools policy provided an understanding of the role policies play in challenging and sustaining inequities. Interrogating existing school safety policies in the way that Winton
has done at the school board level is an excellent starting point in moving towards the examination of Ontario’s school safety legislation. Segeren and Kutsyuruba (2012) also used document and policy analyses methodologies to examine the development of the *Equity and Inclusive Education Policy* in Ontario. Through these analyses, they provided relevant details about the contextual landscape around the policy that included ideological, socio-cultural, political, legal, and economic contexts that existed as the policy developed. Similar to Winton (2012a) and Segeren and Kutsyuruba (2012), my study provides a contextual analysis of Ontario during school safety legislation development between 2000 and 2013.

**Speaking with Racialized Students**

While government-funded research (e.g., APA Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008; SSAT, 2006, 2008) has pointed to a need for school discipline policies and policy implementation with a clear governmental agenda, few research studies in education have explored the first-hand experiences of students while such policies are in effect by hearing their voices. School discipline and violence policies may be proving to be ineffective in preventing violence and disproportionately affecting racialized students because students have little to no input in the development of such policies (Way, 2011).

Not only can school discipline policies be more effective with the input of students, but inviting students’ voices into the policymaking process can increase respect and legitimacy towards teachers, improving student-teacher relationships (Way, 2011). Corroborating these findings about the importance of students’ voices in the policymaking process, 59 racially and culturally diverse research participants aged 13 through 21 in southern Ontario explored students’ unquestioning acceptance of many
school rules (Raby & Domitrek, 2007). While racialized students were especially impacted by disciplinary policies that resulted in their exclusion and alienation from the social system of education, they seldom questioned rules because they were aware of how they might come across as troublemakers. Additionally, racialized students reported feeling powerless as actors in decision-making processes about their behaviour and punishments. Some of these students felt unimportant with respect to the policymaking process.

For the most part, students felt that they had little say in how their lives were governed and they were deeply skeptical about any possibility that they could be. They were resigned to a structural environment that they found oppressive. (Raby & Domitrek, 2007, p. 950)

Students’ sense of powerlessness in regards to disciplinary decisions about their own behaviours was expressed by Black youth from the Jane and Finch neighbourhood, an area mainstream media represent as low-income, racialized, and unsafe, who participated in a qualitative study in Toronto between 2006 and 2007 (Mosher, 2008). Six focus groups were conducted with a total of 34 youth aged 16 to mid-20s, and individual interviews were conducted with 13 of those focus group participants. The majority of participants were still in school, while a few of them had already graduated or left school early. All participants felt discriminated against by teachers, school administrators, and police officers who were involved in incidents related to their school behaviours. They commented on how debilitating disciplinary practices had been for them since the Safe Schools Act (2000) was passed. Not only did many of them report feeling excluded from decisions about their own behaviours and resulting exclusionary outcomes, but the implications of what they viewed as punitive legislation increased their feelings of powerlessness, frustration with the school and criminal justice systems, fear, and anger.
According to one youth participant, the Safe Schools Act (2002) was perceived as a zero-tolerance legislation that was not only counter-productive for individual students being suspended or expelled, but also counter-productive for larger society:

> A few years back, they had a zero tolerance policy or something like that where you weren't allowed to swear or fight or anything like that at school, and what happened was it boomeranged instead; it made more criminals on the streets than actually helping people because all these youths were being kicked out and they had nothing to do so that the (inaudible) skyrocketed. (Mosher, 2008, p. 835)

Williams (2005) conducted an ethnographic study at an urban alternative school in western New York to gain insight into the experiences of Black male students who were expelled from mainstream schools for weapons possession by interviewing them and their teachers at the alternative school and visiting with their parents/guardians in their homes. Parental input (whether it be monitoring their children or becoming more active in discipline policy processes and programs) was seen by all three groups as a moderating factor that can curb students’ violent behaviours and delinquency, which allows more opportunities for teachers and school administrators to gain clearer insights into students’ circumstances outside schools. Gaining such insight can increase communication, help improve cultural understandings to reduce cultural biases, and ultimately build more trusting teacher-student relationships. Understanding the social context, especially family circumstances, of students who are suspended and expelled from schools is critical in understanding the root causes of their behaviours and bringing attention to how cultural and racial stereotypes might be contributing to teachers’ and school administrators’ decision-making processes related to suspensions and expulsions (Williams, 2005).
Students who are expelled from schools often feel a great loss of power. As a result, alternative schools that cater for students who are expelled from mainstream schools make substantial efforts to empower these students. It is important for students to feel as if they have power over their own discipline and safety, and giving their voices importance in school safety research can be empowering for them and, at the same time, increase their accountability for future behaviours (Williams, 2005). Holding the high value of racialized students’ voices in mind, the voices of youth who had been suspended and/or expelled in Ontario schools were central in my study.

**Summary**

This chapter provided empirical evidence of how school safety has been an ongoing concern internationally and locally. I explored studies that highlighted how policy development is rooted in particular understandings of the phenomena of school safety and school discipline, which are largely shaped by mainstream media outlets. Coupled with influence from the media, school safety policies are also heavily influenced by the policymakers who create and reform them. Policymakers can have personal agendas that play into various stages of policy development. Additionally, policymakers usually determine which target populations will benefit most from the policy and which target populations will benefit least. Target populations are determined by the amount of political power they have and/or are perceived to have in society.

Drawing from studies that employed document analysis methodologies to examine education policies, I highlighted the usefulness of interrogating school safety policies in my own work to improve the educational outcomes for racialized students in Ontario. Moreover, I drew from studies that valued the voices of racialized students in the
school safety policymaking process and discussed the importance of empowering students to give them more control over their educational experiences. My study accomplishes a holistic analysis of school safety legislation and its impact on racialized students in Ontario—it consists of a document analysis of school safety legislation and presents the perspectives of racialized youth who were suspended and/or expelled from schools.
CHAPTER 4: METHOD

A researcher’s choice of research methodology is largely influenced by her or his own worldview and experiences combined with the need to match the method with the research purpose (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Kutsyuruba, 2009). As a researcher with previous experience exploring relationships and educational experiences within racialized communities, I recognize the importance of unpacking the complexities in such experiences through an exploration of multiple perceptions/realities of various actors involved. Consequently, in this study where I explored the experiences of racialized youth who were excluded from school under disciplinary and safety policies in Ontario, I completed the following tasks: (a) conducted a safe schools policy analysis, (b) explored relevant documents other than policies to increase my understanding of youth participants’ social contexts, and (c) listened to and shared racialized youths’ stories first-hand.

Research Design

To thoroughly explore the experiences of racialized students who were excluded from school under school safety policies in Ontario, my research examined two primary sets of data across two phases of analyses (as shown in Table 2). The two primary data sets were (i) four pieces of Ontario’s safe schools legislation and (ii) in-depth interviews with youth who were previously suspended/expelled from Ontario schools. The analysis of the second primary data set (youth interviews) was accompanied by one supplemental data set, a researcher journal.
This study was conducted in two phases. To understand the policymaking process and changes in school safety legislation between 2000 and 2013 in Ontario, the first phase entailed a systematic document analysis (Bowen, 2009) of four pieces of Ontario’s provincial school safety legislation (primary data set). This document analysis included a historical analysis of the four policy documents, a content analysis (Bowen, 2009; Pal, 2006), and a thematic analysis (Creswell, 2009). In keeping with a holistic understanding of what it means to do a policy analysis (Bowen, 2009; Hodder, 2000), I used Segeren and Kutsyuruba’s (2012) contextual analysis framework to organize the findings of the thematic analysis to help describe Ontario’s political, economic, social, and educational contexts during the 2000-2013 period to better understand the background and
circumstances under which the four pieces of safe schools legislation were being developed.

The second phase of this study included a thematic analysis of interviews with 20 youth (18-25 years old) who self-identified as racialized (primary data set). These youth were previously suspended and/or expelled from secondary schools in Ontario between 2001 and 2013. A thematic analysis of my researcher journal (supplemental data set), as recommended by Miles and Huberman (1994), complemented the emergent sub-themes in the youth interviews.

Findings across both phases of this study were guided by the types of contexts used in Segeren and Kutsyuruba’s (2012) contextual landscape, with the addition of the educational context and slight modification of the other categories as relevant to my findings. As such, the research findings across all two phases in this study are organized into the following four contexts:

(i) Political: examining the power and authority behind school safety legislation by exploring the type of government that was in power over the 2000-2013 time period, identifying the government’s agenda, and investigating how the government’s agenda influenced school safety legislation development

(ii) Economic: exploring how money influenced school safety legislation development from a political standpoint and also from citizens’ standpoints; exploring the relationship among money, power, and policymaking/development
(iii) Social: examining how various stakeholders interpreted and used/were affected by school safety legislation; what role the public played in school safety legislation development during the 2000-2013 time period

(iv) Educational: investigating how a school’s environment (physical, social, emotional, mental) was impacted by school safety legislation along with the political, economic, and social contexts; understanding how the school environment/climate impacted students’ behaviours

Phase I: Ontario Ministry of Education Safe Schools Policy Analysis

Documents, outside of researcher field notes, observations, and interview/focus group transcripts, are an underutilized resource in qualitative research (Prior, 2003). This underutilization of documents in qualitative research has been attributed to the high value that qualitative researchers place on the ‘emic’ perspective—understanding the world from research participants’ perspectives (Miller & Alvarado, 2005). Analysis of how documents, especially policy documents, have been created and have influenced the educational experiences of research participants, through suspensions and expulsions, is a critical component of this study.

Bowen (2009), Prior (2009), and Lincoln and Guba (1989) emphasized the importance of conducting a systematic policy analysis to increase research consistency and credibility, akin to increasing reliability in the quantitative research paradigm (Lincoln & Guba, 1989). Therefore, I conducted a systematic policy analysis, with a keen eye on changes and developments in legislation between 2000 and 2013.
Data Sources

In this systematic policy analysis, I drew on one data set to help address the three research questions to varying extents:

(1) What has been the nature and state of school safety policies in Ontario between 2000 and 2013?

(2) How might have school safety policies influenced the educational experiences of racialized students who were excluded (i.e., suspended and/or expelled) from school during the time such policies were in effect?

(3) How might have the suspension and expulsion experiences of racialized students influenced school safety policymaking and development in Ontario?

The data set consisted of four Ontario policy documents: Safe Schools Act (2000), the Progressive Discipline and School Safety Act (2007), the Keeping Our Kids Safe at School Act (2009), and the Accepting Schools Act (2012). Considering that education is provincially governed in Canada and decisions about student suspension and expulsion are guided by school safety policies, I explored the content regarding school safety on the Ontario Ministry of Education (OME) website. These particular documents demonstrate how the OME’s approach to school discipline and safety shifted from a punitive to a more progressive and restorative one.

Policy Analysis

I used document analysis (Bowen, 2009) methodology to conduct this policy analysis. Document analysis is a “systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents—both printed and electronic (computer-based and Internet-transmitted) material” (Bowen, 2009, p. 27). In the context of document analysis methodology,
documents are comprised of text (words) and images that have been recorded devoid of a researcher’s intervention (Bowen, 2009; Krippendorff, 2013; Miller & Alvarado, 2005). To complete the process of document analysis successfully, I interpreted the data gathered from both skimming (superficial examination) and reading (thorough examination; Bowen, 2009).

Document analysis consisted first of a historical analysis (Bowen, 2009), followed by a content analysis (Bowen, 2009; Krippendorff, 2013; Miller & Alvarado, 2005; Prior, 2003), and finally a thematic analysis (Creswell, 2009). Sampling of documents in this study was based on representativeness, as it was important for me to “purposefully select the most information-rich and appropriate sources in relation to the goals of the research” (Miller & Alvarado, 2005, p. 350).

**Historical analysis.** To fully comprehend the content of the four policy documents, I conducted a historical analysis (Bowen, 2009) to understand what was happening politically and socially during policy development at the various stages. For Bowen (2009), “previous studies are a source of data, requiring that the researcher rely on the description and interpretation of data rather than having the raw data as a basis for analysis” (p. 28). Documents are shaped by historical and social contexts (Miller & Alvarado, 2005). Thus, I relied on reports and academic studies that informed my understanding of the political and social landscape in Ontario leading up to year 2000 (the year in which the Safe Schools Act, 2000 was passed) and onward until 2013. This historical analysis allowed me to address the first and third research questions.

**Content analysis.** The process of content analysis in this study included three steps of reading each policy document to identify: (i) meaningful and relevant passages
or texts related to my research questions, (ii) dates/timelines, structure, vocabularies, policy focus, and target audience, and (iii) problem definition, policy goal, and policy instrument. Each step followed a similar process. I first read the document with the key elements in mind. I next highlighted the key elements in different colours, while making notes in the margin. Highlighting required multiple passes through the data. I used a fresh copy of the data for each step. I paid attention to the power accorded to four target groups: advantaged, contender, dependent, and deviant (Schneider & Ingram, 1993b). I wanted to particularly examine if there were changes in how groups were discussed in school safety legislation between 2001 and 2013. This content analysis allowed me to address the first and second research question.

**Thematic analysis.** The next part of this policy analysis entailed a thematic analysis (Creswell, 2009) that consisted mainly of an enumeration process. The purpose of thematic analysis is to determine pattern recognition within data that aids interpretation (Creswell, 2009). In producing sub-themes, large amounts of data were reduced into more manageable pieces to allow for analysis.

I used the word frequency query feature on NVivo to uncover frequently used words in each single electronic document; then I counted the frequency of words that were the same or similar/related across the four documents—this process allowed me to uncover eight sub-themes: (i) power and authority, (ii) socio-economic class, (iii) geographic locations, (iv) communication, (v) collaboration, (vi) respect and responsibility, (vii) discipline and safety, and (viii) decision-makers. I organized the eight sub-themes into contexts (as shown in Table 3). Enumeration particularly helped me
address the first research question regarding the nature of school safety legislation between 2000 and 2013 and to see how language evolved over the years.

Table 3

*Sub-Themes in Policy Documents*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contexts</th>
<th>Sub-Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political</strong></td>
<td>• power and authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Economic</strong></td>
<td>• socio-economic class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• geographic locations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social</strong></td>
<td>• communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Educational</strong></td>
<td>• respect and responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• discipline and safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• decision-makers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Organizing sub-themes found in the four policy documents into the political, economic, social, and educational contexts allowed for the documents to tell a story highlighting major changes in politics, economics, society, and education during the 2000-2013 period.

**Phase II: Youth Interview Analysis**

This phase of the study explored the suspension and expulsion experiences of youth who attended Ontario schools between 2001 and 2013 and provided an understanding of their social contexts. Scholarly literature about school discipline and safety clearly communicates the importance of inviting the voices of individuals whose educational experiences are impacted by school discipline and safety legislation to adequately understand the complexities around phenomena of school discipline, school safety, and school violence. To gain a youth perspective, I interviewed 20 youth research
participants who were suspended and/or expelled from Ontario schools between 2001 and 2013.

Data Sources

I drew from two data sets in this phase of the study: (i) interviews with past students (i.e., racialized youth) who were excluded from schools under the safe schools legislation (pre-2008) and/or progressive discipline (post-2008) policies, and (ii) my researcher journal (supplemental data set) that I used after each interview to note down any particular memorable moments about my conversation with the participant and to acknowledge my particular place, time, culture, and historical experience as a researcher, including any personal prejudices and biases. I drew from these two data sets to address the following research question:

How might have school safety policies influenced the educational experiences of racialized students who were excluded from school during the time such policies were in effect?

Research participants included 20 young adults (ages 18 to 25), across gender and racialized groups, who experienced suspension and/or expulsion under school safety and disciplinary policies in Ontario schools located in two metropolitan cities: Toronto and Ottawa. Participants were selected based on the following criteria: (a) self-identified as a racialized youth, (b) 18 to 25 years of age, and (c) experienced suspension and/or expulsion from Ontario schools between 2001 and 2013. Given that there was a philosophical shift from “zero tolerance” to progressive discipline in Ontario’s school safety legislation in 2007, I interviewed equal numbers of participants who experienced exclusion under school safety legislation prior to February 1, 2008 (the date when the
new progressive discipline legislation commenced) and after February 1, 2008. Ten youth participants were male, and 10 were female, evenly split across the policy dates. One of the participants self-identified as a man, but was born with female reproductive organs—I counted this participant as a male (Sean).

In terms of racial identity, all youth participants self-identified as belonging to a racialized population, but some of them had very unique understandings of the term ‘racialized’. For instance, I interviewed two White females (Debbie and Cynthia) who self-identified as racialized because they experienced racial discrimination in their school contexts as a result of them being White, while White students represented a minority of their school population.

Table 4 illustrates demographic details about the 10 youth participants who were excluded from school pre-2008. Eight individual interviews and one focus group session with two participants were completed and are numbered in this table. These interviews were with participants who were suspended and/or expelled from schools between 2001 and 2008. The table indicates participants’ pseudonyms, gender, age, city, race/ethnicity, place of birth, if/when/why they were suspended or expelled from school, and if they graduated with their high school diploma. All participants talked about their suspension and/or expulsion experiences in high schools, but some of them also mentioned suspension experiences in elementary schools.

Two participants identified as Aboriginal, four identified as Black, two identified as White, and two identified as Brown. Nine participants were suspended and/or expelled from schools in Toronto, while one participant was suspended from school in Ottawa.
Table 4
Youth Participants Suspended and/or Expelled Pre-2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transcript #</th>
<th>Youth</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>Race/ethnicity</th>
<th>Birthplace (and year of immigration if applicable)</th>
<th>Exclusion from school</th>
<th>Graduated?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>TO</td>
<td>African-Canadian</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>2004: suspended 3 days from elementary school for fighting</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Parents from Trinidad</td>
<td></td>
<td>2006: suspended 20 days from high school for fighting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Alex</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>TO</td>
<td>Aboriginal (Upper Sixth Nation Mohawk)</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>2003: suspended twice (5 days each) from high school for fighting</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Parents born in Canada</td>
<td></td>
<td>2004: <strong>expelled</strong> (full) from high school for weapons possession (gun)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Barbara</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>TO</td>
<td>Aboriginal</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>2004: suspended 5 days</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sean</td>
<td>Transgender</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>TO</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>2005: suspended 20 days</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(born female; self-identifies as male)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Parents from</td>
<td>Jamaica</td>
<td>from high school for fighting</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2006: suspended 20 days</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>from high school for fighting</td>
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<td>2007: suspended 20 days</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>from high school for suicide attempt</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2007: <strong>expelled</strong> (full) from high school for suicide attempt</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Debbie</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>TO</td>
<td>White Jew</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>2004-2006: suspended 3 times</td>
<td>N</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>from elementary school for swearing at teacher</td>
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<td>2006: suspended 20 days</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>from high school for fighting</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2007: suspended 20 days</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>from high school for suicide attempt</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2007: <strong>expelled</strong> (full) from high school for suicide attempt</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>Events</td>
<td>Notes</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Cynthia</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>OTT</td>
<td>White Polish Canadian</td>
<td>Israel school for smoking cigarettes (3 days), fighting (10 days), and skipping classes (3 days) 2007: <strong>expelled</strong> from high school for one year for hitting teacher</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>parents adopted her and brought her to Canada</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>David</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>TO</td>
<td>Black Jamaica</td>
<td>2002-2004: suspended 3 times from elementary school for anger issue (suspected to have killed</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Details</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>expelled</td>
<td>for 20 days from elementary school for sexual harassment, but the expulsion was withdrawn when more supporting evidence unfolded</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>suspended twice</td>
<td>(first time 10 days; second time 20 days) for fighting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>expelled (full)</td>
<td>for weapons possession (knife)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>suspended twice</td>
<td>(3 days each) from high school for skipping school (first time was in-school suspension)</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ken M 24 TO Brown
- Parents from Trinidad (2000)
- he was 11
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>TO</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Canada</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Kendra</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>TO</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Somali</td>
<td>2003: suspended 3 days for passing notes in class about teacher</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Somali</td>
<td>2004: suspended one day (in-school) for being late for school more than three days in one month</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Somali</td>
<td>Canadian</td>
<td>Parents from Somalia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Jason</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>TO</td>
<td>Brown</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>2004: suspended 3 days from high school for injuring a student on school property with his father’s van that he drove illegally</td>
<td>2005: suspended 5 days from high school for fighting</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>Parents from Sri Lanka</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Table 5 illustrates demographic details about 10 youth participants who were suspended from school post-2008. Eight individual interviews and one focus group session with two participants were completed and are numbered in this table. These interviews were with participants who were suspended and/or expelled from schools between 2008 and 2013. The table indicates participants’ pseudonyms, gender, age, city, race/ethnicity, place of birth, if/when/why they were suspended or expelled from school, and if they graduated with their high school diploma. All participants talked about their suspension and/or expulsion experiences in high schools, but some of them also mentioned suspension experiences in elementary schools.

Two participants identified as mixed race, two identified as Black, three identified as Brown, one identified as South Asian, one identified as Chinese, and one identified as Spanish. Three participants were suspended and/or expelled from schools in Ottawa, while the other seven were suspended and/or expelled from schools in Toronto.
Table 5
Youth Participants Suspended and/or Expelled Post-2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transcript #</th>
<th>Youth</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>Race/ethnicity</th>
<th>Birthplace (and year of immigration if applicable)</th>
<th>Exclusion from School</th>
<th>Graduated?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>TO</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Ecuador (2005)</td>
<td>2008: suspended 20 days in the fall semester for fighting</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Adopted by single mother</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(White Canadian)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Sierra</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>TO</td>
<td>Black Somali</td>
<td>Somalia (1991)</td>
<td>2010: suspended one day for disrupting class; she wet her pants and stormed out</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Parents from Somalia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• she was 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Cindy</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>TO</td>
<td>Mixed Race</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>2010: suspended once from high school for 5 days for not submitting assignments and missing exams (in-school)</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Mom is from China and Dad is White Canadian</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lisa  F  20  TO  Mixed Race  Canada  
- Dad Irish descent and 
- Mom is Aboriginal; both parents are Canadian-born

2011: suspended a second time for 5 days for pulling fire alarm during an exam
2011: suspended three times from high school for skipping school (2 days in-school), drug use (10 days), and smoking (14 days)
2009: suspended 18 days for fighting
2010: expelled (from one school and transferred to

N
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Parents from</th>
<th>School Details</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Janio</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Brazilian</td>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>another school in same board) for missing in-school suspensions and continuing to skip classes</td>
<td>2008: suspended 10 days in fall term for possessing illegal drugs</td>
<td>N</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>South Asian</td>
<td>India</td>
<td></td>
<td>2008: suspended five days for illegal drug possession</td>
<td>N</td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- Janio M: Parents from Brazil (1994)
- Mark M: Parents from Tibet, but were exiled to India before moving to Canada (2004)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 15 | Cassie | F | 19 | TO | Chinese | (2001)  
• she was 7  
2010: suspended one day for skipping classes (in-school suspension)  
2011: suspended 10 days for spitting on teacher  
2012: suspended one day for skipping classes (in-school suspension)  
2013: suspended two days for swearing at teacher |
• he was 8  
2010: suspended 2 days for fighting  
2011: suspended 2 days for skipping school  
2011: suspended 5 days for violently reacting to hate speech on his locker (fighting) |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Offense</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Glenn</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>OTT</td>
<td>Brown Canada</td>
<td>2012: suspended 18 days for fighting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>2011: suspended 10 days for sharing pornographic images from the Internet in class</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2011: suspended twice for skipping classes (one day in-school suspensions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>OTT</td>
<td>Brown Pakistan</td>
<td>2011: suspended 5 days for participating in sexual acts in bathroom</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
Data Collection

Recruitment. I purposefully sampled (Patton, 2002) participants who lived in two Ontario cities with diverse populations, namely Toronto and Ottawa. After receiving research ethics clearance (see Appendix B) from Queen’s University on January 25, 2013, I mounted recruitment posters (see Appendix C) on bulletin boards in community centres, university and college campuses, employment centres, malls, grocery stores, and coffee shops across the two cities during the first week of February 2013. These cities were chosen because they have a growing number of racialized groups of people. After receiving a slow response rate to my recruitment poster, in March I applied to Queen’s General Research Ethics Board (GREB) for an amendment to my study to include Kingston, Ontario in my recruitment since I found out about various organizations in Kingston catering to racialized groups of the population that were willing to help me with my recruitment. I received ethics clearance for an amendment from GREB on April 22, 2013 to included Kingston in my study. However, I did not receive responses from the population in Kingston, Ontario. In the final participant group, 16 youth participants lived in Toronto, while the other four lived in Ottawa.

In mid-February 2013, recruitment emails were sent to listserves at post-secondary institutions and community centres across Toronto and Ottawa. Similar recruitment emails were sent to organizations in Kingston at the end of April 2013. Posters and emails noted that there was a $15 gift card or cash incentive for participating in the study; participants would not be identified in the study. Coordinators at community centres and employment centres in Toronto and Ottawa were instrumental in recruiting participants with typical and rich cases (Patton, 2002). While many of the coordinators
were open to having their organizations identified in this study, I have refrained from doing so because it might jeopardize the confidentiality of the youth participants who visit these organizations.

**Interviews.** All youth participant interviews were conducted between March 2013 and May 2013. Prior to being interviewed, participants were asked to review the Letter of Information (see Appendix D) and sign the Consent Form (see Appendix E). They were given a take-away copy of both documents. At the beginning of the interview, participants were provided with the monetary incentive as outlined in the recruitment notice. At the end of the interview, participants were provided with a one-page document (see Appendix F) containing a list of community organizations in their neighbourhood that provided various supports (e.g., shelter, food, counselling services, employment assistance). Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes with an opportunity for participants to review and modify their responses (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003) within two weeks following the interview. All but one youth participant declined to being contacted to review her or his interview transcripts to fulfill the member-checking process. However, this participant never responded to my three attempts to contact her.

Semi-structured interviews (Creswell, 2009) with youth participants were conducted using an interview guide (see Appendix G) containing nine open-ended questions. Youth were provided with a copy of the questions via email and/or in-person for their reference during the interview. I invited them to go over the questions prior to turning on the recorder and conducting the interview. They were invited to ask me any questions or state any concerns before and after I turned on the recorder. Participants were also reminded on each recording that they could stop the interview at any point.
without losing their $15 and without having to provide me with an explanation for stopping.

I conducted all interview sessions, audio recorded them, and took notes throughout sessions to improve transcription accuracy and quality. Two participants (Mary and Jason) were interviewed on the telephone, while all other interviews were conducted in person. My audio recorder was battery powered (and could be charged on a laptop—my laptop was with me at all times), so I ensured that interviews were conducted on fully charged batteries. I transferred each interview from the audio recorder immediately to my password-protected computer after I conducted it. On that same day, I also made a copy of the interview and placed it in Dropbox (file back-up solution). My files in Dropbox were encrypted. At the end of each day, I would delete all interviews from the audio recorder to ensure that, if the recorder were to be misplaced, no interview files would be available for access. All interviews were transcribed verbatim by either me or a transcriber, with a signed Confidentiality Agreement for the transcriber (see Appendix A).

Electronic and hard copies of all interview transcripts belonging to youth participants were securely stored throughout the research process. All real names were replaced with pseudonyms on all copies, with each interview numbered 1 through 18. Each corresponding researcher journal entry was modified to replace participants’ legal names with pseudonyms and was also marked with a number that corresponded to the respective interview. I numbered interview sessions and corresponding researcher journal entries so that I would have a second way of organizing documents, as I was concerned about experiencing confusion when changing participants’ legal names to pseudonyms.
Data Analysis

Youth data analysis. The data analysis of the interview data from self-identified racialized youth included the components of organizing, analyzing, representing, and making interpretations (Creswell, 2009; Glesne, 1999). Iteratively, I used an inductive approach for discovery and a deductive approach for verifying sub-themes (Guba, 1978). Using NVivo software, I employed an inductive approach using an open-coding method to identify emergent patterns in the interview data. Presupposing a realist view, I became exceedingly aware that, while I was identifying emerging patterns, I was making judgments about participants’ judgments. I also employed a deductive approach by using some of the codes found in the four policy documents to search for codes in youth interview data. Table 6 illustrates the 11 sub-themes I uncovered in the youth interview data. As seen in Table 6, I then employed a deductive approach to organize sub-themes into four contexts: political, economic, social, and educational.

Table 6
Sub-Themes in Interview Data from Youth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contexts</th>
<th>Sub-Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Political</td>
<td>• authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>• socio-economic status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>• identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• immigration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational</td>
<td>• respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• physical activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• belonging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• attitudes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• discrimination/bias</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A part of the open-coding method included a close reading of each youth interview transcript. I printed single copies of each youth interview transcript. The front page of each document noted the participant’s pseudonym, age, city, gender, race/ethnicity, and whether the participant was suspended or expelled pre-2008 or post-2008. A close reading of each transcript entailed reading each transcript twice. The first time I read each transcript, I read with the following two purposes in mind: (i) to grasp an understanding of the participants’ pre- or post-progressive discipline student experiences, noting on the front page any large, important points that stood out; and (ii) to take note of what the participants’ biggest criticism and/or praise was in terms of their suspension or expulsion experience—I noted this information on the reverse of the transcript. The second time I read each transcript, I read with the sole purpose of identifying if and when the participant implicitly or explicitly mentioned being discriminated against by practices related to safe schools legislation. I used small post-it notes to mark the pages that indicated discrimination related to practices connected with safe schools legislation. Prior to reading transcripts for the second time, I re-read the four pieces of safe schools legislation used in Phase One of this study. Doing a close reading of youth interview transcripts enabled me to make connections between the participants’ stories and the story-line that I created in Phase One after completing the policy analysis.

**Researcher journal analysis.** I made entries in my researcher journal by hand after each interview with youth participants. I typed each journal entry and added a first page to each document containing the same demographic information (including pseudonym) as that found in each of the interview transcripts.
Using NVivo software, I employed an open-coding method where I allowed for emergent sub-themes. I then used sub-themes from my youth interview data to search for codes in the researcher journal. I identified 10 sub-themes in my researcher journal and organized them into the four contexts: political, economic, social, and educational (see Table 7). Identifying common sub-themes across these two data sets added to the stories of youth participants.

I printed single copies of each journal entry (including the first page of demographic information) and read them once. A part of the open coding process involved me closely reading each entry with the purpose of using a yellow highlighter to identify my relevant prejudices and biases. I listed keywords listing biases and/or prejudices (that may lead me to approximate truth, according to a realist view) on the front page of each document. While I read each journal entry, I gave attention to notes that made connections between the respective interview and/or policy documents in this study. I used a post-it note to mark pages where I made important connections.

Each hard copy of interview transcript and its corresponding researcher journal entry were placed in a folder and stored in a locked filing cabinet.
Table 7

*Sub-Themes in Researcher Journal*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contexts</th>
<th>Sub-Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political</strong></td>
<td>• power and authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Economic</strong></td>
<td>• financial challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social</strong></td>
<td>• neighbourhoods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• community support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• media</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>• family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Educational</strong></td>
<td>• self-esteem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• exclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• intersectionality</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8 illustrates the sub-themes found in the two primary data sets and the supplemental data set. Sub-themes in Table 8 are organized into the four contexts (political, economic, social, and educational) to show similarities and differences across all the data sets.
Table 8

Sub-Themes across Data Sets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contexts</th>
<th>Primary Data</th>
<th>Supplemental Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Policy Documents</td>
<td>Youth Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>(n = 20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political</td>
<td>• power and authority</td>
<td>• authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>• socio-economic class</td>
<td>• socio-economic status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• geographic locations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>• communication</td>
<td>• identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• collaboration</td>
<td>• immigration</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>• family</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational</td>
<td>• respect and responsibility</td>
<td>• respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• discipline and safety</td>
<td>• physical activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• decision-making</td>
<td>• belonging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• exclusion and inclusion</td>
<td>• expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• teachers’ negative attitudes</td>
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</table>
CHAPTER 5: ONTARIO MINISTRY OF EDUCATION SAFE SCHOOLS
POLICY ANALYSIS

Current school safety legislation in Ontario started to develop in the year 2000 as a result of the Ontario Ministry of Education’s (OME) commitment to “building and sustaining a positive school climate for all students in order to support their education so that all students reach their full potential” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010). The legislation grew out of zero tolerance policies in Ontario, more specifically, a Safe Schools Policy on Violence and Weapons (1993) that was adopted by the Scarborough Board of Education (Bhattacharjee, 2003) and the Violence-Free Schools Act (1994) that was adopted by the New Democratic Party (NDP) government of Ontario led by Premier Bob Rae (Anderson & Jaafar, 2003). In a document titled School Violence and the Zero Tolerance Alternative (1995), zero tolerance was described by the Solicitor General of Canada as "swift and certain consequences; severity of response proportional to the gravity of the infraction; a clarification of school and social standards; and empowering school administrators and staff, as well as students" (p. 6).

Document analysis of school safety legislation requires adequate acknowledgement of the impetus of such legislation in that such analysis brings attention to the different ways in which political, economic, social, and educational forces shape one another and, in turn, shape school safety legislation in Ontario. Document analysis can follow inductive methods (allowing coding categories to emerge) and/or deductive methods (using taxonomies based on previous document analyses).
deductive methods were used in this study to analyze four pieces of school safety legislation.

Using NVivo software to find word patterns in four pieces of Ontario school safety legislation (Ontario’s Safe Schools Act [SSA], 2000; Progressive Discipline and School Safety Act [PDSS], 2007; Keeping Our Kids Safe at School [KOKSS], 2009; and Accepting Schools Act [ASA], 2012), sub-themes were identified and then organized into four large contexts (political, economic, social, and educational). While the sub-themes were emergent, the four contexts in which they were organized are congruent with a previous study conducted by Segeren and Kutsyuruba (2012) that similarly included document analysis of an education policy.

This chapter provides: (a) a historical analysis of each of the four pieces of school safety legislation in Ontario, (b) a content analysis (Bowen, 2009; Pal, 2006) of each piece of legislation, and (c) a thematic analysis (Creswell, 2009).

**Historical Analysis of Safe Schools Legislation in Ontario (2000-2013)**

In the 1990s, it became general knowledge in Canada that school violence and the severity of incidents were increasing in public schools (Gabor, 1995). The 1998 federal government’s report on youth justice across the country signalled a need for more legislation that ensured the safety and well-being of Canadian youth (Stevenson et al., 1998). Knowledge about the United States’ implementation of zero tolerance school policies to curb school violence, provided Canadians with hope for improvements in public school safety should we employ similar policies in Canada (Daniel & Bondy, 2008). Therefore, policies such as the Safe Schools Policy on Violence and Weapons (1993) were adopted in some Canadian schools. Despite the existence of local and
international data (e.g., Casella, 2003; Cornell & Mayer, 2010; Daniel & Bondy, 2008; Vavrus & Cole, 2002) that noted several shortcomings of zero tolerance policies and/or disciplinary policies rooted in a ‘zero tolerance’ philosophy but not explicitly called a ‘zero tolerance’ policy, Ontario nevertheless created a zero tolerance type policy (Bhattacharjee, 2003). While policymakers did not use the term ‘zero tolerance’ explicitly in the SSA, 2000, the sections of the Act that outlined mandatory suspensions and expulsions were viewed by some researchers as being rooted in a zero tolerance philosophy (e.g., Daniel & Bondy, 2008; Raby & Domitrek, 2007). These researchers were not alone in their interpretation of Ontario’s school safety legislation being rooted in a zero tolerance philosophy, as some school board administrators decided to use the phrase ‘zero tolerance’ quite freely in their board policies between 2000 and 2007 even though provincial policymakers in Ontario were careful not to employ that phrase (Bhattacharjee, 2003; Mosher, 2008).

**Safe Schools Act (SSA, 2000)**

Bill 81, subsequently SSA, 2000, was brought forward and passed by a Progressive Conservative majority government, led by Premier Mike Harris, to amend Section 23 of the *Education Act* that previously limited the authority to suspend students to school principals and the authority to expel students to school boards. In regards to public school safety and discipline concerns in Ontario’s public schools, the Act contained a Code of Conduct that listed specific infractions warranting mandatory student suspensions, expulsions from a particular school or school board, and full expulsions (expulsion from all public school boards in the province). This Act may not be called a completely zero tolerance policy because, while it contained instructions for mandatory
suspensions and expulsions, it also included instructions for discretionary suspensions and expulsions, and there was also some mention of mitigating factors around regulations. Under this Act, school boards were allowed to add more infractions to their board policies for which suspensions and expulsions were either mandatory or discretionary (Bhattacharjee, 2003). This Act mentioned police-school board protocols that were to be arranged between each school board and the police.

In the Code of Conduct, the Minister of Education provided regulations to be followed by school boards to ensure a standardized systematic way of addressing safety and discipline issues. This document outlined specific expectations about behaviour, safety, and discipline and described the roles of parents, teachers, administrators, principals, and students. The Code of Conduct was applicable on school premises, on school buses, and at school events (Bill 81, 2000). Under the Act, the Ministry required school boards to implement the policies, guidelines, and procedures in accordance with the Act, but it did not require school boards to establish courses/programs and services for suspended and expelled students. Therefore, students who were suspended and expelled became primarily the responsibility of their families and communities, with the school providing limited, if any, support. These students’ human right to public education was denied during the time they were away from school (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2004).

This breach of a human right impacted a number of students. Figure 2 notes that the number of expelled students increased from 106 (of total student enrollment of 2,140,736) in 2000-2001 (when the SSA was first implemented) to 1,909 (of total student enrollment of 2,127,129) in 2003-2004 (right before the first policy review was
conducted. The largest increase happened between 2000-2001 and 2001-2002. The majority of students who were expelled in Ontario were Black male high school students of Caribbean origin in particular (Safe Schools Action Team [SSAT], 2006).

**Figure 2. Student expulsions in Ontario’s public schools (2000-2004)**

The number of suspensions also increased over time. According to Figure 3, 152,626 (of total student enrollment of 2,127,129) students were suspended in 2003-2004, with 229,394 suspensions issued that year. Therefore, multiple suspensions were given to individuals. Male students accounted for 77% of suspended students, while students with exceptionalities accounted for 18%. The majority of suspensions were given to Black students (SSAT, 2006).
Figure 3. Student suspensions in Ontario’s public schools (2000-2004)

The consequences of implementing the SSA (2000) were brought to the attention of the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) by parents, educators, and community organizations. Just before the Act was reviewed by the Ministry of Education (SSAT, 2006) five years after it was implemented, the OHRC adamantly requested that the Ministry gather race-based and gender-based data to ensure that their review was thorough and addressed the concerns raised by the public (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2004). The Ministry advised that they would accommodate this request, but, for reasons unclear, did not agree to collect race-based information.

Progressive Discipline and School Safety Act (PDSS, 2007)

Under a Liberal majority government led by Premier Dalton McGuinty, the SSA, 2000 was reviewed at the end of 2005-beginning of 2006, and Bill 212 was brought forth in 2007. The SSA was amended on June 4, 2007 and renamed the PDSS, 2007. It came into effect on February 1, 2008. Policy amendments were made based on the information
gathered from the two inquiries conducted by the Ontario Human Rights Commission (2004) and the SSAT (2006); the latter was commissioned by the Minister of Education.

The term *progressive discipline* was the key ingredient to this amended Act, intended to move away from notions of mandatory suspensions and expulsions and implement restorative practices. In fact, under this new Act, school boards were required to remove zero tolerance phrases from all policy documents. Additionally, full expulsions (from all boards in Ontario) were no longer allowed, teachers were no longer permitted to suspend students, and principals were no longer authorized to expel students. Principals could suspend students, but student expulsion had become the responsibility of the school board. This shift in authority resulted in completion of additional paperwork for school administrators. Furthermore, mitigating factors were given more weight in decision processes about suspensions and expulsions. School boards were required to have alternative schools or programs available to their expelled and suspended students and to re-admit expelled students after they had completed alternative programs; furthermore, these students remained students of the board during the expulsion period (Roher, 2007).

Lastly, teacher education programs in Ontario were required to address non-violent conflict resolution in the curriculum (Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario, 2007; Roher, 2007).

**Keeping Our Kids Safe at School Act (KOKSS, 2009)**

Safe schools legislation in Ontario was reviewed again in 2009, under McGuinty’s Liberal government (majority of seats in the Legislature), to create new legislation guiding how school board employees (teachers, educational assistants, all non-teaching staff [e.g., social worker, child and youth worker], administrative and custodial
staff, vice-principals, and school bus drivers) would handle incidents in schools. The legislation required all school board employees to report incidents that happened at school and required employees working directly with students to respond to these incidents. This Act came into effect on February 1, 2010.

The KOKSS Act detailed four major changes in how incidents were handled in Ontario schools by school board staff. First, all school staff were required to report all incidents that could lead to suspension and/or expulsion to their principal. The Act provided a list of behaviours that might lead to suspensions and expulsions. Suspension incidents included possessing alcohol or illegal drugs and/or being under the influence of either of these substances, threatening to inflict serious bodily harm on a person, and swearing at a person in authority at school. Expulsion incidents included possessing a weapon and/or using a weapon to threaten or commit bodily harm to another person, committing sexual assault, and committing robbery at school. This Act provided details about what would happen when an incident was reported to the principal and what information would be shared with the parents/guardians of students involved in incidents. Additionally, this Act detailed what would happen if an incident were not reported, and the obligations of the principal to respond by contacting the human resources department.

Second, according to the Act, once an incident was reported to the principal she or he would decide what disciplinary actions, if any, would be taken. If a suspension were required as per the policy guidelines, then the principal was obligated to contact the parents/guardians of the suspended student. Additionally, if another student was harmed in the incident (again, the principal’s determination), the principal was obligated to contact the parents/guardians of the victim. There were two exceptions when the
principal could not contact the parents/guardians of students involved in incidents: (i) principals were not permitted to contact the parents/guardians of students who were 18 years of age or older, or who were 16 or 17 years old and had withdrawn from parental control; (ii) principals were not permitted to contact the parents/guardians of students if the principal believed the parents/guardians would harm their child as a result of learning about the incident.

Third, school staff members who worked directly with students were required to respond to incidents that had a negative impact on the school climate. Responding to an incident might include identifying the behaviour, asking the students involved to stop the inappropriate behaviour, explaining why certain behaviours were inappropriate or disrespectful, and asking the students to change their future behaviour. School staff were also required to report incidents (deemed to be inappropriate behaviours) that happened off school property if these incidents would have a negative impact on the school climate and could lead to a student’s suspension or expulsion. In the Act, inappropriate behaviours included sexist, racist, homophobic, and sexual comments, slurs, and jokes. Lastly, the Act advised that school board employees were obligated to respond and report all incidents that might lead to students’ suspension and expulsion as long as reporting the incident did not cause physical harm to anyone; however, once conditions were deemed safe, the incident must be reported to the principal.

**Accepting Schools Act (ASA, 2012)**

Still under McGuinty’s Liberal government (minority of seats in the Legislature), Bill 13 was put forth in November, 2011 to require schools to take more measures to prevent bullying incidents in schools, issue tougher consequences for bullying, and
support students who wanted to promote understanding and respect for all. The bill came into effect on September, 2012 and was henceforth called the *Accepting Schools Act, 2012*. While this legislation required school boards to begin making specific changes to their policies and procedures around bullying and school safety by September, 2012, it was legally acceptable that these changes might not be operationalized until February, 2013.

Some of the main requirements detailed in the *ASA (2012)* were: (a) new definition of bullying; (b) changes to Section 310(1) of the *Education Act*, which set out the circumstances where a student must be suspended and considered for possible expulsion—circumstances now included incidents related to bullying and to activities that were motivated by bias, prejudice, or hate; and (c) amendment to school board multi-year plans to include the goals set out in Bill 13 around positive school climate and bullying prevention.

**Content Analysis**

The content analysis process began with an initial review of each of the four pieces of school safety legislation individually, followed by a comparison across documents. Finally, Pal’s (2006) policy framework was used to explore three major parts of the documents to produce a more holistic understanding of the content of school safety legislation in Ontario. Bowen (2009) advised that content analysis should ultimately link research questions and the elements of the policy content to ensure sufficient focus is placed on answering the research questions.
Addressing Research Question # 1 Using Bowen’s (2009) Model

To address the first research question in this study about the nature and state of school safety legislation, Bowen’s (2009) process for identifying the main elements of a document was drawn upon. The following five elements were identified in each document: dates and timelines, structure, vocabularies, policy focus, and target audience. A comparison of the five elements across documents is illustrated in Table 9.
Table 9  
Comparing Five Elements across Four Policy Documents

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[SSA]</td>
<td>[PDSS]</td>
<td>[KOKSS]</td>
<td>[ASA]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dates and Timelines</strong></td>
<td><strong>Dates and Timelines</strong></td>
<td><strong>Dates and Timelines</strong></td>
<td><strong>Dates and Timelines</strong></td>
<td><strong>Dates and Timelines</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Bill 81 was read three times by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario: 1st Reading: May 31, 2000 2nd Reading: June 13, 2000 3rd Reading: June 14, 2000 Royal Assent: June 23, 2000 Effective: June 23, 2000</td>
<td>• Bill 212 was read three times by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario: 1st Reading: April 17, 2007 2nd Reading: May 8, 2007 3rd Reading: June 4, 2007 Royal Assent: June 23, 2007 Effective: June 23, 2007</td>
<td>• Bill 157 was read three times by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario: 1st Reading: March 12, 2009 2nd Reading: April 7, 2009 3rd Reading: June 1, 2009 Royal Assent: June 5, 2009 Effective: June 5, 2009</td>
<td>• Bill 13 was read three times by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario: 1st Reading: November 30, 2011 2nd Reading: May 3, 2012 3rd Reading: June 5, 2012 Royal Assent: June 5, 2012 Effective: June 5, 2012</td>
<td>• Ontario’s Education Minister, Janet Ecker, released a <em>Code of Conduct for Ontario Schools</em> in April 2000, which was presaged by the Scarborough Board of Education’s (1993) adoption of a <em>Safe Schools Policy on Violence and Weapons</em>. These two documents paved the way for Bill 81 followed by the three other pieces of legislation examined in this study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Bill Passed</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Effective Date</td>
<td>Remarks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Bill 81 passed</td>
<td>Safe Schools Act, 2000</td>
<td>February 1, 2008</td>
<td>- Section 7 effective: June 19, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Whole document effective: September 1, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bill 212 passed</td>
<td>Progressive Discipline and School Safety Act, 2007</td>
<td>February 1, 2010</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Once Bill 157 was passed, it was named Keeping Our Kids Safe at School Act, 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bill 157 passed</td>
<td>Keeping Our Kids Safe at School Act, 2009</td>
<td>June 19, 2012</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Once Bill 13 was passed, it was named Accepting Schools Act, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Bill 13 passed</td>
<td>Accepting Schools Act, 2012</td>
<td>June 19, 2012</td>
<td>- All bills were passed in the month of June in various years, but not all of them came into effect immediately. The SSA (2000) and Section 7 of the ASA (2012) were the only ones that came into effect immediately. Some of the requirements that accompanied some legislation could only be realistically satisfied over time.</td>
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</table>
| | This uniform way of presenting the pieces of legislation along with having a uniform list (e.g., Bill number) of components in each document positions the policies within a formal government authority.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocabulary</th>
<th>preamble, enacting clause, and coming into force provisions.</th>
<th>on the cover page.</th>
<th>Readings and Royal Assent dates are noted on the cover page.</th>
<th>dates are noted on the cover page.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Contains a Bill number, title, preamble, enacting clause, and coming into force provisions.</td>
<td>• Contains an index in the far left corner margin (far right corner margin for French column) that provides the reader with guidance when searching for</td>
<td>Contains an index in the far left corner margin (far right corner margin for French column) that provides the</td>
<td>Contains an index in the far left corner margin (far right corner margin for French column) that provides the reader with guidance when searching for</td>
<td>Since the documents are deemed to be legal documents, some legal jargon is used in them. However, overall the vocabulary used in the documents is accessible to someone who is not</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sections that address particular issues. For example, “duration of mandatory suspension” can be found in the far left corner margin pointing to the Section that discusses the recommended length of time for mandatory school suspensions.

- Contains formal/legal language.

| Provides the reader with guidance when searching for Sections that address particular issues. |
| Provides the reader with guidance when searching for Sections that address particular issues. |
| Provides the reader with guidance when searching for Sections that address particular issues. |

• All documents contain formal/legal language. For example, the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Ontario is mentioned in all documents, and there are words and phrases typically used in legal documents such as, “Board of Governors,” “membership in Federation,” “subsection,” “commencement,” “clause,” and “explanatory note.” The presence of these words contribute to the formal tone of the documents—a tone representative of seriousness and government authority.

considered to have extensive experience reading and writing documents in the legal field.

- Contains formal/legal language.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>“Safety,” “discipline,” “behaviour,” “mandatory,” “mitigating circumstances,” “appeal,” “learning,” “school environment,” “behaviour,” and “school climate” are repeatedly used in the document.</th>
<th>“Safety,” “school environment,” “school climate,” “report,” “response,” “respond,” “teacher,” “circumstances,” and “notify” are repeatedly used in the document.</th>
<th>“Safety,” “behaviour,” “bullying,” “notify,” “report,” “reporting,” “response,” “respond,” “school climate,” “discipline,” “disciplinary measures,” “disciplinary approaches,” “learning,” “teachers,” “circumstances,” and “inclusive” are repeatedly used in the document.</th>
<th>All documents mention the words “safety,” “behaviour,” and/or “behaving”—considering the purposeful use of these words across documents, there is a strong relationship between student behaviour and creating safe schools.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>● “Bullying” is used twice in the document.</td>
<td>● “Discipline,” “disciplinary measures,” “behave,” and “behaviour”</td>
<td>All documents mention the word and/or phrase “discipline” and “disciplinary measures” communicating the importance of addressing discipline issues to contribute to school safety.</td>
<td>The word “learning” is also commonly used across documents, with the exception of the KOKSS (2009) document.</td>
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<td>Summary of focus:</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Preventing misbehaviour, reducing punitive punishments, implementing restorative justice programs for students who are suspended and/or expelled</td>
<td>• Responding to and reporting incidents that compromise school safety</td>
<td>• Bullying awareness and prevention</td>
<td>• Inclusive school environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Defining acceptable and unacceptable student behaviours</td>
<td>• Prescribing strict punishments for specific behaviours</td>
<td>• Implementing accountability measures to support a positive school climate</td>
<td>• To help understand why the SSA (2000) might have been viewed by some people as having a zero tolerance tone, the word “mandatory” is mentioned 23 times in the SSA (2000) and is never mentioned in the other three documents.</td>
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<td>• The word “bullying” is used twice in the PDSS (2007) and is repeatedly used in the ASA (2012), but it is not mentioned in the SSA (2000)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Furthermore, the words “teacher” and/or “teaching” are found across all documents highlighting relationships among school safety, student learning, effective teaching, and teachers’ responsibilities.</td>
</tr>
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</table>
or the KOKSS (2009).

- The ASA (2012) is the only document that mentions the word “inclusive” and repeatedly so, which indicates a certain shift in focus of school safety legislation in that it sends the message of being more sensitive to the needs of all students.

- The phrases “school environment” and “school climate” are used across all documents emphasizing the influence that the school environment/climate has on students’ behaviours and, ultimately, school safety for everyone in the school community.
| Target Audience | • School board administrators, school administrators, teachers, parents, and students. | • School board administrators, school administrators, teachers, parents, and students. | • School board administrators, school administrators, teachers, parents, and students. | • The four documents amended Ontario’s *Education Act* and/or the *Teaching Profession Act*—together, these Acts are in place to shape the understandings, responsibilities/duties, and behaviours of school board administrators, school-level administrators, teachers, parents, and students. |

To help answer the second research question in this study about how Ontario’s school safety legislation might have impacted the educational experiences of racialized students, Pal’s (2006) policy framework was used to identify the problem definitions, policy goals, and instruments in each of the four documents. The policy problem definition in each document sometimes consisted of a description of prominent conditions that surrounded the topic at hand and a history of prior government policies or political inaction that had been influential in framing the issue. Indeed, reading each policy document communicated the topic/issue at hand, but it was necessary to observe and gather information that had resulted in the topic becoming a priority for the government to adequately understand the problem definition in each policy document, and to also understand if a cluster of problems made up the problem definition.

The policy goals are objectives that are set to rectify the problem as defined in the policy. The goals in each of the four documents were related to each other in that they all amended sections of Ontario’s Education Act that provides instructions and guidelines regarding school discipline and safety. The policy goals were also related to the broader goals of public education in Ontario. Although the policy goals are considered to be intermediate goals, they can now be measured every two years via the required school climate surveys.

Policy instruments address the problem as defined in the policy by achieving the goals. The government generally uses the following types of policy instruments: (i) doing nothing (i.e., no intervention, usually because the problem is self-corrective), (ii) information-based (e.g., knowledge transfer, moral persuasion [least coercive]), (iii)
expenditure-based (e.g., grants, vouchers), (iv) regulation (e.g., command, prohibit, limit activity), and (v) acting directly (e.g., education, garbage collection, Parks and Recreation). Only the regulation and information-based policy instruments were identified in the four policy documents in this study.

Pal (2006) noted the importance of acknowledging the internal consistency within each of these three elements and also acknowledging the vertical consistency (e.g., a program promoting school safety under school safety legislation should relate to the policy goals and problem definition). Table 10 illustrates Pal’s policy framework applied to the four pieces of legislation.
Table 10
*Pal's (2006) Elements of Policy Content*

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<td>• There is a lack of respect, responsibility, and clearly stated standards around behaviours that contribute to school safety.</td>
<td>• There is a disproportional number of racialized students being suspended and expelled from Ontario’s public schools.</td>
<td>• There are no standards governing the ways in which school board employees respond and report incidents in schools.</td>
<td>• There are excessive incidents of bullying taking place at schools, and too many schools boards in Ontario do not have existing or adequate school board policies of inclusivity and anti-discrimination.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• To increase respect and responsibility, and to set standards for safe learning and safe teaching in schools.</td>
<td>• To provide more thoughtful and inclusive guidelines for suspending and expelling students from schools, and to introduce restorative</td>
<td>• To provide school board employees with clear standards to respond and report incidents in schools.</td>
<td>• To amend the part of the <em>Education Act</em> that addresses bullying and school board policies that can prevent bullying.</td>
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</table>
Additionally, to amend the *Teaching Profession Act.*

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy Instruments</th>
<th>The Government of Ontario is employing the policy instrument of regulation where the following Safe Schools initiatives are implemented to discipline students for specific misconduct: (a) Provincial Code of Conduct, (b) Local Police-School Board Protocol, (c) Appropriate Dress Policy, (d) Opening and Closing Exercises, (e) schools still required practices in schools.</th>
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<tr>
<td>• The Government of Ontario is employing the policy instrument of regulation that is focused on a more proactive approach to preventing student misconduct and addressing student misconduct with a progressive discipline/restorative practice versus a punitive one. This practice especially entails prohibiting teachers from suspending students and principals from solely making decisions to expel students. It furthermore helps achieve the policy goal. That is, the government is providing all school</td>
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<td>• Again, the Government of Ontario is employing the policy instrument of regulation by commanding school board employees to respond and report incidents in very uniform ways. Additionally, the government is employing the information-based policy instrument to help achieve the policy goal. That is, the government is providing all school</td>
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<td>• The Government of Ontario recognizes that bullying prevention and reduction in schools is best accomplished using a whole-school approach that includes support from government, educators, school staff, parents, students, and the wider communities. Taking this hypothesis into consideration, the Government is employing an</td>
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to follow the requirements outlined in the 1994 Policy/Program Memorandum (PPM 120), and (f) board-specific Safe Schools initiatives are also encouraged by the government. Additionally, the government is employing a regulation policy instrument by requiring schools to conduct school climate surveys every two years, and having schools add to the public with a document containing information about this policy’s requirements—the document can be located on the Ontario Ministry of Education website or via the Google search engine. The document includes a requirement for school boards to have programs for students who are suspended for more than five school days and those who are expelled. The document contains information on programs for students who are suspended for more than five school days and those who are expelled. The document can be located on the Ontario Ministry of Education website or via the Google search engine.
| • Here, the instrument of regulation is being used by the government to define norms and acceptable behaviours, and prohibit certain types of behaviours in schools. | • Here, the instrument of regulation is being used by the government to shift the policy focus from punitive punishments to more preventative and restorative practices, and redefine the control and responsibilities of school boards, principals, and teachers. | • Here, the regulation and information-based policy instruments are being used by the government to monitor and instruct teachers and principals when they are faced with incidents at school. | • Here, the regulation and information-based policy instruments are being used by the government to reduce and prevent incidents of bullying by providing a clear definition of bullying and requiring certain initiatives. | • Here, the existing Safe Schools initiatives by including bullying prevention and awareness initiatives. |
Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis (Creswell, 2008) is a component of this policy analysis. As implied by its name, thematic analysis is used to identify sub-themes, in this case, across the four pieces of school safety legislation in Ontario. This process of thematic analysis involved reviewing the four pieces of legislation, one at a time and then across documents, to develop codes, using codes to construct categories, and lastly identifying sub-themes that were organized into the four main contexts: political, economic, social, and educational. The decision to organize sub-themes into four major contexts occurred after all sub-themes were identified.

Initially, the policy documents were reviewed manually and then the NVivo software was used to help with enumeration of words in each document and then across documents. The four major contexts along with the emergent sub-themes are presented in Table 11. While the majority of sub-themes were found across all four documents, nothing related to the economic context was found in the KOKSS (2009). The SSA (2000) focused more on excluding students with behaviour challenges from school, while the PDSS (2007) and the ASA (2012) focused more on finding ways to keep these same students in the school system. Therefore, a sub-theme of exclusion was identified in the SSA (2000), whereas a sub-theme of inclusion was identified in the PDSS (2007) and the ASA (2012).
Table 11

*Contexts and Sub-Themes in the Four Policy Documents*

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<td><strong>Political</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Power and authority:</strong></td>
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<td><strong>geographic locations:</strong></td>
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<td>• Section 301: (8) “The</td>
<td>• Section 5: (2) “The</td>
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<td>*promote a positive school</td>
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<td>climate that is inclusive</td>
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<td>and accepting of all pupils,</td>
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<td>including pupils of any race,</td>
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for **different classes of persons.**”

- Section 306: (2) “The minimum duration of a mandatory suspension is one school day and the maximum duration is 20 school days. The minimum and maximum duration may be varied by regulation, and different standards may be established for **different circumstances** or **different classes of persons.**”

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<th>Collaboration:</th>
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<td>- Section 302: (8) “When establishing policies and guidelines under this section, a board shall consider the <strong>views of persons responsible for programs</strong> for suspended and expelled students in the <strong>climate</strong>”</td>
<td>- Participation of <strong>persons responsible for programs</strong> for suspended and expelled students in the <strong>climate</strong></td>
<td>- Requires all board <strong>employees</strong> to participate in improving the school <strong>climate</strong> by reporting</td>
<td>- “programs, interventions and other supports may be provided by <strong>social workers, psychologists</strong>”</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
school councils with respect to the contents of the policies and guidelines.

- Section 302: (9) The board shall periodically review its policies and guidelines established under this section and shall solicit the views of pupils, teachers, staff, volunteers working in the schools, parents and guardians, school councils and the public.”

- Section 303: (3) “When establishing or reviewing a local code of conduct, the principal shall consider the views of the school council with decision-making processes about suspended and expelled students.

- Section 311.7: (1) “In this section, “designated tribunal” means a tribunal designated under the regulations to hear appeals of board decisions to expel pupils.”

incidents that negatively impact the school climate; also requires non-board employees who frequently interact with students to report such incidents to the principal.

- With input from members of the school community, parents/guardians, school councils, and the public (paraphrased from ASA, 2012), the bullying prevention/intervention plan will be reviewed periodically by each board.

or other professionals who have training in similar fields, as determined by the board” (p. 4).
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<th>Communication:</th>
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<th>Communication:</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Legal obligations and understanding of acceptable/unacceptable behaviours are communicated among school administrators and parents/guardians</td>
<td>• Policy now includes the requirement of contacting parents/guardians of students who were harmed in incidents, with special consideration to keeping the identity confidential of a student who harmed a student.</td>
<td>• Requires principal to communicate the results of an investigation to the teacher or other employee who reported the incident.</td>
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<td>• “an open and ongoing dialogue among the principal, school staff, parents and students is an important component in creating a positive school climate in which everyone feels safe and respected” (p. 2).</td>
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<td>• Section 13: (303.3.4) “A board shall make its bullying prevention and intervention plan</td>
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available to the public by posting it on the board’s website or, if the board does not have a website, in another manner that the board considers appropriate.”

- “the Minister shall post on the Ministry’s website information about the number of reported suspensions and expulsions [after receiving board’s annual reports].”

- Using school climate surveys, “every board shall use surveys to collect information from its pupils and staff, and parents and guardians of its pupils...
Educational

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<th>Discipline and safety:</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Section 301: (1) “The Minister may establish a code of conduct governing the behaviour of all persons in schools.”</td>
<td>• Each board is required to provide at least one program for suspended students and one for expelled students; increased board/school accountability for student learning after they are suspended and/or expelled (progressive discipline).</td>
<td>• Requires principal to show safety concerns for all students involved in incidents beyond the incident when notifying parents and determining the consequences for actions.</td>
<td>• Section 6: (300.0.1) “To establish disciplinary approaches that promote positive behaviour and use measures that include appropriate consequences and supports for pupils to address inappropriate behaviour.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Section 301: (3) “Every board shall take such steps as the Minister directs to bring the code of conduct to the attention of pupils, parents and guardians of pupils and others who may be present in...</td>
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<tr>
<td>Decision-making:</td>
<td>Responsibility:</td>
<td>Inclusion and Respect:</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Teachers cannot</td>
<td>• All board employees and individuals who are not board employees who come</td>
<td>• Section 3: (1.a.1) “Promote a positive</td>
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at least once every two years in accordance with any policies and guidelines made under paragraph 31 of subsection 8 (1).”
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schools under the jurisdiction of the board.”

**Respect and responsibility:**
- The written purpose of this Act is to “increase respect and responsibility, to set standards for safe learning and safe teaching in schools…”

**Decision-making:**
- Teacher is able to make a decision about suspending students from school.
- Principal as main decision-maker when expelling students from a board.
- Principals can suspend students, but can only recommend students be expelled to board.
- Board as main decision-maker when expelling students from school.
- Expulsion from all boards in province no longer allowed.

**Inclusion:**
- Students remain a part of the school board that has expelled them if they cooperate by attending the
- into contact with students regularly are required to report incidents to the principal if students’ behaviour negatively impacts school climate.
- Principal’s responsibility to notify parents/guardians of their child’s involvement in the incident (there are exceptions to be considered here based on the age of the child and the safety of the child).

**Decision-making:**
- School climate that is inclusive and accepting of all pupils, including pupils of any race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, marital status, family status or disability.”
- Section 12: (303.1.1) “Every board shall support pupils who want to establish and lead activities and organizations that promote a safe and inclusive learning environment, the
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exclusion:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Full expulsion from all boards in province allowed.</td>
<td>• <strong>Principal</strong> (or employee designated by the principal) makes the decision about adequate disciplinary actions.</td>
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</table>

recommendation program.

acceptance of and respect for others and the creation of a positive school climate.”
Political Context

Public schools in Ontario are governed by the Ontario Ministry of Education. The political context/theme includes identifying instances in the documents when governmental power and authority is talked about. The power and authority of Ontario’s Ministers of Education were repeatedly mentioned throughout all four policy documents. It was mentioned 38 times in the SSA (2000), 11 times in the PDSS (2007), 8 times in the KOKSS (2009), and 20 times in the ASA (2012)—these numbers only pertain to the English component of the documents and do not include the explanatory notes that are included in some of the documents. Governmental power and authority were evident in instructing various parties in the school community and the general public of what was deemed acceptable and unacceptable behaviours, and if/how particular groups of individuals employed by school boards and those not employed by school boards (but frequently interact with students) should respond to incidents that are threatening to the school climate (according to the policy). The Minister’s authority was mentioned throughout the documents when discussing/instructing students and parents/guardians to respond to incidents involving students’ behavioural challenges. Although there were several instances where these policy documents stated school board autonomy in creating local policies, programs, and practices that promoted a positive school climate, it clearly stated that school boards are always answerable to the Minister for decisions.

Economic Context

Considering that public schools across Ontario accommodate students from various socio-economic backgrounds, three of four policy documents (KOKSS did not mention anything related to the economic context) mentioned that the Minister’s and
local school boards’ decisions about consequences for students involved in incidents can vary according to their socio-economic classes. Notably, the exact phrases about socio-economic classes that are used in policy documents can be found to be vaguely stated. The SSA (2000) states “different classes of persons”; the PDSS (2007) states “different classes of pupils”; and the ASA (2012) states “family status.”

The phrase “different locations” is used in the SSA (2000) and the PDSS (2007). This phrase alludes to a school’s geographic location. Schools that exist in certain cities/communities may largely serve particular groups of students with specific socio-economic backgrounds.

Social Context

Collaboration and communication are identified as the two sub-themes for social context evident in all four policy documents.

Collaboration. The SSA (2000) mentions the necessity for school boards to review school discipline and safety legislation periodically and, in doing so, “solicit the views of pupils, teachers, staff, volunteers working in the schools, parents and guardians, school councils and the public” (SSA, 2000, p. 4). In the SSA (2000) document, the Ministry encourages principals to rely on input from school councils when reviewing codes of conduct, but this is not a requirement: Section 303: (3) “When establishing or reviewing a local code of conduct, the principal shall consider the views of the school council with respect to its contents” (SSA, 2000, p. 4).

Collaborative efforts are mentioned across all the documents, with these collaborations expanded over time. For example, the PDSS (2007) includes the perspectives of persons responsible for programs for suspended and expelled students in
the decision-making processes about students who are expelled. Additionally, the PDSS (2007) includes a tribunal to provide input into the expulsion appeal processes—Section 311.7 (1) states the following: “In this section, “designated tribunal” means a tribunal designated under the regulations to hear appeals of board decisions to expel pupils” (PDSS, 2007, p. 13). Decisions about expulsions made by the tribunal are final.

Moreover, the KOKSS (2009) document clarifies expectations, which may have previously been vague, of board employees—especially principals and teachers—and provides details on how all board employees and non-board employees who frequently interact with students must work together to contribute to a positive school climate. More recently, in 2012 the Ministry started placing special focus on the supports outside schools upon which schools can rely. For instance, to improve the bullying prevention and intervention plans in boards, the Ministry recommends that, “programs, interventions and other supports may be provided by social workers, psychologists or other professionals who have training in similar fields, as determined by the board” (ASA, 2012, p. 4). The Ministry even requires boards to solicit input from members of the school community, parents/guardians, school councils, and the public when periodically reviewing the bullying prevention/intervention plan.

**Communication.** Communication is imperative when addressing social issues. Its importance is clearly expressed across all four policy documents. According to these documents, communication not only extended over time to include more members of the school community and also persons beyond the school community, but the information that needs to be communicated and the depth/details have increased. The SSA (2000) mentions the need for school boards to fulfill legal obligations by sharing the
understanding of acceptable and unacceptable student behaviours among students, school administrators, and parents/guardians. While the SSA (2000) introduces relevant concepts in addressing school discipline and safety and mentions mitigating factors, the PDSS (2007) explores mitigating factors at greater lengths and provides more detailed explanations of concepts and expectations of particular members of the boards and school community. The KOKSS (2009) goes further by providing a particular protocol for responding to and reporting incidents, and more explicit instructions are provided for if/when principals should notify parents of incidents. Of the four documents examined, the ASA (2012) focuses the most on increasing communication among members of the school community when addressing behavioural challenges and revising the bullying prevention and intervention plan. This document gives special attention to the necessity of communicating with the public.

**Educational Context**

School discipline and safety legislation play an important role in shaping the school environment/climate, which in turn impacts students’ behaviours and educational outcomes. It was important to identify patterns and sub-themes in the four policy documents that were related to promoting a positive school climate. Discipline and safety go hand-in-hand as a sub-theme across all four documents. Respect and responsibility are intertwined in the SSA (2000) document, while responsibility is emphasized in the KOKSS (2009) document, and inclusion and respect are coupled and prioritized in the ASA (2012) document. Inclusion is emphasized in the PDSS (2007) document. The sub-theme of decision-making is identified across all documents with the exception of the ASA (2012).
**Discipline and safety.** While the sub-theme of discipline and safety is evident across the four documents, it is mentioned in different ways in each document. In the SSA (2000), discipline and safety are talked about in terms of identifying unacceptable behaviours and coupling those behaviours with consequences as per the code of conduct provided by the Ministry, which typically includes suspensions and expulsions from school. The PDSS (2007) document discusses school discipline and safety with a special focus on mitigating factors and board-required programs for students who are suspended and expelled—hence the title of the 2007 Act includes the phrase “progressive discipline.” With what seems to be a broader understanding of safety, the KOKSS (2009) document compels principals to be equally concerned about the safety of students who harm others when responding to incidents, determining consequences, and notifying parents/guardians. The ASA (2012) document instructs boards on how to design and implement a holistic approach to promote school discipline and safety.

**Respect and responsibility.** Respect and responsibility are coupled in the overarching purpose of the SSA (2000) document, emphasizing the reciprocal relationship between these two concepts. The SSA (2000) sets out to increase students’ respect for authority figures (e.g., teachers and other school staff), but it also extends to respect among peers. The document states the responsibilities of all school board employees, parents, and students to respond to particular incidents specified in the document. The PDSS (2007) does not explicitly discuss respect and responsibility. In the KOKSS (2009) document, responsibility is explicitly discussed in terms of particular persons’ responsibilities to respond and report incidents that compromise the positive school climate. The KOKSS (2009) document also gives significant attention to
principals’ responsibility to notify the parents/guardians of students who are involved in incidents that compromise the positive school climate. Responsibilities in the KOKSS (2009) document are specific with stipulations accompanying them. While the ASA (2012) document does not explicitly address responsibility, it focuses on acceptance and respect for students of “any race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, marital status, family status or disability” (ASA, 2012, p. 3).

**Decision-making.** The sub-theme of decision-making is found across all documents with the exception of the ASA (2012) document. In the SSA (2000) document, teachers are able to decide whether or not students who do not behave in ways that are deemed acceptable should be suspended from school, and principals are able to decide whether or not students are expelled from school. Decision-making authorities shift in the PDSS (2007) document: teachers are no longer allowed to suspend students—decisions about suspension are made by the school principal. Additionally, the PDSS (2007) mentions that boards would serve as decision-makers about expulsions, while designated tribunals would make final decisions about expulsion appeals. The KOKSS (2009) notes that deciding adequate consequences for behaviours is typically the responsibility of the principal; this responsibility includes recommending expulsions to the board.

**Exclusion and inclusion.** The sub-theme of exclusion is evident in the SSA (2000) in terms of how students who receive full expulsion (i.e., expulsion from all boards in Ontario) are treated. Full expulsions take away the opportunity from these students to receive a public education in Ontario. While SSA (2000) recommends that
boards provide programs for students who are suspended and expelled, there is no requirement for boards to do so. The treatment of students who are expelled changed in the PDSS (2007) in that students no longer receive expulsions from all boards in Ontario, and all boards are required to provide a program for suspended students and one for expelled students. Once expelled students attend the program, they remain a part of the respective board. However, if expelled students do not attend the program, then they are (a) not allowed to re-enrol in school and (b) typically not allowed to apply for re-entry to a school in the board from which they were expelled. Inclusion is explicitly mentioned in the ASA (2012) document with particular focus on school administrators’ support of students who want to create groups and programs that promote respect for all students and, in turn, an inclusive learning environment. The ASA (2012) frames school discipline and safety in a way that focuses more on student leadership, adult supports, acceptance, and collaboration.

Synthesis of Policy Analysis Findings

To provide a thorough understanding of the nature and state of school safety policies between 2000 and 2013 in Ontario, this chapter reported the results of a systematic policy analysis (Bowen, 2009) of four pieces of school safety legislation in Ontario, namely, the Safe Schools Act (2000), Progressive Discipline and School Safety Act (2007), Keeping Our Kids Safe at School Act (2009), and the Accepting Schools Act (2012). This systematic process consisted of three types of analyses: (i) historical analysis, (ii) content analysis, and (iii) thematic analysis.

The historical analysis was based on information found in scholarly articles and government reports that provide an overview of Ontario’s political climate during the
time period (2000-2013) in which school safety legislation was developing. Additionally, the four pieces of legislation were each described in this historical analysis, highlighting each piece’s defining features (e.g., mandatory suspension requirements).

The content analysis consisted of two parts. First, a five-element analysis (Bowen, 2009) was conducted, identifying the dates and timelines, structure, vocabularies, policy focus, and target audience in each document, and then comparing these elements across the four documents. This analysis contributes to answering the first research question. Second, a three-element analysis (Pal, 2006) was conducted, noting the problem definitions, policy goals, and instruments in each of the four documents, and drawing comparisons across them. This analysis contributes to answering the second research question.

The thematic analysis included coding the four documents to identify sub-themes that were later organized into four contexts: political, economic, social, and educational. These sub-themes encompassed: power and authority (political context); socio-economic classes, geographic locations (economic context); collaboration and communication (social context); and discipline, safety, respect, responsibility, decision-making, inclusion, and exclusion (educational context).

The historical, content, and thematic analyses that comprise this policy analysis complement each other to tell a story of school safety policy development in Ontario between 2000 and 2013. This story is drawn upon to better understand the suspension and expulsion experiences of racialized students in Ontario during that time period.
CHAPTER 6: PRE-2008 YOUTH ANALYSIS

The purpose of this study was to explore how Ontario’s school safety policies influenced the educational experiences of racialized students between 2000 and 2013. With this purpose in mind, I set out to answer the following three research questions:

(1) What has been the nature and state of school safety policies in Ontario between 2000 and 2013?

(2) How might have school safety policies influenced the educational experiences of racialized students who were excluded (i.e., suspended and/or expelled) from school during the time such policies were in effect?

(3) How might have the suspension and expulsion experiences of racialized students influenced school safety policymaking and development in Ontario?

By inviting the perspectives of youth who experienced suspension and/or expulsion from Ontario schools between 2001 and 2013, I particularly address the second research question and, at the same time, explore the relationship between how the policies were experienced and how they changed/developed over time.

Findings from youth interview data are presented in two chapters to improve readability and highlight similarities and differences in youth experiences across two time periods. Chapter 6 reports the findings from interview data of 10 youth who experienced suspension and/or expulsion between 2001 and 2008. This period is understood as the time before the introduction of progressive discipline. Progressive discipline became a priority in Ontario school safety legislation in late 2007, with the policy commencing in schools in February, 2008. Chapter 7 reports the findings from interview data of 10 youth
who were suspended and/or expelled between 2008 and 2013. The post-2008 period is known as the time when progressive discipline was a main priority in Ontario school safety legislation.

Participants’ Backgrounds

Table 12 illustrates the names of the participants who were suspended and/or expelled pre-2008. It provides an at-a-glance view of which participants described experiences related to sub-themes that were organized under the four contexts. An addition sign (+) indicates a participant’s contribution to a theme under a particular context, while a subtraction sign (-) indicates their lack of input about sub-themes under a particular context.

Table 12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Youth Participants Pre-2008</th>
<th>Mary</th>
<th>Alex</th>
<th>Barbara</th>
<th>Sean</th>
<th>Debbie</th>
<th>Cynthia</th>
<th>David</th>
<th>Ken</th>
<th>Kendra</th>
<th>Jason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Political</td>
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Six of 10 participants (Mary, Barbara, Sean, Debbie, Cynthia, and Kendra) self-identified with being biologically female, but Sean said he lived as a male (and wished to be identified in the research as male). Alex and Barbara requested to be interviewed together in a focus group session, while the other eight participants took part in individual interviews. Mary and Jason were interviewed via telephone, while the other interviews were face-to-face. Only four participants (Mary, David, Kendra, and Jason) graduated
from high school. In presenting the findings, I have used direct quotations from the participants as deemed necessary to convey their feelings and perceptions related to the discussed experiences. As many of the respondents chose to use language that may be deemed inappropriate for an academic readership, I masked swear words using the asterisk symbol (*).¹

**Students Expelled**

The time period between 2001 and 2007 saw a rise in expulsions because the *Safe Schools Act, 2000* instituted mandatory expulsions under the principal’s authority. There were two types of expulsions: limited expulsion and full expulsion. Limited expulsion meant that students were not entitled to attend their school nor engage in school-related activities of that school. A limited expulsion could last from a minimum of 21 days to a maximum of one year after the date the principal suspended the student (note: principals usually suspended a student first, while the student was being considered for expulsion). A full expulsion meant that students were not entitled to attend any schools in the province until they met certain requirements as outlined by principal and board. It was the norm to have principals and board representatives collaborate on decisions of full expulsion.

Five (Alex, Sean, Debbie, David, and Ken) of the 10 participants experienced expulsion from school between 2004 and 2007. Debbie and David received limited expulsions, while Alex, Sean, and Ken received full expulsions from school.

¹ Verbatim quotes with swear words intact that belong to youth participants mentioned in Chapter 6 can be found in Appendix H.
Alex: Aboriginal (Upper Sixth Nation Mohawk) Canadian-born male was expelled from high school in 2004 for carrying a gun on school property.

Sean: Black Canadian-born transgender male whose parents are from Jamaica was expelled from high school in 2007 for his second suicidal attempt on school property.

Debbie: White Canadian-born female whose parents are from Israel (she self-identified as a White Jew) received a one-year expulsion from high school in 2007 for hitting a teacher.

David: Black Canadian-born male whose parents are from Jamaica was expelled from elementary school in 2004 for one year for sexual harassment, but, at the end of his second month of the expulsion, he was invited back to the school because it was revealed that he had been wrongfully accused.

Ken: Brown Trinidadian-born male immigrated to Canada in 2000 (he self-identified as a Brown person) was expelled from high school in 2006 for carrying a knife on school property.

Alex, Sean, and Ken were expelled from all schools within the province of Ontario. Alex, Sean, and Ken were not involved in any other educational programs or community work after they were expelled. They said that no other programs were recommended to them. Debbie said she was only expelled from her school for one full school year. She told me that one of the requirements to return to school was to complete community service at a local park, but she never completed that requirement. However, she returned to school after the school year, and nobody questioned her about not fulfilling the requirement. Due to a drug habit and being bullied by her peers, Debbie left school three weeks after she returned. David was only expelled from his elementary
school and began attending a different elementary school in a different school board by the time his original school principal contacted his parents. David’s parents placed him back in the original school. David eventually graduated from high school.

**Students Suspended**

The time period between 2001 and 2007 saw a rise in suspensions because the *Safe Schools Act, 2000* instituted mandatory suspensions. There were two types of suspensions: mandatory suspensions and discretionary suspensions. Reasons for mandatory suspensions were those listed in the *Safe Schools Act, 2000* and were applied across the province, while discretionary suspensions were those listed in school board policies. Both teachers and principals had the authority to issue mandatory and discretionary suspensions. A minimum suspension constituted one school day, and a maximum suspension was 20 school days.

All 10 students experienced school suspensions between 2003 and 2008 (winter term before the progressive discipline amendment to provincial policy in February, 2008). All five students who were expelled from school (including David who was wrongfully expelled and later rejoined school) experienced multiple suspensions prior to their expulsion. Alex and Ken were each suspended twice prior to their expulsion. Sean, Debbie, and David had each been suspended three times prior to their expulsion. David was additionally suspended twice in high school for skipping classes. All suspensions experienced by Alex, Sean, Ken, and David lasted 20 school days (the maximum). Debbie’s suspensions lasted from 3 to 10 school days.

Mary, Barbara, Cynthia, Kendra, and Jason experienced school suspensions but no expulsions. They each also experienced more than one suspension. Of the five
participants who were suspended but not expelled, three (Mary, Kendra, and Jason) graduated from high school.

**Mary:** Black Canadian-born female whose parents are from Trinidad (she self-identified as African-Canadian) was suspended from high school in 2006 for 20 days for fighting with another student. Prior to that suspension, Mary had been suspended once in elementary school for three days for fighting.

**Barbara:** Aboriginal (Upper Sixth Nation Ojibwe) Canadian-born female was suspended from high school in 2006 for 20 days for fighting with other students. Prior to that suspension, Barbara had been suspended once in elementary school for five days for swearing at her teacher.

**Cynthia:** White Canadian female whose White Canadian parents adopted her from Poland and brought her to live in Canada in 1995. She self-identified as White Polish Canadian. Between 2003 and 2005 (Grades 9-11), Cynthia was suspended 10 times for fighting (one of these times, she was carrying a knife). Her suspensions lasted about 5 days each time. In addition to these 10 suspensions, she was suspended twice for skipping classes; both suspensions were one-day in-school suspensions.

**Kendra:** Black Canadian-born female whose parents are from Somalia (she self-identified as a Black Somalian Canadian) was suspended from high school in 2003 for three days for passing notes about the teacher in class. She also received a one-day in-school suspension in 2004 for being late for school too many times in one month.

**Jason:** Brown Canadian-born male whose parents are from Sri Lanka (he self-identified as “Brown but not really Canadian”) was suspended three times from high school between 2004 and 2006. He was suspended for three days in 2004 for using his father’s
vehicle to hit a student on school property. In 2005, he was suspended for five school
days for fighting with another student. In 2006, he was suspended for one day for being
late too many times that month—this was not an in-school suspension.

**Students Graduating**

All six students who did not graduate expressed regret about not completing their
high school education. Twenty-five-year-old Alex explained that he had been unable to
secure employment because he did not have a high school diploma. He was very
concerned that his pregnant unemployed girlfriend (Barbara, another participant in this
study) would soon give birth to “another mouth to feed with no money coming in”
(Alex). Twenty-one-year-old Barbara agreed that a high school diploma could have made
a world of difference in her life, but she refused to attend school because she was bullied
by her peers and “could not catch a break in the system with all the teachers always
holding [her] back” (Barbara). She further explained that she was always the oldest
student in her classes due to “failing grades and failing everybody since pre-school”
(Barbara).

Twenty-three-year-old Sean told me that he was determined to obtain his high
school diploma one day soon, and explained that if he had not been expelled from school
he would have successfully obtained his diploma years ago:

I mean I struggled with a lot of the subjects in school but I was bright. I wasn’t
day lazy, you know? I was going places…knowing me, I was not going to let things
hold me back from succeeding with the diploma. I wanted to graduate and finish
school but that place wasn’t for me. I lost all my friends after the suspension
before they kicked me out. People were scared of me and I was scared of them,
but I would have stayed and finished. My dad was so disappointed in me for real
already and, when I got kicked out, it got worse. He didn’t even wanna see me.
Twenty-one-year-old Debbie explained that she regretted not completing her high school education but also mentioned the uselessness of education for her:

My mom and dad are not proud of me for not finishing school…that makes me mad because they don’t know what I experienced up in there. They never see my side of the situation. I got a chance to go back after a year, but the expulsion year left a bad taste in my mouth. I lost all my friends that time away and sh*t. I lost the year, and everything was so new when I went back. I couldn’t stay, so I left…I regret not finishing school because I don’t have that to be proud of, but really and truly high school education don’t mean anything these days. Have to have a master’s to even find a proper paying job and even then job security is sh*t too. Education ain’t, you know, ain’t what it used to be. My mom still thinks that it’s like it was in her days, but it’s different. Know what I mean?

Twenty-four-year-old Ken broke into tears expressing his regret for not completing high school. I noted in my researcher journal that “[Ken] seemed to be surprised by the emotions brought up in this interview—he started to cry.” As I watched his face become flushed with emotions, he lowered the tone in his voice and told me more about his story:

My parents were so ashamed of me, man. I let them down. They brought me and my sister here to this country to do better {pause} anyway, last year I was all set to go back and finish up the diploma in adult school, but my pops [father] got sick and he passed away. I wanted to show him that I could finish, you know? He never saw {pause}. They never really can understand how hard it is for kids here when they not born here, when they feel like they don’t fit anywhere {pause}. Gang life in my school was the only way I survived…and I wasn’t White so I had to find my place or the bullying wouldn’t stop, man. They called me Paki all the time and told me I smelled like curry and all that sh*t. Locked me up in a stall. One of the mother-f*ckers sh*t in a cup and throw the cup on me in the stall. The schools here are for the White people, not for people like me. Of course you need a f*cking gun or knife or something to protect yourself. I’m not like that. I was never like that when I was living in Trinidad. That’s why Pops couldn’t understand why I was always in trouble here. He totally blamed me when they found the knife.

For 25-year-old Cynthia, dropping out of school seemed like the only way she could maintain her self-esteem:
I was tired of being the dunce kid…the stupid as* kid…my grades were sh*t and all the f*cking tutoring that my parents were paying good money for wasn’t working. I felt so stupid and really just wanted to be smart but it is what it is. The higher the grades got the harder the work got and my grades just f*cking dropping. I missed a lot of school because I was always in a fight, so some assignments I didn’t do. It was frustrating and I just felt myself getting angrier and angrier, so I left. It’s too bad I didn’t sit it out but I couldn’t and if I did I would have probably failed and failed everything anyway.

Four (Mary, David, Kendra, and Jason) of the 10 students graduated from high school. After a 20-day suspension at one high school, twenty-one-year-old Mary was relieved to discover a more diverse and welcoming school environment at the second high school she attended:

When I realized there were more Black kids like me in the new school, I felt so glad…you know, I wasn’t alone anymore and there were people who could understand who I am. For Black people it’s different…other cultures don’t understand how important it is for us to feel welcomed and understood…an entire people were not welcomed or understood for centuries and they [other cultures] didn’t have to deal with that struggle so how can they understand it? I felt so down about the suspension and was too embarrassed to go back to the old school, so changing the school was the rightful thing to do. I never picture myself as a drop-out or someone who got kicked out. I’m glad it worked out and I’ve got the diploma.

Twenty-two-year-old David explained that graduating from high school was very important to his parents who were of Jamaican descent. He said that he struggled but stayed in school and graduated because it was so important to his parents that he graduate and also because he was a star player on his school’s basketball team. According to David, “In Jamaican culture it’s shameful for the whole family if your kids [are] not educated at least in high school especially if you’re living in North America.”

Similarly, 25-year-old Kendra chuckled a little when she explained how devastating it would have been to her entire Somalian family if she did not graduate from high school: “My mother would have killed me…well, not killed me…but she would let
me stay in school until I was 40 if that is what I needed until I graduate… graduation is not a choice in my culture.” Twenty-four-year-old Jason also explained how “out of the question” it was for him to not complete his high school education. He said that his parents were always clear on what was debatable and what was not debatable:

My parents immigrated here to this country to ensure their kids have a good life…a life that is better than theirs. A life that includes a good education, you know? They were clear on what was up for debate and what was not up for debate. High school education was not up for debate. I never really considered, I mean seriously considered leaving school. I always knew I would graduate. It was out of the question not to, really.

**Contexts**

Acknowledging the importance of context when studying a variety of people’s experiences in a particular geographic area and to also improve consistency across data sets used in this study, sub-themes in Chapters 6 and 7 are organized into four contexts: political, economic, social, and educational.

**Political Context**

Political context refers to the governmental landscape in which Ontario’s school discipline and safety policies developed. Three (Cynthia, David, and Kendra) of the 10 participants mentioned topics indirectly related to the political context that existed in Ontario between 2001 and 2008. I additionally found the theme of power and authority in my researcher journal that accompanied the youth interviews.

There were instances where youth participants referred to their teachers’ lack of time and patience to teach them. These youth participants made comments about teachers looking stressed out, constantly complaining about their workloads, impatiently disciplining students, and openly mentioning their dissatisfaction with the salary received for the large amount of work they did. For example, Cynthia recalled an incident in 2003
where her teacher did not seem to care why or with whom she had been fist fighting—the teacher suspended Cynthia and reportedly said, “I’m just doing my job here, kid. If you can’t follow the rules, there are consequences. Make sure your parents see this letter and let’s keep the line moving.” At that moment, Cynthia noticed about nine other students in the office waiting for their suspension letter. David said that he started to understand his three suspensions in elementary school between 2002 and 2004 as “the norm for Black guys, especially since all the teachers were White and out to prove a point…it was like they had a suspension quota to meet and these teachers couldn’t care less about circumstances around certain behaviours.” According to Kendra, “most of the teachers was always in a bad mood looking like they didn’t want to be there, and they dished out that attitude on students for no reason…we were scared of breathing because we might get kicked out.”

Cynthia noted how, in retrospect, she understood a bit more about the power and authority in her classroom:

When you have control taken from you, you just want to take control from anywhere you can get it, you know what I mean? These teachers were like in a panic I feel and their workload was overwhelming them. When I think back about it, I have a new understanding of what was going on. They were feeling the squeeze of management and were under pressure. I was suspended 10 times…they were trying to reclaim control. The fact that they were authorized to send us home whenever we p*ssed them off was a big deal for them to get control back. They’re only human, man.

In my researcher journal, I mentioned how Cynthia was indirectly making connections between teachers’ increased pressures at school related to changes in their job requirements (caused by governmental changes), the pressures they experienced based on mandatory suspensions as outlined in the provincial legislation, and their attitudes toward
students. My researcher journal highlighted how “it was clear that student outcomes in schools were directly and indirectly a product of the politics in our province.”

Economic Context

The economic context refers to the ways in which money influences school discipline and safety policy development and policy outcomes. This context describes financial contributions (or lack thereof) from the government, and also the financial circumstances of youth who experienced suspensions and/or expulsions under the policies. The interview guide (Appendix G) used with youth participants in this study did not contain a question about their family’s financial status, but all 10 participants nevertheless volunteered this information. While Jason and Cynthia discussed their family’s healthy financial status, the other eight participants discussed their family’s financial challenges while they attended high school. Mary said that her family of six was being solely supported by her father’s income as a truck driver, while her mother was a stay-at-home mom:

> It made more sense for her to just stay home and take care of us while my dad worked because paying for babysitting four kids could get pricey. She only had her high school diploma…no point of her trying to make a salary with only that in this place…it just don’t make sense...being a full-time mom to us saved money.

Both Alex and Barbara acknowledged how hard it had been for almost every other Aboriginal family they knew to “make ends meet” (Alex). Barbara recalled how disappointed she often was when her mom told her that they didn’t have enough money to send her on school trips. Barbara’s gaze along with her voice lowered as she described her disappointment when her mother told her she couldn’t afford to send her on a skating trip with her class:
I was in Grade 9 and everyone was raging about the skating trip right before Christmas, and I was nuts about the idea that the guy I was crushing on told me he’d have enough money to buy us both lunch. So, I had that part covered but my mom would still need to pay for skates rental and she said no. I was like so embarrassed. I pretended to be sick for the trip and didn’t go to school that day. Up to this day that guy doesn’t know how poor my family is [chuckles].

Alex explained how he perceived Aboriginal peoples on the whole as being impoverished. Fighting back tears, he held Barbara’s hand and angrily explained the struggles faced by Aboriginal peoples on his reserve:

The reserve that my family lives on is filled with dirt poor people. We just can’t get ahead. We are not a part of a life where there is opportunities to make money. We ain’t got enough money for nothing, you know what I mean? We ain’t educated enough…we ain’t White enough…we ain’t smart enough. Dirt poor is what we are. My grandparents were dirt poor, my parents were dirt poor, and I’m gonna die dirt poor.

David, who just started his own business as a music producer, corroborated Alex’s story about financial hopelessness across generations in his family and alluded to a similar sense of hopelessness around the Black Jamaican immigrant community at large. David was determined to break this cycle by pursuing a career instead of an underpaying job:

My family struggled with money. My father didn’t really have much to contribute, so my mother was pretty much a single parent because he left her before I was born but he was in my life on and off. He is not very supportive of my music business because he thinks it’s not a good way to make money. Now he’s eating his words. I will make it out of the projects because I want to provide for my kids better than he did for me and my sister. I don’t want my girl to struggle like my mom struggled. Things will be different for my children one day when I get them. No more of this bullsh*t. Too much money to be made out there.

Debbie recalled the shame she felt because her family was unable to afford the cost of certain amenities, highlighting all the stereotypes of Jewish people being cheap:

My parents weren’t really cheap; they just spent their money smartly. Back then though I thought they were cheap because I expected them to give me whatever I want like the other kids got from their parents, but now I understand that they
couldn’t give something they didn’t have. We were a little poor and couldn’t afford all the school trips and those pizza lunches but I think about it now and it’s not important now but back then the kids teased me for being cheap. You know that thing about cheap Jews?

Sean talked about how he struggled financially more than ever when his family disowned him after he disclosed that he was transgender. The day his parents received the letter advising them of Sean’s expulsion for attempting to commit suicide, they had a conversation with Sean when he revealed he was transgender. He told them that, although he was born female, he was a man trapped in a woman’s body and that he was attracted to women. Consequently, his family (his father in particular) told him to pack his things and leave their home. He ended up living at a friend’s house for a few weeks but then the friend’s parents asked him to leave after they found out that he had been expelled for trying to commit suicide for a second time in the same school year. Sean has since lived in shelters for two years. He is now on disability and has been living in a charity-run shelter this past year. He told me that the government pays for him to do a Cook-for-Life (12-week culinary training program) through the shelter where he lives, which guarantees him a paid placement at a restaurant. Sean is hopeful about becoming financially stable in the near future because of all the knowledge he is gaining through the Cook-for-Life program, but he has every intention of completing his high school diploma one day.

Ken mentioned the hardship his family faced upon immigration, and he identified the main reason for his current financial difficulties as his lack of a high school diploma:

My family came here from Trinidad with nothing and when they thought we would get help from my grandparents, we didn’t get anything. Money was tough for my parents…I remember being rich in Tn’T [Trinidad and Tobago] but this place made us paupers {laughter}. The only way I’m gonna do better is if I get that [high school] diploma…people just think you’re stupid without it [diploma].
Kendra noted the importance of having her grandmother living with their family when she was in school. She said her grandmother was a great help in taking care of her siblings while both of her parents worked outside the home. However, she said that her father seemed to never be at home since he worked three jobs to support their family of eight people who lived in a three-bedroom apartment. In my researcher journal, I noted that Kendra mentioned her dad’s frequent absence from their home at three separate times and linked it twice with his lack of involvement with her educational experience.

Cynthia and Jason were the only participants who commented on belonging to families that did not experience many financial hardships. Cynthia noted that everyone at her school thought she was the “rich kid” who didn’t belong in that school. Cynthia said, “Lots of poor kids went to my school and they all hated me. They would always thief my lunch money and even my lunch sometimes…if I rat on them I’d get into trouble.” She shared a revelation of hers during our interview:

Having money in a place where people don’t have much money can be dangerous for the person who has money. Sometimes you must be careful for what you wish for cause you just might get it…money doesn’t always mean power. Sometimes it means you’re f*cked. Money can f*ck up a kid’s life {chuckles}.

Cynthia said that her stay-at-home mother had time to dedicate to various volunteer endeavours at her school. Cynthia asked me a question: “Do you think that when a family’s got money then they naturally spend more time taking part in their kids’ school stuff, right?” I responded by saying that sometimes that is the case indeed.

Jason did not experience as many financial hardships as did many of his friends; he explained the dynamics:

My parents are educated professionals in their field who work hard to provide for us, we weren’t in need of anything growing up…we were lucky…and they
spoiled us too…some of the guys I hung with were bullying other kids for lunch money and sh*t…but lots of gangs there.

According to my researcher journal, both Jason and Cynthia acknowledged the privilege of having money during their time in school. They also acknowledged the rarity of people being financially comfortable in their respective neighbourhoods.

**Social Context**

Social context refers to the physical and social environment in which a person lives. It involves identity, immigration, and family. For the purpose of this study, the identity sub-theme particularly refers to an individual’s self-identification of her or his race/ethnicity/indigeneity, birthplace, gender, and sexual orientation. The immigration sub-theme includes an individual’s immigration experience to Canada and/or their parents’ immigration experience to Canada. The family sub-theme relates to an individual’s home life, parental involvement and support in schooling experience, and family values that dictated home and school life.

**Identity.** Because of the *Safe Schools Action Team* reports in 2006 and 2008 highlighted that racialized (non-White) students made up the majority of students who were suspended and/or expelled in Ontario schools, there was focused attention on the experiences of racialized populations in this study.

Initially, I employed the term ‘racialized’ in my work as a way to identify non-White youth; youth would need to self-identify as racialized. When I began data collection with this youth population, it quickly became apparent, however, that my use of the term ‘racialized’ did not always match people’s understandings of the term. While I expected to conduct interviews with non-White youth, I was approached by White youth who self-identified as racialized bodies and who had been suspended and/or
expelled from an Ontario school. They were visibly White but self-identified as ‘racialized’ because of one or more of these reasons:

(a) They experienced discrimination based on the colour of their skin and/or ethnicity.

(b) They felt that they could not access the privileges of what it meant to be White due to their immigration status, economic circumstances, and/or geographic location of homes and schools.

(c) They did not see White as merely a physical skin colour. For them, being White meant being powerful, but they often felt powerless.

My experience with the term ‘racialized’ in the field compelled me to revisit my understanding of the term altogether. In fact, it led me down a road of exploration for which I was slightly unprepared. This exploration invited me to consider controversies about the term and acknowledge my narrow understanding of it during data collection. The road on which this exploration led me underlined the importance of writing in my interview elaboration journal, acknowledging my particular place, time, culture, and historical experience as the researcher (see Table 4 in Chapter 4 for the research participants’ self-identified racial/ethnic identity).

In the researcher journal, I noted my initial misperception of Alex’s and Barbara’s race as White because of their physical appearance. They self-identified as Aboriginal. Alex mentioned that it was not unusual for people to think he was White but explained how being visibly White still did not guarantee him privileges as a White person:

For me, life was definitely not like the White man…Aboriginals experience a harder type of discrimination than other minorities…politically we are still scorned and mocked and there is no denying that even if we are living in a white skin…we are primates according to the White man not once upon a time but
forever. It’s hard to get over something that is still going on. My white skin colour didn’t protect me in school…it might have protected me if I deny my blood heritage, but f*ck that, you know.

Another topic related to identity that arose from interviews with youth participants had to do with gender and sexual orientation. At the beginning of our conversation, I perceived Sean as a woman; however, Sean explained that he identified himself as a man, although he still had female reproductive organs. In a persuasive tone, he asked me the following questions:

I look like a guy, right? Like if I walk in a room there would be no doubt, right, that I was a boy? I don’t look like no female, right? When I tell people how I’ve always seen myself they tell me I am transitioning but how can I transition to something if I always felt it since I was kid? I even have a girlfriend. I’m a man, yo! I look like a guy, right?

Individuals’ perceptions of their race/ethnicity, gender, and sexuality can be different than that perceived by people living in the society in which they exist. While it is important to understand how individuals perceive themselves, it is equally important to understand how society perceives them because identifying people places them into particular social groups that receive certain advantages and/or disadvantages.

When it comes to looking at the types of suspensions received by students in this sample who were suspended and/or expelled, White students seemed to get leaner expulsions (i.e., Debbie was expelled for one year from just one school board in the province for hitting a teacher) and leaner suspensions (i.e., Cynthia was suspended 10 times for fighting, only for five days at times and she was never expelled). In my researcher journal, I noted that disciplinary treatment of White students in Ontario schools seemed to be consistent and less harsh than disciplinary treatment received by non-White students:
This is my very last interview and I have to say that it seems like non-White students have received more severe punishments in terms of longer suspension times and full expulsions. Plus, it seems like students who self-identify with being White stood less of a chance of being expelled from schools. Looks like White female students like Cynthia are less likely to receive a long suspension for carrying a knife…she only got suspended for 5 days for carrying a knife.

**Immigration.** While only two (i.e., Cynthia and Ken) of 10 participants were born outside of Canada and experienced the immigration process, five other participants discussed their parents’ immigration experiences. Cynthia recalled great difficulty adjusting to living in Canada after emigrating from Poland when her parents adopted her at the age of 7:

> At the drop of a hat, I had a new family, a new country, a new school, new friends. Everything was new. It was a lot to take in…my head was spinning. My parents didn’t know much at all about my life in Poland, and I feel like a whole part of me just disappeared. They didn’t really know how to help me. I was homesick for a long time, and I don’t think it like, you know, went away. I just got used to [a homesick feeling].

Ken, who immigrated to Canada from Trinidad with his family at the age of 11, acknowledged how difficult it was for him to adjust to life in Canada. He was bullied at school and teased because of his race, accent, and the non-brand name clothing he wore. Ken’s classmates mocked him for living in an apartment building that was well-known for having mice and roach infestations. Ken explained that “[his parents were] living within their means.”

Five participants (Mary, Sean, Kendra, David, and Jason) acknowledged their parents’ challenges as a result of immigration. Mary’s father lived in Canada illegally before being able to sponsor her mother and have her relocate to Canada from Trinidad. Mary’s mother almost divorced her father since they lived apart for over six years before
she was allowed to join him in Canada. The time lost due to the immigration process took a toll on their marriage.

In Sean’s case, his father returned to Jamaica for extended stays after immigrating to Canada. Sean attributed his father’s absence as normal for immigrant parents, since their educational accomplishments were not acknowledged in Canada. Sean’s father once told Sean and his siblings that he needed to work in Jamaica to support them. Kendra also discussed how her father’s educational accomplishments in Somalia were undervalued upon immigrating to Canada. As a result, her family’s financial circumstances have always been dire.

David’s father abandoned his family before David was born, but was in and out of David’s life while he was in elementary school and onward. David’s dad frequently reminded him of how fortunate he was to grow up in Canada as opposed to Jamaica:

My dad drilled into me how lucky I am to live in this country and that I wasn’t born into struggle like he was. He used to tell me how hard [and] how long it took for him to move here. He said him and moms were married but had to divorce to move here. They never married back…were only here for a few months before they separated. I was not born yet. He would make fun and say she saw the White man and didn’t want him anymore.

Jason’s parents emigrated from Sri Lanka to Canada with “lots of money because they had good paying jobs in Sri Lanka but they realized that their standard of living was going to drop in Canada…they experienced lots of problems finding jobs.” Any time family members emigrated from Sri Lanka to Canada, his parents were always the ones who “keep [support] them until they get on their own feet…like they would live with us until they could find work.” One time, Jason’s friends from school visited his home to play video games and made fun of the large number of people who were at the time living in a relatively small house.
Family. Two of 10 youth participants (Cynthia and Jason) discussed the high level of involvement their parents had in their schooling. Cynthia’s “parents always made me feel important. [They] never missed those parent-teacher nights and would always sit down with me and my report card to talk about how I would improve my marks.” Her family went on lots of trips together, so there were ample opportunities to bond with them. However, Cynthia expressed great sadness in admitting that she somehow felt like an outsider in her family because her parents knew so little about her Polish culture:

They [parents] tried so hard with me but I was like a problem child…it wasn’t that I wasn’t happy, it’s just that I felt like I was playing house with these two people. I knew we are rich and finances [were] never really an issue, but that doesn’t solve everything. I was like a stranger living with two strangers growing up. Sh*t, I probably sound like a f*cking spoilt kid, eh?

Jason will always fondly remember how much effort his parents put into his education. His parents were very supportive at home, and they frequently made appointments with his teachers to discuss his progress. Jason was only able to complete his final year of school because of the support his parents gave him. They were always willing and ready to help him with homework and sat down at nights with him to help him study for exams: “my dad was my personal tutor for real.” My researcher journal noted that Jason praised a Sri Lankan organization in his community that provided a sense of community for his parents especially, but he also benefitted from the organization. It was through the community organization that he was able to have a closer look at his Sri Lankan culture. It was also through this organization that he connected with a math tutor while he was in high school.

Other participants had mixed levels of support from their parents. David’s father wasn’t very much involved in his school life, and his mother only became involved when
he was being disciplined for misbehaviour in school. However, David shared a fond
memory of his mother sometimes dropping off hot McDonald’s lunches in his locker
during lunch period and staying up late at night to help with homework. In my researcher
journal, I noted David’s views of popular media about parenting:

    You know how media portrays Black guys as deadbeat fathers who are MIA? Well this is a result of us not expecting nothing more than trouble from Black
guys. Nobody expects much from me, so I tended in the past to strive for simple
things.

Debbie and Mary indicated a similar level of parental involvement during their schooling.
Their parents only became involved with their education when they were being
reprimanded at school for bad behaviour. Debbie’s parents never formally/explicitly
questioned or appealed three suspensions or expulsions; “it was like they didn’t really
expect too much from me and nothing surprised them that I did.”

Both Alex’s and Barbara’s parents were very encouraging about them attending
school and behaving well at school, but they would never try to assist them with
homework. Alex always struggled academically and really wanted some support to
complete his homework, but since he never received the support he needed to complete
homework, he quit doing homework. Barbara’s mother always sent her to her older sister
for help with homework, but her mother never tried to help Barbara. Kendra’s parents
emphasized the importance of having an education, but they were far too busy trying to
financially provide for their large family to make time to be involved in her schooling.
Sean’s family also made it clear that “education was the key to a successful life,” but they
were less inclined to attend parent-teacher nights. Sean’s mother once explained her lack
of involvement:
She was like telling me one day how she don’t go to parent-teacher things because she was always at my school trying to get me out of trouble, so they were probably tired of seeing her because she was tired of seeing them too.

Sean declared in an angry tone of voice that his parents should have been more involved in his schooling, but instead “they treated school like daycare for us…nothing but a daycare…although they were always talking about knowledge is power.”

Levels of parental involvement varied among the 10 youth participants. The majority of them reported that their parents were not as involved as they probably should have been in their schooling. Four of 10 students completed high school; of those four, Jason’s parents were very involved with his schooling, Mary’s and David’s parents were moderately involved in their schooling, and Kendra’s parents were the least involved with her education.

**Educational Context**

Educational context refers to the physical and social environment in which a person goes to school. All 10 youth participants who were suspended and/or expelled pre-2008 discussed how their educational context impacted their experiences through (numbers refer to the number of participants who mentioned the issue): discrimination/biases (8), belonging (7), teachers’ negative attitudes (5), expectations (4), respect (4), and physical activity (3).

**Discrimination/biases.** Eight of 10 youth participants (Mary, Alex, Barbara, Sean, Debbie, Cynthia, David, and Ken) mentioned how discrimination/biases based on race and/or gender impacted their educational experiences, using terms such as racism, racist, discrimination, colour-blind, skin colour, fair/fairness, unfair, gender, transgender, sexist, sexual discrimination, and sexism. Mary’s, Sean’s, David’s, and Ken’s teachers
racially discriminated against them. Mary believed that her homeroom teacher treated her and all the other Black students in her homeroom class as if they mattered less than other students:

She [homeroom teacher] acted like funny towards us…you know, from the way she said her names at attendance time in the mornings…almost with scorn…nobody ever talked about how she was racist…but she was always rough with us. We were the first people she told to be quiet or go to the office when the rest of the class was doing the same thing like us but we would get called out first. When I look back I wish I had words to tell her to stop treating us like that because we were Black and stood out from the others.

Sean expressed sadness and anger when he talked about his teachers being racist:

They treated Black kids in that school like they were worthless…from the teachers to the EAs [Educational Assistants] to the principal. We could never do nothing right. We were the bad eggs…the bad apples…a menace to society, you know what I’m saying? Being Black was like a disease…no role models anywhere, nobody standing up for us, school was not safe for us…so when you talk about safe school policy, I don’t know who those were protecting back then.

David also talked about the struggles about being Black in school, despite being a star basketball player who admittedly was the centre of attention in his classrooms because he was good-looking and charming. His mostly White and Chinese teachers had limited knowledge about Jamaican culture; he said, “They [teachers] had no clue about my Jamaican background and what was normal in my family…they assumed my father was a deadbeat [absent] because I was Black… they didn’t know how me and my father struggled to have a relationship.”

Ken acknowledged that, when he immigrated to Canada with his family from Trinidad, he expected his schooling experience to be a lot more positive than it turned out to be:

Never in my wildest dreams did I expect so much racism here…I didn’t expect people to be colour-blind though sometimes they pretended to be, but I didn’t expect to be treated like sh*t and I mean like absolute sh*t! {pause} The other
kids bullied me and sh*t but what surprised me more than anything was just how the teachers would let all this sh*t happen...it’s like they just made it normal...they talked down to me whenever I tried to speak up and always reminded me that this was not Trinidad...I’m talking about my teachers, yo! One time I asked to go to the toilet and my teacher asked me if I found that the kids in Trinidad peed more than Canadian kids...what the f*ck, in front of the whole class she asked me that.

Mary, Sean, Barbara, Debbie, and Cynthia experienced gender discrimination in school at the hands of their teachers and/or principal. Mary was involved in a fight with other female students; she received the maximum 20-day suspension, although she claimed she didn’t start the fight and was merely defending herself. She thought that this suspension was given to her because there was an increase in fights among girls at her school, and she was being used as a scapegoat to deter future fights among girls.

Sean was experiencing a gender transition from female to male in high school where he was mocked by teachers. He once went to the principal’s office where he overheard some of the administrators talking to the principal about him and referred to him as the “he-she.” When he asked his gym teacher to use the boys’ change-room for swimming practice, his gym teacher asked him if he had balls. Sean was very embarrassed by this question and never asked to use the boys’ change-room again, continuing to use the girls’ change-room. When Sean asked some of his teachers to refer to him as a boy and call him by his gender-neutral nickname, they declined to do so and told him that if he wanted to have his name changed then he should consult with the principal along with his parents. Sean said he was embarrassed one morning when he tried to explain to his male English teacher why an assignment wasn’t complete. The teacher told him to “man up if you wanna be treated like a man.” Sean’s entire class heard this comment and were laughing at him. In my researcher journal entry that
corresponds with the interview with Sean, I noted his very long pause after telling me about the situation when his peers laughed at him while he endured the insulting comment from his teacher; he was holding back tears during that pause.

Barbara had also been on the receiving end of unkind comments from teachers in high school. One of her teachers in high school told her that she was aware of Barbara’s previous suspensions in elementary school for fighting and that high school would not be as lenient toward her:

My homeroom teacher was sexist…she said she knew about my suspensions in elementary and she knew how little Aboriginee girls like me are dragged up and have no manners…how our families only teach us how to fight and bully. She never had a kind thing to say to me…just tried to scare me all the time…threaten me with expulsion…badmouth my culture in subtle little ways. It was super annoying more than anything.

Debbie was expelled from high school for hitting a teacher. She said that teacher was “a pain in the ass.” Debbie explained the unfair treatment she received from her teacher:

She always ignored me when I told her the kids were calling me wigger and slut and she always told me to ignore them…that ain’t right…no type of solution there…she avoided any kind of confrontation but I was f*cking in the line of fire while she sit pretty and enjoy her benefits and salary. She wasn’t there to help me. She just kept saying to me to dress and act like a lady…what the f*ck does that even mean? Sh*t! When guys would complain to her she had all the time in the world to stand up for them…to put them first…but she had no time for the girls in that class, not just me but all the other girls got no type of attention from her. She was all for the boys. That was sexual discrimination…plain and simple sexism bull.

Cynthia was frequently involved in fights because she considered herself to be a sensitive teenager. Male students who were involved in fights as regularly as she was involved in them received longer suspensions with many of them being expelled. However, Cynthia was never expelled:
I received about 10 or 12 suspensions and wasn’t ever expelled. I was a tomboy always in fights but the guys would get suspended more than me and a lot of them were expelled. My school was famous for expelling people, but mostly guys. I think if I was a guy I would have been expelled too, but being female saved me. Plus, the principal always had the last say about expulsions and he was soft with the girls. He was a d*ck with the guys though. I guess it was unfair for them.

**Belonging.** Mary, Alex, Barbara, Sean, Debbie, Cynthia, and Ken talked about their sense of belonging in school. A sense of belonging refers to feeling like one fits into the school environment (e.g., the classroom, at lunchtime/recess, extra-curricular activities). When individuals feel as if they are in the right place where they are welcomed and accepted, then their sense of belonging increases (Dei, 2008).

Mary felt an increased sense of belonging to a community after she transferred from a predominantly White high school to a school where she had some Black peers: “It was really good to know that there were others like me at my new school…I didn’t feel so alone anymore…that was something good that came out of that [expulsion].” Alex and Barbara, high school sweethearts, both felt they didn’t fit into their high school environment because they went to a school with predominantly White students who were often unkind to them. However, they were not the only Aboriginal students there. They found a sense of community when they formed friendships with other Aboriginal students,

They were other Aboriginal people and we hung out together but we mainly did it to stay safe…it’s not easy being the people at the bottom of the food chain. We all knew that we didn’t belong there…our parents made us go…over and over my mother told me how it’s not my choice to go to that school but I have to go to learn about Canada. She didn’t want me to live all my life on reserve. She wanted me to go out and find a good life. I love reserve life but it’s hard and you can’t save money if you’re not making nothing. So, I know I gotta go out and make it so that I can save it…can’t do that on reserve. (Alex)
Barbara chimed in and said, “School was hard because it’s true about being at the bottom of the food chain. Teacher treat us like we were cheap {pause} insignificant...and stupid with no brain.”

Sean’s high school consisted of students from diverse backgrounds, but he was continually stigmatized for being a transgender person. As a consequence, he struggled with belonging:

School was a nightmare because I was Black and transitioning from being a woman to transforming to a man—what I was truly meant to be. People didn’t understand that I was trapped in a woman’s body. They laughed at me and f*cking mocked the way I walked, talked, and...man, I didn’t fit in there at all...it was messed up for real...even though I was Black enough to have Black friends, I wasn’t straight enough to have them [Black friends].

Debbie explained how she rebelled against stereotypes of Jews being “goody two shoes” by smoking cigarettes and skipping classes: “It was hard to fit into school when you’re so different or when people behave like you’re so different than them.”

Cynthia and Ken too felt the perils of being different. Cynthia lost her sense of belonging as one of the “cool popular kids” when her best friend told everyone she was adopted. Ken lost his sense of belonging after he moved to Canada from Trinidad. He “went from being the class clown who everybody liked to a quiet guy who nobody even noticed and when they noticed me here in Toronto it was because um...I wasn’t wearing the right clothes or shoes.” In my researcher journal entry that corresponds with the interview with Ken, I noted, “reminds me of losing my sense of belonging after moving from Guyana to Canada…and I can definitely identify with wearing clothes that were outdated.”

**Teachers’ negative attitudes.** Five youth participants noted how their teachers’ negative attitudes impacted their educational experiences. More specifically, Mary’s and Kendra’s teachers’ attitudes about teaching and curriculum content impacted their
educational experiences. Many of Mary’s teachers seemed unhappy with their jobs. She frequently heard some of her teachers use the phrase, “they don’t pay me enough for this.” Many of her teachers seemed impatient, frustrated, and tired. Kendra felt “these kinds of negative feelings only just naturally spilled over into the energy of the whole class.”

David identified himself as the ‘class clown’ and explained that some of his teachers never appreciated his sense of humour and his engagement in the classroom:

They [teachers] just hated me because I was the funny guy in the class and so they just couldn’t stand me when I opened my mouth to say anything…for attendance they needed me to be there but they didn’t like to hear me speak at all…they were all about rules and they saw me as the rebel, but I really wasn’t…I just like to make people laugh.

Debbie’s homeroom teachers in elementary school often treated her poorly because she had been suspended more than once. According to Debbie, her teachers were sometimes rude, inattentive, and less kind to her:

After my first suspension, my homeroom teacher treated me like crap. She and other teachers put me in their ‘black book’…I was pegged the problem child who ain’t never gonna amount to anything worthwhile…the little White girl who didn’t deserve no respect just because I was suspended before…I wasn’t perfect like the other little White girls and everybody knew that…those teachers in homeroom treated me rough. They kept telling me about my attitude but they were the ones who needed an attitude adjustment.

Sean expressed how unfortunate it was for him to be in a school environment where many of his teachers’ ill treatment toward him perpetuated the bullying he experienced in high school. According to Sean, most of his teachers didn’t care enough to understand him:

The kids at my school saw how teachers treated me like I was invisible…like if I was society’s problem but not their own…I dunno…it was like my teachers didn’t really care about me enough to take any interest in how I was feeling or how I was doing. They knew I had depression because my mother spoke with them
when I started there. They just chalked it up to a head case…they saw me as a head case…as work…work nobody had no time for…they even knew about my reading problem but nobody really cared. It’s funny because the same way the teachers treated me like I was a head case, was the same way the other kids treated me.

Sean also acknowledged that some of his teachers “thought that they were neutral but their mindset was just against me and gave me no support…that hurts a kid on a personal and social level.”

**Expectations.** David, Kendra, Mary, and Jason, the only participants who completed high school, described teachers’ high and/or low expectations of them related to their schooling. While many teachers did not expect much from them, David and Kendra had one or two particular teachers who expected them to be academically successful. For David, his “history teacher was the man…he pushed me and told me I could do better,” instead of how other teachers saw David solely in terms of his basketball excellence and telling him how he “should focus more attention on basketball and not really set big goals to become a doctor or lawyer or accountant.” Kendra’s drama teacher believed in her and steered her in the direction of exploring acting and screenplay writing while in high school. Her strong relationship with her gym teacher who was Muslim additionally served as a great support.

Mary and Jason shared similar feelings of sadness and disappointment about how their teachers’ low expectations of them affected their educational experiences. Mary noted the importance of having supportive teachers who had high expectations of students during pre- and elementary school years; she said she “needed to have that groundwork of high expectations laid out for me from way back in pre-school and elementary school.” Jason’s teachers expected him to end up in jail; he explained that
they thought I dressed like a gang member...my pants was hanging off my hips a little...they [teachers] were like we think he’s a loser from gang so and so..instead of grading me, they failed me.”

Jason explained how his teachers quit expecting him to complete homework and sometimes made comments about how he was not “uni or college material.” For Jason, low teacher expectations discouraged him from striving to his academic potential. Jason elaborated how the lack of teacher support affected his decision not to apply for college or university education:

If it was up to the teachers at that school, I’d be a drop-out...it’s as simple as that...my sister had an amazing teacher at the same school after I left and she said he really had a good impact on her and now she’s well on the way to studying to become a doctor. He believed in her, you know? I really needed that. I didn’t even do homework any more and everybody stopped asking me for the homework...it was a given that I didn’t do homework and would never get into uni or college...I didn’t bother applying to anything because my confidence was shot after being constantly put down...just worked at [fast food restaurant] and then applied for the bus driver job I have now.

Respect. Participants talked about respect in three different ways: (i) respecting oneself, (ii) respecting authority, and (iii) respecting students. Mary’s mother had always told her to respect herself or others would never respect her. However, Mary felt quite disrespected and humiliated in school when she was suspended for fighting, despite having great respect for herself. Cynthia’s self-respect was rooted in her cultural identity as a Polish person. She said she was “very proud of being Polish even though they [parents] had no idea of what it meant to be Polish.” Cynthia experienced being called derogatory names in school because of her Polish background and felt the name-calling affected her self-esteem, which was directly related to her self-respect. She disappointedly noted that “my parents don’t seem interested in knowing me as their
Polish daughter…they ignored who I am and yet they told me to have self-respect…how can I have self-respect if they don’t even respect who I am?”

Mary feared the vice-principals and principal at the high school where she was suspended from the time she started in Grade 9. She interpreted her fear as respect for authority:

They scared me from day one in Grade 9 when they introduced themselves at assembly. Can you imagine starting a new school with these old White men who have all sorts of power over you but they knew nothing about you? I respected them though and would always say hi in the hallway. None of them really knew my name but one VP used to always ask me in the hallway what monkey-business I was up to.

Ken was afraid to “p*ss off the assistant principal and principal with any of my nonsense because didn’t want them telling my parents I was behaving sh*tty” (Ken). He tried his hardest to obey teachers in the classroom, and admitted that outside the classroom was where most of his fights happened. Alex realized at an early age that he had to earn respect from others. As an Aboriginal man, respect was not given freely; it could only be earned. Alex’s frequent involvement in fights was one way he gained respect from his peers. One time he was suspended for not sharing the name of the student who brought weapons in the school. “It’s simple…people respect you if you’re not a snitch, but if you’re a f*cking snitch you should expect respect from nobody. You’re not worthy of respect if you’re gonna f*cking snitch, you know?” According to Ken, fighting also earned him respect from his peers in high school and among students who belonged to gangs in surrounding high schools. Furthermore, he prided himself on not being a snitch and protecting the identity of a gang leader in the larger community (outside his school). “That would have gotten my as* killed. Plus, it was like I earned their respect by shutting the f*ck up. You can’t buy respect in a store…that’s for sure.”
Cynthia’s respect from peers increased by getting suspended 10 times for fighting: “I learned fast how to gain respect from the people at school, especially my school. Being in the chess club or winning the f*cking athlete award wasn’t gonna get you any real respect on a day-to-day [basis].”

**Physical activity.** Mary, David, and Jason discussed how their involvement in sports teams at school contributed to their educational experience. Mary’s participation on a field hockey team at school allowed her to build positive relationships with teammates and helped her expend excess energy connected to Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD). Mary’s teammates missed her most while she was away on suspension.

David enjoyed and appreciated being a part of his school’s basketball team. He excelled as a basketball player even if he was “just an average Joe student in the classroom.” Being a part of the basketball team saved him from suspensions a few times because he was such a vital part of the team. “Grade 11 and 12 were my roughest years….To make matters worse I got kicked off the team in Grade 12 for skipping too many classes…was just having too many family problems and personal issues and things just falling apart.”

Similarly, for Jason, being a part of his school’s basketball team kept him grounded and committed to school. “The guys on the team were like my brothers…my family away from home, you know? It wasn’t just about winning the game. It was about playing together as team players.”

**Synthesis of Pre-2008 Youth Findings**

This chapter captured the suspension and expulsion experiences of 10 racially diverse youth (two Aboriginal, two White, four Black, and two Brown) who attended
high schools in Ontario (nine in Toronto and one in Ottawa) and were expelled and/or suspended from school pre-2008. All participants received multiple suspensions from school. Five of them were expelled from school: three of them received full expulsion and two of them received limited expulsion. Four of the five students who were expelled did not graduate from high school. The only student who graduated from high school after receiving an expulsion was actually wrongfully expelled and re-admitted to school after administrators acknowledged an error in their decision to expel him.

Acknowledging the political, economic, social, and educational systems that shaped the educational outcomes of racialized students such as those interviewed in this dissertation is crucial in understanding how policies and programs can better address the disproportional exclusion of racialized students. This chapter presented the emergent sub-themes from these 10 students’ interview data, categorizing sub-themes into four contexts to increase the understanding of how the contexts in which students existed influenced their suspension and/or expulsion experiences. These sub-themes encompassed: authority (political context); socio-economic status (economic context); identity, immigration, and family (social context); and discrimination/bias, belonging, teachers’ negative attitudes, expectations, respect, and physical activity (educational context).
CHAPTER 7: POST-2008 YOUTH ANALYSIS

In response to the increasing number of students who were suspended and expelled from Ontario schools between 2001 and 2007, the Ontario government revisited the Safe Schools legislation in 2007 and particularly modified the protocol for suspensions and expulsions. The post-2008 period was known as the time when progressive discipline and restorative practices became a main priority in Ontario school safety legislation. Although the Progressive Discipline and School Safety legislation was dated 2007, it commenced in February 2008. Mirroring the way in which Chapter 6 is organized, this chapter reports the findings from interview data of 10 youth participants who were suspended and/or expelled between 2008 and 2013.

Participants’ Backgrounds

Table 13 illustrates the names of the participants who were suspended and/or expelled post-2008. It provides an at-a-glance view of which participants described experiences related to sub-themes that were organized under the four contexts. An addition sign (+) indicates a participant’s contribution to a theme under a particular context, while a subtraction sign (-) indicates their lack of input about sub-themes under a particular context.

Table 13

Youth Participants Post-2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contexts</th>
<th>Sam</th>
<th>Sierra</th>
<th>Cindy</th>
<th>Lisa</th>
<th>Janio</th>
<th>Mark</th>
<th>Cassie</th>
<th>Barry</th>
<th>Glenn</th>
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Five of 10 participants (Sierra, Cindy, Lisa, Cassie, and Anna) identified as female, while the other five participants (Sam, Janio, Mark, Barry, and Glenn) identified as male. Cindy and Lisa requested to be interviewed together in a focus group session, while the other eight participants took part in individual interviews. I interviewed all 10 participants in-person. Only three participants (Sam, Cassie, and Glenn) graduated from high school. In presenting the findings, I have used direct quotations from the participants as deemed necessary to convey their feelings and perceptions related to the discussed experiences. As mentioned previously, because many of the respondents chose to use language that may be deemed inappropriate for an academic readership, swear words have been masked using the asterisk symbol (*).  

**Students Expelled**

School safety legislation was modified in 2007 ensuring that student expulsions were only authorized by school boards. Principals were no longer allowed to make the sole decision about expelling students. School boards made decisions about expulsions within the 20-day suspension that was issued by the principal. Based on a restorative justice principle, boards more carefully decided on whether a student should be expelled from one school in their board or all schools in their board. Also, students were no longer being expelled from all school boards in the province. In fact, students who were expelled were even given the opportunity to return to the school and/or board from which they were expelled provided they completed requirements instructed by the board that expelled them. Requirements included completing a program outside the school for

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2 Verbatim quotes with swear words intact that belong to youth participants mentioned in Chapter 7 can be found in Appendix I.
expelled students. School boards were required to recommend such programs to students who were expelled. In 2007, mitigating factors became a more important part of school discipline and safety legislation when determining whether or not students should be excluded from schools. While mitigating factors were not discussed in detail during youth participant interviews, it was evident that the number of expulsions reduced post-2008 and the decision-making process about expulsion required more thought. Three (Lisa, Janio, and Mark) of the 10 participants experienced expulsion from school between 2008 and 2013.

Lisa: Mixed race (Irish and Aboriginal) Canadian-born female was expelled from high school in 2010 for missing three in-school suspensions related to skipping classes. She was expelled from high school and assigned to another high school in the same board. However, she only attended the new high school for two days before she dropped out. Prior to expulsion, she was suspended five times.

Janio: Brown Brazilian-born male who immigrated to Canada in 1994 was expelled from high school (and all schools in that board) in the 2008 fall term for illegal drug possession and use on school property and for selling illegal drugs to minors on school property. He was also arrested by police on school property. The board recommended a program for expelled students to Janio. He only attended the program for two weeks because he believed that police involvement in his situation meant that he would be seen as a trouble-maker no matter which school he attended in the province. Prior to expulsion, he was suspended once.

Mark: South-Asian male was born in India to Tibetan parents. His parents were of Tibetan descent but were exiled to India before they all immigrated to Canada in 2004.
He was expelled from all schools in the school board in 2009 for stabbing three students. The board recommended that he attend a program for expelled students, but he never attended the program. He was also arrested by police who required him to complete 100 hours of community service doing snow removal and lawn mowing at four churches in the city. He completed his community hours. Prior to expulsion, he was suspended twice.

**Students Suspended**

Although the *Progressive Discipline and School Safety, 2007* legislation states that school principals may not suspend a student more than once for the same occurrence, some students (e.g., Lisa, Cassie, Barry, and Glenn) were reportedly still being suspended multiple times for what seemed to them to be the same occurrence. There were two types of suspensions: short-term suspensions (less than 20 days) and long-term suspensions (the maximum 20 days). Only principals had the authority to administer suspensions, whereas teachers were no longer allowed to suspend students. If the suspension was long-term, then the board was required to recommend students attend a program for suspended students. Since an investigation by the principal was required prior to a board decision of student expulsion, principals first administered a 20-day suspension to accommodate the investigation.

All 10 students experienced school suspensions between 2008 (fall term) and 2013. All three students who were expelled from school experienced a 20-day suspension preceding their expulsion. During that 20-day suspension, the principal investigated the respective incidents and recommended expulsion to the board. Apart from the 20-day suspension related to the expulsion, Lisa was suspended five times, Janio was suspended once, and Mark was suspended twice.
Seventeen of ten youth participants experienced suspensions but no expulsions. Sam, Sierra, and Anna were only suspended once each from school.

**Sam:** Spanish male who was born in Ecuador was sponsored by a White Canadian woman when he was a toddler. His sponsor visited him in Ecuador twice before adopting him, and having him move to Canada in 2005 at the age of 16. He received a 20-day suspension from high school for fighting in 2008 at the age of 19. He fulfilled the requirement of attending a program for suspended students and rejoined high school.

**Sierra:** Black Somalian-born female who emigrated with her parents from Somalia to Canada in 1991 received a one-day out-of-school suspension in 2010 for ignoring the teacher’s instructions to remain seated after she requested to use the washroom during class time/disrupting class.

**Anna:** Brown female who emigrated with her parents from Pakistan to Canada in 1999 was suspended five days from high school in 2011 for participating in sexual acts in the boys’ bathroom.

Cindy, Cassie, Barry, and Glenn were suspended multiple times.

**Cindy:** Mixed race Canadian-born female whose mother is from China and father is White Jewish Canadian was suspended a total of five times from high school. She was suspended twice in 2010 for 5 days each (in-school suspensions). The first time she was suspended for not submitting multiple assignments and missing two exams. The second time she was suspended for pulling the fire alarm during an exam to avoid the exam. In 2011, she was suspended three times: the first time she was suspended for two days (in-school) for skipping classes, the second time she was suspended for 10 days for using
illegal drugs on school property, and the third time she was suspended for 14 days for smoking cigarettes on school property.

**Cassie:** Chinese-born female who emigrated with her parents from China to Canada in 2001 was suspended from high school four times. In 2010, she was suspended for one day (in-school) for skipping classes, and then she was suspended in 2012 for the same reason (skipping classes) but with a three-day (in-school) suspension. She experienced a 10-day out-of-school suspension in 2011 for spitting on her teacher. Finally, in 2013, she was suspended two days for swearing at a teacher.

**Barry:** Black Nigerian-born male who emigrated with his parents from Nigeria to Canada in 2003 was suspended from high school four times. Three of those times he was suspended for fighting incidents. He was suspended in 2010 for two days for trying to break-up a fight; in 2011, he was suspended five days for fighting with students responsible for writing racist insults on his locker; and then again in 2012 he was suspended 18 days for participating in a gang-related fight on school property. Prior to his five-day suspension in 2011, he was suspended for two days for skipping classes. All suspensions were out-of-school.

**Glenn:** Brown Canadian-born male whose parents were both from Guyana was suspended three times in 2011 from high school. He was first suspended for 10 days for sharing pornographic images from the Internet with his peers. His second and third suspensions were one-day in-school suspensions for skipping classes.
Students Graduating

Seven students (Sierra, Cindy, Lisa, Janio, Mark, Barry, and Anna) did not graduate from high school. Sierra, Cindy, Barry, and Anna dropped out of school following a suspension, while Lisa, Janio, and Mark were expelled from school.

All seven students who did not graduate expressed regret about not completing their high school education. Cindy, Lisa, Mark, and Anna shared a similar regret related to employment. Cindy’s drug habit that she developed when she was still in high school seemed to be the main reasons that she was fired from her part-time jobs at gas stations and factories, but her job options were very limited because she dropped out of school after her last 14-day suspension: “I applied to shops in the malls and banking jobs too because I was a people-person and a whiz at math, but no diploma so no job there for me. Not the smartest thing to leave but I left.” During Lisa’s interview with the manager of a retail store, the manager asked if she had a high school diploma. Lisa explained that she was taking time off from school. The manager further asked if she was kicked out. When she said she was expelled, he ended the interview: “Say no more, kid. We’re done here. You can’t not have a diploma and expect to be employed in this country and get reasonable pay and respect from nobody. Doesn’t work like that.” After talking about the store manager’s response, Lisa shook her head and said, “I should have done everything to go back [to school] because now I have to take whatever life deals me…no choice.”

After Mark was expelled from school, he accepted that he would have to maintain his ties to the gang to which he belonged because, without a high school diploma, his employment options would be limited. Mark gave the logic for his decision: “I knew that I’d make more money with the boys [gang] than packing shelves at No Frills…I could
never get a better job than No Frills night job without the diploma…but not proud that I don’t have it [diploma].” Anna shared a similar understanding about her current job as a prostitute: “I can’t do better than work the streets right now…not without a diploma.”

With tears in her eyes and a relief in her voice that I was asking her these questions, she further explained her regret and dilemma: “Yeah, I’m 18 and I can go back to school but now my reputation is f*cked…catch 22… it was f*cked when I was there [school] so I came here. Sad that I left and sad that I can’t go back.”

Sierra, Janio, and Barry shared a sense of regret that was related to their identities as non-Canadian born citizens and the relationships with their parents. Sierra’s parents immigrated to Canada from Somalia with big dreams for her. Her acquiring a high school diploma was a part of those dreams. She felt as if she had largely disappointed them by dropping out of school and had instead been a burden to them with her ongoing battle with lupus. Janio felt fortunate to have opportunities in Canada that he would not have otherwise had in Brazil. He felt he failed his mom by being expelled from school: “She brought me here for a better life. I broke her heart. I accept it. I accept it. I’m gonna fix it. I’ll go back and make her proud. Show her I’m not a waste of skin.” For Barry, his parents’ disappointment in him seems to have quite the hold on his life. Barry fought back tears as he explained his parents’ disappointment: “They [parents] worked harder than I’ve ever seen two people work and they starved so that I could eat. I just couldn’t stay in that hell-hole [school]…should have stayed…they cried when I dropped out. I broke them and me.”

Lisa, Janio, Barry, and Anna would like to acquire their diploma later on. However, Janio was the only who seemed to have concrete plans to return through going
to night school in September 2013 to acquire his high school diploma: “I’ve got it all figured out. I’m gonna work three days a week and hit school three nights a week. That way I can see my daughter too. Moms will help. It’s gonna work. I’ll make her proud.”

**Contexts**

To provide consistency across data sets used in this study, sub-themes in Chapter 7 are organized into four contexts (as done in Chapter 6): political, economic, social, and educational. The decision to organize sub-themes into four contexts occurred after all sub-themes were uncovered.

**Political Context**

Political context refers to the governmental landscape in which Ontario’s school discipline and safety policies developed. Three (Cindy, Glenn, and Sierra) of the 10 participants mentioned topics related to the political context that existed in Ontario between 2008 and 2013. I also found the sub-themes of [governmental] power/authority/influence in my researcher journal that accompanied the youth interviews.

Cindy and Glenn discussed how the revised safe schools legislation preventing teachers from suspending students might have affected teachers’ behaviour related to having authority taken from them and having additional duties to intercept and report behaviours/situations. Cindy, who dropped out of school in 2011 after her last suspension, felt that her teachers were permanently angry: “Almost all the teachers there were on-edge and always p*ssed off at the world because the new policy makes them work harder. Can’t suspend kids nor pretend we’re invisible.” Glenn, who was suspended twice in 2011 for skipping classes, also noted how “teachers noticed more if we skipped
out…before that I used to skip all the time and no suspension…but the rules got
tighter…tighter…rules for teachers too…they had to be more vigilant of us…they had to
pay attention {laughs}.”

Sierra’s teachers seemed to have had less patience with her and other students as
she progressed through the grades. Sierra said, “their [teachers’] moods just seemed to
change and they weren’t kind any more because they just didn’t have time and, when
some of them tried to be kind, they just got frustrated because they can’t keep up with
everything.” Sierra asked me if the teachers’ salaries were reduced during the time she
spent in high school: “Do you know if they got less pay during my years because their
whole energy changed, and it wasn’t just my school, it was also at other schools in that
neighbourhood?” She further mentioned the Mike Harris government: “Years ago my dad
talked about school stuff with my uncle…they talked about how the Harris government is
making hell for teachers. He said he hopes I don’t become a teacher because it’s gonna be
tough.” Similarly, Cindy talked about how she wanted to be a teacher up until she started
high school where all her teachers “were b*tches and f*cking d*cks…just hungry for
power…some of them just picked on kids for no reason to feel big…that’s bullying right
there but they told us not to bully—irony.” Glenn was fascinated by the high number of
students in his class who were being suspended almost on a weekly basis for what was
deemed to be bullying. He believed that many of the suspensions received by his peers
were based on his school’s policy instead of a policy across the school board, since his
friends in other schools in his board were not being suspended as much for behaving in
similar ways:

Bullying was big in my school…kids couldn’t even swear without being sent
down to the office…as soon as you touch somebody they can report you attacked
them…people at my school were like targeted under the policy of the school I think because my boys at other schools in the district didn’t get nailed for the same sh*t. It was ignorant.

In my researcher journal entries, I mentioned that students who were suspended and/or expelled between 2008 and 2013 were making connections between teachers’ increased pressures at school related to changes in their job requirements (caused by possible governmental changes), the authority to suspend that teachers lost, and their harsh behaviours toward students.

**Economic Context**

The economic context refers to the ways in which money influenced school discipline and safety policy development and policy outcomes. This context describes financial contributions (or lack thereof) from the government and the financial circumstances of youth who experienced suspensions and/or expulsions under the policies. All youth participants, with the exception of Cassie and Anna, shared information about their family’s financial status, although there were no questions in the interview guide about this topic. While Cindy discussed her family’s healthy financial status, the other seven participants discussed their family’s financial challenges while they attended high school. Cindy was bullied by some of her peers at school because she belonged to a family who did not experience many financial struggles and her peers treated her like the “rich kid.” She recalled incidents when she complained to her mother about being bullied at school: “My mom was like ‘are you stupid?’ Why would you feel bad for having money because their parents are too lazy to work hard and have money too? She was like ‘tell them to screw off.’” Her mother was a pediatrician, while her father owned a medium-sized business.
Lisa was interviewed in the same session as Cindy. They became friends after high school when they met at a community organization for unemployed youth after attending schools in the same board. Lisa noted that her parents were “opposite to Cindy’s parents…my parents are lazy as*es…we always struggled to make ends meet…I don’t live with them no more though.” Cindy saw herself as Lisa’s “knight in shining armour…and she [Lisa] made me realized I’m bi [bi-sexual]…we’re together now…and I help her out but we’re both in the shelter.” Lisa’s wrist all the way up to her elbow was covered with scars. She pulled up her sleeves and pointed at her arm, “yeah, she [Cindy] saved me from me.”

Mark’s family experienced a great deal of financial struggles while they lived in Canada. His father was shot dead in a “freak accident at a shooting range,” and his mother passed away in her sleep within a year of his father’s death. As an only child, Mark solely bore the financial costs of burying his parents. Mark expressed gratitude for the gang to which he still belongs for its help at that time. “Those guys saved me a lot from the cops…even back in school when things were rough with money I turned to them and they helped me out…when my parents died they helped me out with [the] burial.”

Sam was also an only child to his mother who first sponsored and then adopted him from Ecuador. Sam’s mother was a dentist. Shortly after Sam moved to Canada, however, his mother closed her dental practice and fell ill with cancer. She spent a lot of time in hospital and bed-ridden at home. Although health care coverage was “something to be admired” in Ontario, Sam’s mother had “a lot of needs related to her condition that wasn’t really of a medical kind and we ran out of money real quick…I had to start working when I was in high school to help out.” Similarly, Janio worked while he was
still in high school because his family struggled financially. In a heated argument related to skipping classes (prior to his first suspension), his father told him “if you think you’re a man then man-up and find a job and get your as* outta here.” Janio found a job at a telemarketing company: “I worked at this sleazy telemarketing company for like three months and then they accused me of thieving some cash...boss didn’t even pay me for my last week there.” In my researcher journal entry that corresponds to my interview with Janio, I mentioned that,

Janio’s telemarketing job situation reminds me of my first job in Canada when I was 15 [years old]...the owner of the company made a sexual advance toward me and then when I quit almost right after that happened, he refused to pay me...but, paid me after my older brother showed up at the company and demanded my money or he would have taken the owner to the Labour Board. I worked there because I didn’t want to ask my mom for money for anything. I knew we were financially strapped as new immigrants to Canada, and she [Mom] was supporting all three of her kids on her own.

Barry also worked during his time in high school. Being employed “made a huge difference in his life” when he got suspended for the fourth and final time from high school. He was working at a fast-food restaurant. “Of course, it was a sh*tty job but it was mine… it was me becoming a man… my father couldn’t say sh*t because I was at least helping out while my mother was just popping babies out.” Barry’s parents did not express too many concerns about him dropping out of school after his fourth suspension because they needed his financial contribution. Leaving school early meant that he would be available for more hours to work at the restaurant.

While Glenn didn’t work during high school, he considered selling drugs to help contribute to his family’s financial struggles:

Guys in the neighbourhood kept approaching me to get me to sell their sh*t for them…I just had to say the word and they’d give it to me to sell…good money for
someone like me…my family didn’t have much and we struggled but education came first always…so I bear it until the end.

Glenn did not regret his choice to remain in school and acquire his high school diploma. However, he regretted not getting a “decent part-time job” while he was in high school to help his family with their expenses. Sierra too regretted not getting a part-time job while she was in high school to financially contribute to her family’s living expenses. She shared a double bed with three of her sisters and her two brothers shared another double bed in one bedroom in a two-bedroom apartment. Sierra’s health condition (lupus) prevented her from being “a good daughter helping out.”

Barry, Sierra, and Sam did not participate in activities at school that required money. They did not mention some field trips to their parents because they knew their families could not afford them. Barry “just told the other kids that I didn’t want to go on stupid as* field trips…I prefer to stay home and chill.” Sierra, on the other hand, “would tell my friends that my family couldn’t afford it and that’s all…plus, they all knew I was always sick all the time.” For Sam, “it was clear that my life was different than the others…my mom was sick as hell and field trips were just not on my mind…didn’t owe nobody explanations for not going…couldn’t care less.”

Social Context

Social context refers to the physical and social environment in which a person lives. It involves identity, immigration, and family. For the purpose of this study, the identity sub-theme particularly refers to an individual’s self-identification of her or his race/ethnicity, birthplace, gender, and sexual orientation. The immigration sub-theme includes individuals’ immigration experiences to Canada and/or their parents’ immigration experiences to Canada. The family sub-theme relates to individuals’ home
life, parental involvement and support, and family values that dictated home and school life.

Identity. My initial use of the term racialized was particularly directed at non-White youth. However, while there were White youth participants in Chapter 6 who self-identified as racialized, there were no youth participants who self-identified as White in Chapter 7. There were, however, two youth participants (Cindy and Lisa) in this chapter who self-identified as mixed race, each of whom had one White parent (see Table 5 in Chapter 4 for the 10 research participants’ self-identified racial/ethnic identity).

In the researcher journal, I noted that Cindy and Lisa were explicit about their parents’ ethnicities. In my journal entry related to Sierra, I noted that it was interesting that she repeatedly mentioned that, although she is Black, she doesn’t act Black. Implying that acting Black was distasteful, Sierra said, “I don’t talk like Blacks or carry myself like them…the colour of my skin is Black but my culture isn’t Black…but I’m treated like them a lot but I don’t deserve it.”

Lisa also noticed how particular racial stereotypes played out in her school life. Her skin colour, according to her, was White, and her Aboriginal physical features were unnoticeable. She was treated like a White person with White privilege on her side: “I looked White and could get away with stuff…I skipped out on classes a million times and was only called down like four times and I was always fighting but never really got into trouble except one time.”

Youth participants also discussed stereotypes related to gender and sexual orientation. During her time in high school, Cindy explained a longing to be male because she recognized that “guys have so much more freedom than girls…they could
smoke and drink…get high and come to school and all that was just boys being boys and I wanted that for me.” Cindy was attracted to boys back then and never considered herself to be a lesbian or bi-sexual, but noted the following: “maybe I had those tendencies in my subconscious because once I met Lisa I knew I loved her.” Lisa also self-identified with being bi-sexual. She enjoyed a sense of relief after she was expelled from school because “I could be myself now and didn’t have to be ashamed that I liked girls.” Later in our conversation, Lisa said that, when she worked as a server at a restaurant where the size of women’s chests was the main attraction, she became acutely “aware of the fact that I had to pretend to be straight because the clientele was straight men…the men came there to see straight women with big t*tties.”

Individuals’ perceptions of their race/ethnicity, gender, and sexuality can be different than what is perceived by people living in the society in which they exist. While it is important to understand how individuals perceive themselves, it is equally important to understand how society perceives them because identifying people places them into particular social groups that receive certain advantages and/or disadvantages.

With regards to gender, male students received longer and more frequent suspensions than did female students. Only one of the five female students was expelled. While the male students who were expelled were expelled from all schools in their board, the female student was only expelled from her school. Three of five males were suspended for fighting, while only one of five females was suspended for fighting. Apparently, “when girls fight it’s not as serious…not taken seriously because it’s just cat-fight…more entertainment, so even though we fight a lot we hardly get in trouble…but fighting is more serious with guys” (Lisa). In slight contradiction, Mark too was involved
in more fights than those for which he was actually suspended; according to him, “guys fighting is normal and teachers expected that from us, but not if guns and sh*t were involved.”

**Immigration.** Seven (Sam, Sierra, Janio, Mark, Cassie, Barry, and Anna) of 10 participants were born outside of Canada and experienced the immigration process. The other three (Cindy, Lisa, and Glenn) participants discussed the immigration experiences of one or both of their parents.

Sam and Cassie experienced great difficulty learning English as they were born in non-English speaking countries—Ecuador and China respectively. Sam said that his “mother didn’t speak much Spanish at all, so our communication was barebones…not good…plus, the kids at school couldn’t understand me…I was lost.” Not only did Cassie experience her peers not understanding her when she spoke, but she also experienced what it felt like to be “shunned” by the other students of Chinese descent at her school: “The Chinese kids were all born here and could speak English fine, so they pulled away from me…called me an FOB [Fresh off the Boat]…they didn’t talk to me much and when they did it was some mean sh*t.”

While Barry was fluent in English, his peers mocked his Nigerian accent and called him a “f*ck.” In fact, the words “f*ck,” “as*—f*cker,” and “c*ck-s*cker” were marked on his locker once, with the vandals leaving instructions for him to kill himself. Barry was convinced that a lot of this harassment was based on him having an accent. Most of the Black students at his school were born in Canada and “talked ghettoish…nobody had an accent like mine” (Barry). The school resource officer at the scene of the fight in which Barry was involved in 2012 told Barry to “go back to where I
came from and take all my sh*tty behaviour with me.” Barry understood that the officer’s comment was based on hearing his Nigerian accent. Barry was embarrassed by this comment but did not think there was anything he could do to hold the officer accountable.

Similarly, Sierra emigrated from Somalia at the age of three. She was fluent in English but had a strong Somalian accent. Sierra’s expressed lack of confidence in her academic ability and ability to connect with others was largely based on her teachers’ understanding of her English: “One of them [teachers] tells me to hustle while I was trying to get a sentence out…and another one wished when all kids were taught English they would learn it without the accent because it only slowed down everything.” Sierra regretted being an immigrant. In my researcher journal that corresponds with Sierra’s interview, I noted how poignant one of her comments was, here quoted verbatim: “I hated being an immigrant. I sounded like an immigrant, walked like an immigrant, thought like an immigrant, and even smelled like an immigrant. School is no place for immigrants if you want to make friends and find support.”

For many years, both Sierra and Mark longed to return to their birthplaces because they did not feel welcomed in their schools. Sierra would “go back to Somalia in a heartbeat where I obviously belonged…didn’t belong here even though I came here when I was very little…I just never fit here.” For Mark, “coming here at 14 for a better life was the plan that failed…everything went downhill…both my parents died in this country…I became reckless, homeless, I changed from being good…but I had to change…I longed for India…for home.” In my researcher journal entry that corresponds
with both Sierra and Mark, I noted how I could personally relate to their longing to return to their homelands after immigrating to Canada.

Janio, who spoke Portuguese and English fluently, emigrated from Brazil when he was four years old. He did not have a Portuguese accent when he spoke with me. However, he complained about how his “dark skin colour didn’t make matters easy in school…didn’t have too many friends…always hung with the oddballs…everybody congregated with their own kind.” Janio was bullied by his peers and was called “cooler slave.” He found comfort in using marijuana and, later on, selling marijuana. In my research journal that corresponds with Janio’s interview, I noted “Janio tried very hard to connect at school through teams, groups, and so on but felt pushed aside and couldn’t connect with anyone well…so he tried drugs and successfully connected with that.”

Similar to Janio, Anna only “hung out with the Brown people in the school…but just the outcast ones…the poor ones…the Brown Paki immigrants {laughs}.” She found comfort in illegal drugs while she was in high school. She spent the majority of her high school years being “the girl that the other girls envied…I was exotic looking…so the girls hated me…all my friends were guys and they all wanted to f*ck me…I know that’s not right but I felt like I belonged with them.” Anna was sexually involved with “about eight guys at school and about two outside of school…the two outside hooked me up with weed and I didn’t need to pay them if I let them hook up with me…it was fair.”

Three participants (Glenn, Lisa, and Cindy) acknowledged their parents’ challenges as a result of immigration and/or belonging to particular cultural backgrounds. Glenn’s parents were married in Guyana and immigrated to Canada to start their family with “an understanding that Canada was gonna be good for our family…it would be
better than life in Guyana…it was a less racist country than Guyana…more fair…more kind.” However, Glenn’s parents “realized quick that how they thought about Canada was a lie…Canada is hard and cold {laughs}.” Glenn’s father told him that he “should quit complaining about school issues and just recognize that it’s not our country…we’ve got to work harder to fit in.” Working hard to “fit in” was a familiar concept to Lisa’s parents: “Mom was born here but is First Nations, and my dad was new from Ireland when they met…everyone was against their relationship…both of them struggled to fit in…fit into each other’s life and then help me fit in as a mixed girl.” Lisa figured out quickly that she “could downplay her First Nations heritage and just be White…things were simpler like that…my friends didn’t really question it because my last name was White.” While in high school, Cindy was happy that her “dad’s White genes were stronger than my mom’s Chinese eyes…just because I could fit in anywhere I wanted to fit in…I didn’t have to hang with the Chinese kids.”

**Family.** Three (Cindy, Cassie, and Anna) of the 10 youth participants discussed the high level of involvement their parents had in their schooling. Cindy’s mother was very much involved in the parent-teacher committees at her daughter’s elementary and secondary schools—“Mom never missed a single parent night or any of my choir performances…she tried to make me a success…I disappointed her.” Cassie’s parents constantly worried about how their daughter was adjusting to Canadian lifestyle after moving here from China at the age of seven. Their concern for Cassie was largely rooted in an incident that happened when Cassie was eight years old: “They [parents] were freaked out because I tried to kill myself at school when I was eight. I was so unhappy with life. I just never liked this place.” Cassie’s parents’ concern for her well-being
motivated their participation in “every parent night, bake sales, and everything under the sun that happened at school…when Mom couldn’t make it, Dad came…they even helped me with homework.” For Anna, her parents did not help her with homework but they always encouraged her siblings to help each other with homework. “They [parents] always went to the school when they needed to be there and I felt good about that.”

While Glenn’s parents encouraged him to do well in school, his “parents weren’t actually involved in my school life…school was like their babysitter while they went to work…but they made sure I understood that I had no choice but to go [to school]…they just wanted me to be successful.” Similarly, Mark’s parents made clear the importance of him attending school, but they did not assist him with homework or attend any school-related activities—“they never even really showed up for meet the teacher night…they were busy trying to make ends meet…I knew that but I didn’t like that they weren’t really there for me.”

In the same way Mark attributed his parents’ absence from his schooling to financial pressures, Sam’s single-parent mother was not involved in his schooling because of financial pressures. In addition to financial pressures, Sam’s mother spent a great deal of time bedridden because of illness. Similarly, Sierra’s mother spent a great deal of time ill with bone cancer and, as a result, was unable to contribute to her daughter’s schooling. Sierra’s father “had the burden of taking care of the entire family…he was never home…always working…just saw him at dinner time and he never really asked about my life in school…we just have a different culture around these things in Somalia.” Although Lisa’s mother was born and raised in Canada, she highlighted how her mother’s Aboriginal cultural background might have impacted her involvement in her
children’s schooling: “Mom just didn’t go to stuff at our school…her parent didn’t do it for her, so she didn’t feel the need to do it for me…Native people just don’t do that kind of thing {pause} because they’re tough.”

Janio’s parents were frustrated and consumed with their financial situation and were “not paying attention to me at school…things were flying out of control there and they just couldn’t care less…too much money problems drove them insane…I wasn’t the priority.” He partly blamed his parents’ lack of care for his illegal drug use and involvement with gangs who sold illegal drugs: “One point I had weed growing in my room almost eight months before they [parents] even noticed or questioned it…they gave me lots of freedom and I like that, but I felt like they didn’t care {tears in eyes}.” In contrast, Barry felt as if he was under constant surveillance from his parents:

They [parents] were always asking me foolish questions about drugs and sh*t…but that energy they spend wasting my time with that kind of talk, they should have shown up at my school…just f*cking show up. When I have my kids I’m gonna show up for them…I know how hurtful it was to be bullied in school and all my father said was “suck it up and be a man”…that ain’t right.

**Educational Context**

Educational context refers to the physical and social environment in which a person goes to school. All 10 youth participants who were suspended and/or expelled post-2008 discussed how their educational context impacted their experiences through (numbers refer to the number of participants who mentioned the issue):

discrimination/biases (7), belonging (7), teachers’ negative attitudes (5), low expectations (3), self-respect (3), and sports teams (2).

**Discrimination/biases.** Seven of 10 youth participants (Sierra, Cindy, Lisa, Janio, Mark, Barry, and Anna) mentioned how discrimination/biases based on race and/or
gender impacted their educational experiences, using terms such as racial slurs, racism, discrimination, skin colour, blackness, fair, gender, sexist, and sexism. Lisa, Sierra, Janio, and Barry experienced racial discrimination in high school. Lisa’s “one drop rule of one drop of Aboriginal blood made me Aboriginal all over applied in school…teachers saw me as Aboriginal and my friends too…I was less than White and they treated me so…it wasn’t fair.” Sierra also talked about unfair treatment by her teachers that was based on her “blackness makes people uncomfortable…they don’t know much about blackness…so, I made teachers uncomfortable and their uncomfortableness made them treat me with a long spoon, never getting too close to me…never treating me fair.” Janio acknowledged a certain amount of distance that existed between teachers and students based on students’ races and teachers’ racial stereotypes and biases: “When you’re Black it’s worse…there’s not much hope for them [teachers] to treat you fairly but Brown people like me had it rough too, especially if you were an immigrant.” In agreement with Janio’s observation of how unfairly Black students were understood and treated, Barry noted how being Black negatively impacted his educational experience:

My teachers weren’t all bad but they were all White and didn’t try with me the way they tried with the others [students]…they didn’t want me to do bad but didn’t do much to help me either…my skin colour was the elephant in the room…people fear what they don’t know and I understand that but I didn’t like how being Black clouded everything else for them.

Gender biases were noted by three individuals. Anna mentioned how gender biases and discrimination impacted her educational experience in high school. Cindy and Mark detailed how a combination of gender and racial biases operated together to negatively impact their educational experiences in high school. For Anna, the suspension process she experienced for partaking in sexual activities in the bathroom at school was
plagued with gender biases. She said that, although the male student who participated in the sexual activity was also suspended, their

[female] school principal and [female] administrators didn’t shame him [male student] like how they shamed me. They kept asking me how I could disrespect myself…how I don’t have no pride…they asked me all these questions in front of the guy [male student] they didn’t ask him any of that.

In addition to how Anna was treated differently than the male student by the senior administrators of the school, her peers “looked at me with disgust and looked at him like he was the man…we were caught doing the same thing but he was like admired for it and I was shamed.”

Cindy was a “bad as* in school and got away with murder…teachers were lenient on me…being half White and Asian helped but what helped more was being a girl {laughter}.” She further acknowledged that, “honestly, though, if I was Black or Paki I would have been kicked out for pulling the things I pulled.” In my corresponding research journal entry for Cindy’s interview, I wrote, “it makes me think about how outraged I felt when my Math teacher (Sri Lankan) in high school embarrassed me on several occasions on the basis of me being a girl, but he only picked on Brown girls.”

Mark expressed feelings of outrage when he talked about receiving an expulsion after he stabbed three students:

I was always seen as a problem child…I complained so many times to teachers about how those guys I fought with called me Paki and they didn’t do anything about it…it spun out of control and nobody considered why I stabbed those as*holes…they teased me senseless…they got what was coming to them. A month before that a girl took a knife to another girl but they were both just suspended for 20 days…when guys fight they get kicked out but it’s different for girls.

**Belonging.** Seven students discussed the importance of feeling a sense of belonging in their school environment. Cassie, Anna, and Glenn talked about how they
often felt like they were outsiders/intruders in their schools. Cassie attributed her feeling of not belonging in her school environment to her immigration status and how she was “already seven or eight years old when I moved here and schools just didn’t feel good for people like me…my elementary school was the same as my high school…both made me feel like an outsider.” Anna also attributed her feeling of not belonging in her school environment to immigrating to Canada:

I came here when I was already five…school is a lot to take in for a new kid here from a place like Pakistan…and I just felt like I didn’t belong and nothing in my schools here really made me feel differently…to be from Pakistan meant to be an outsider and everyone was fine with that.

Similarly, Glenn explained that both his elementary and secondary schools did not offer him a sense of belonging: “Schools had a way of making me feel like I was out of my element…I didn’t feel like I was in my element but it wasn’t just my experience…the few friends I had in high school felt that way too.”

Barry and Sierra mentioned how being Black automatically meant that they were “othered” in their school environments; this othering prevented them from gaining a sense of belonging. For Barry, being Black meant that, “I had to deal with the N word written on my locker every few days…it was bullsh*t…that didn’t make me feel safe and definitely didn’t make me feel like I belonged in that environment.” Barry made a crucial point that seemed to serve as a moment of enlightenment for him in our conversation; “Gotta say, though, it made me realize that I played this role as the outsider in a place that validated insiders by having outsiders like me…sounds confusing, right?! {laughter}.”

Sierra struggled to manage her diabetes throughout high school. She explained how her body was weakened by her condition and her mind was distracted. Her teachers seemed to attribute her slow pace of learning and partaking in other activities to her being “the
typical Black lazy student…that was their stereotype of Black people…even the Black teacher saw me as lazy, not sick.” Sierra’s teachers didn’t make her feel like she belonged in her school environment because “it was clear that they [teachers] were working off of the bad stereotypes of Black people assuming sh*t left and right…they couldn’t even properly acknowledge my sickness. All they could see was my black skin.”

Sam and Lisa illuminated the important role that teachers could play in helping students feel like they belonged to school environments. Sam explained that, although he received a 20-day suspension for fighting, he felt that it was “a well-deserved suspension…and the teacher in charge of the program for kids who got suspended was very encouraging and supportive…that was important to have…when support is there, you automatically feel like you belong to the environment.” For Lisa, struggling with depression and obsessive compulsive disorder impacted her educational experiences. “It made a huge difference to know that one of my teachers suffered from the same things and could open up and talk to me about what I was going through. She seriously helped me feel like I belonged there.”

**Teachers’ negative attitudes.** Five youth participants explained how their teachers’ attitudes impacted their educational experiences. Janio’s, Mark’s, and Glenn’s teachers’ negative attitudes about teaching and curriculum content impacted these students’ educational experiences. The majority of Janio’s teachers in high school seemed to be unhappy with their jobs, as they often openly complained about their workloads and “the bureaucratic bullsh*t in the system.” Mark recalled how one of his teachers often expressed frustration about “having to deal with the needs of IEP [Individual Education Plan] kids.” Mark noted “that sort of negative energy got mixed in with everyone’s
energy in the classroom, and it was hard to get past it sometimes…but teachers don’t really understand how their frame of mind impacts [the educational experiences of] the kids.” Similarly, Glenn acknowledged how many of his teachers with negative attitudes were usually unaware of how their attitudes impacted their practice and the attitudes of students in the classroom. Glenn felt that several of his “teachers felt powerless in a school where they were constantly being told what to do and how to do it…and how long it should take them to do it.” Anna commented on how her teachers’ and school administrators’ attitudes about gender roles impacted her suspension experience, her short-lived return to school after her suspension, and ultimately her decision to drop out of high school.

Lisa, Janio, and Mark explained how frustrating it was for them to understand their teachers’ and school administrators’ negative attitudes that seemed to be based on a lack of understanding of policies and students when making decisions around suspensions and expulsions. Lisa “did not have a clue about how the school could suspend me for missing school…wouldn’t that mean I missed more school even for in-school bullsh*t suspension? Clearly, I needed more than a f*cking suspension to change my ways.” Similarly, Janio did not understand “how is it that 10 days of missing school for using [drugs] was going to make me kick drugs…principal had no clue why he was doing the things the policies told him to do…he was like a mechanical doll.” Janio was angry that he had to change school boards altogether because travelling to school would have taken him almost one hour. However, he had every intention of returning to school until he started attending the program for expelled youth, where “the kids told me that once the cops are involved in my records, I was blacklisted all over the province…so,
what’s the f*cking point of starting fresh? They should just suspend me…let me do the
program and go back.” Mark, on the other hand, accepted the reason for his expulsion but
chose not to attend the program for expelled youth because he believed that, even if
another school was to accept him upon completion of the program, his schooling
experience would be just as unbearable as the first one.

**Low expectations.** Three youth participants (Sierra, Janio, and Barry)—all of
whom did not complete high school—described how teachers’ low expectations of them
impacted their educational experiences. Many of Sierra’s teachers didn’t expect her to
excel academically because she “had a strong Somalian accent and didn’t participate
much in class discussion due to my language insecurity and I’m shy too, plus they saw
me as a lazy person who wouldn’t amount to much.” Janio’s known association with a
gang in his community affected his teachers’ academic expectations of him:

> My teachers knew about my involvement with the gang, which I won’t name right
now, and they thought that I was a hopeless cause. They [teachers] couldn’t see
that the gang was like my family away from home…it was that simple…I felt like
I belonged in the gang, not the classroom.

For Barry, “teachers had given up on me…I was the kid always cutting school and
finding myself in fights…nasty fights…I was the kid who wouldn’t amount to much
because I was seen as not interested in being in school or doing good.”

**Self-respect.** Three participants talked about self-respect. In a focus group
session, Cindy and Lisa talked about how their mothers instilled in them a certain anxiety
around the necessity for girls/women to have a great deal of respect, especially for their
bodies. Cindy acknowledged that her mother’s understanding of self-respect was rooted
in a traditional Chinese cultural background with which her mother identified. In my researcher journal entry that corresponds with Cindy’s interview, I wrote that, “my mom was also fixated on self-respect that was mainly related to the idea of a woman’s body being a rare treasure…this was tied to our cultural understanding…I grew up with that understanding too.” Lisa acknowledged that her mother’s urgency around women’s self-respect was rooted in her personal experience with being raped by two men in her past in combination with her struggle with obesity (and being self-conscious about her physical appearance). For Anna, her understanding of self-respect was brought to the forefront by female authoritative figures at her school followed by her parents’ disappointment in her after she was suspended and then again after she decided to drop out of school. Anna said that she was still working hard at regaining her self-respect that was compromised by many people in her life: “Lost respect for myself in the bathroom with that as*hole guy…lost it over and over again when I had to talk about it…it was taken by the guy, people at school, and my family…still working hard to get it back.”

**Sports teams.** Glenn and Sam—both of whom graduated from high school—discussed how their involvement in sports teams at school contributed to their educational experience. Glenn’s participation on his school’s basketball team was “one of the few things that made me feel connected to school…some days it was the only thing I looked forward to…being a part of something I was pretty good at made a difference.” He laughed when he explained that he skipped classes several times but “I would drag my as* to practice [basketball practice] even when I was sick with a cold or something.” Sam acknowledged how disconnected he felt from school in general when he quit the football team at his school due to his mom’s illness that placed time demands on his schedule,
leaving him less time to participate in extra-curricular activities. After quitting the team, Sam’s football coach and team members frequently checked in with him for updates about his mom’s condition and inquired about how they could help him.

**Synthesis of Post-2008 Youth Findings**

This chapter captured the suspension and expulsion experiences of 10 racially diverse youth (two mixed race, two Black, three Brown, one Chinese, one South Asian, and one Spanish) who attended high schools in Ontario (seven in Toronto and three in Ottawa) and were expelled and/or suspended from school post-2008. Six participants received multiple suspensions from school. Three participants were expelled from school and never graduated. Four participants who were suspended but not expelled did not graduate from high school.

Acknowledging the political, economic, social, and educational systems that shaped the educational outcomes of racialized students such as those interviewed in this dissertation is crucial in understanding how policies and programs can better address the disproportional exclusion of racialized students. This chapter presented the emergent sub-themes from these 10 students’ interview data, categorizing sub-themes into four contexts to increase the understanding of how the contexts in which students existed influenced their suspension and/or expulsion experiences. These sub-themes encompassed: authority (political context); socio-economic status (economic context); identity, immigration, and family (social context); and discrimination/bias, belonging, teachers’ negative attitudes, low expectations, self-respect, and sports team (educational context).
CHAPTER 8: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to explore how Ontario’s school safety policies influenced the educational experiences of racialized students between 2001 and 2013. To fulfill this purpose, I examined Ontario’s school safety policies (2000-2013) through examination of four pieces of school safety legislation passed between 2000 and 2013. I also engaged the voices of racialized youth (18-25 years old) who were suspended and/or expelled from schools while those policies were in effect.

My study was guided by three questions:

1) What has been the nature and state of school safety policies in Ontario between 2000 and 2013?

2) How might have school safety policies influenced the educational experiences of racialized students who were excluded (i.e., suspended and/or expelled) from school during the time such policies were in effect?

3) How might have the suspension and expulsion experiences of racialized students influenced school safety policymaking and development in Ontario?

To address these three research questions, provide an overview of Ontario’s political, economic, social, and educational contexts (2000-2013), discuss important topics that emerged from the research process, shine light on Ontario’s shift from punitive measures to progressive discipline and restorative programs, and provide implications for policy, practice, and research, this chapter provides a synthesis of the findings based on Ontario’s school safety legislation, relevant scholarly literature and
research reports, and interviews with self-identified racialized youth participants who were suspended/and or expelled from Ontario schools.

**Addressing Research Questions**

**Research Question 1: What has been the nature and state of school safety policies in Ontario between 2000 and 2013?**

In response to the first research question about the nature and state of Ontario’s school safety policies between 2000 and 2013, four pieces of legislation were examined in a systematic policy analysis (Bowen, 2009; Pal, 2006): (i) *Safe Schools Act* (SSA), 2000; (ii) *Progressive Discipline and School Safety Act* (PDSS), 2007; (iii) *Keeping Our Kids Safe at School Act* (KOKSS), 2009; and (iv) *Accepting Schools Act* (ASA), 2012.

Under a Progressive Conservative majority government, led by Premier Mike Harris, the SSA (2000) was passed. The SSA (2000) legislation was prompted by mainstream media outlets’ pervasive messages about the perceived increase of violent incidents in schools (Bhattacharjee, 2003) coupled with the Harris government’s agenda that included a zero tolerance approach for school violence (Mosher, 2008). These outlets played a major role in constructing the social problem of school violence in the minds of the general public. These messages fuelled the idea that more punitive measures were required in schools to reduce violent incidents, motivating policymakers to pass the SSA, 2000 (Ruck & Wortley, 2002).

Policymakers addressed issues of discipline and respect in the SSA (2000) by defining acceptable and unacceptable behaviours and consequences that communicated a “zero tolerance” philosophy to the public and all other stakeholders. While the SSA (2000) did not actually employ the phrase “zero tolerance,” some school boards and
schools used the phrase in their jurisdiction’s policies until 2007 when new policy
developments required the removal of the phrase from all school board policies, under a
granted more attention to mitigating factors, removed the possibility for full expulsions
from all schools in Ontario, and required restorative programs for students who were
suspended and/or expelled as opposed to briefly mentioning these ideas in the SSA
(2000).

Given that suspension and expulsion decisions were reportedly still being
inconsistently made across schools and school boards under the PDSS (2007), more
policies were developed to clarify roles and responsibilities of members of the school
community. Under a Liberal majority government, still led by Premier Dalton McGuinty,
KOKSS (2009) was implemented to provide school board employees with standards to
respond and report incidents that threatened the positive school climate. Additionally, the
KOKSS (2009) made it mandatory that school board employees respond to and report
incidents of violence in schools. The requirements of the KOKSS (2009) meant that
teachers and school administrators experienced an increase in their responsibilities. It is
likely that these requirements also helped to hold teachers and school administrators more
accountable for their decisions to suspend and/or expel students.

Understanding that safe schools are built on a positive school climate, the OME
passed the ASA (2012), which recognized the need for programs to enhance school
climates and the need to evaluate school climates on a regular basis using the
perspectives of multiple stakeholders (ASA, 2012). In comparison to the first three pieces
of legislation discussed in this study, the ASA (2012) was more focused on anti-bullying
initiatives and school board policies and programs that addressed inclusivity and anti-discrimination.

**Research Question 2: How might have school safety policies influenced the educational experiences of racialized students who were excluded (i.e., suspended and/or expelled) from school during the time such policies were in effect?**

In response to the second research question about how school safety policies might have influenced the experiences of racialized students who were excluded from Ontario schools between 2001 and 2013, I drew primarily from 20 interviews with youth ages 18-25, who were suspended and/or expelled from schools in either Toronto (16) or Ottawa (4). Additionally, I drew from the four policy documents and relevant research literature and reports to address the second research question.

The SSA (2000) has been described in scholarly literature (e.g., Daniel & Bondy, 2008; Joong & Ridler, 2006; Raby & Domitrek, 2007), research reports (e.g., Bhattacharjee, 2003; Safe Schools Action Team, 2006), and youth participants (Alex, Barbara, Mary, Sean, Cynthia) as being punitive in nature, entailing mandatory punishments for particular behaviours with little to no room for mitigating factors. Although the SSA (2000) mentions mitigating factors, several youth participants interviewed in this study believed that mitigating factors were generally ignored in practice because an implicit zero tolerance approach existed. Youth participants (Cynthia, Jason, and Sean) explained that receiving multiple suspensions for fighting when sometimes they were fighting in self-defence and were experiencing emotional turmoil was a clear indicator of the lack of attention given to mitigating factors under the SSA (2000).
The Ontario Ministry of Education (2013a, 2013b) reported a dramatic decrease in the number of students suspended and expelled under the PDSS (2007) compared with the SSA (2000). However, OME findings did not account for multiple suspensions received by some students; in other words, if a student was suspended more than once in one school year, she or he was counted as one suspension. More concerning was that, even under the PDSS (2007), racialized students and students with exceptionalities were still receiving a disproportional number of suspensions and expulsions (Rankin & Contenta, 2009; Short, 2011; Winton, 2012a).

Five (four males and 1 female) of 10 youth in the group who were excluded from school between 2001 and 2008 were expelled. Only four of the five youth graduated from high school, and none of them attended a program for expelled youth. Alex, Sean, and Ken received full expulsions, and a one-year limited expulsion was received by Debbie. David was one of the youth who were expelled, but had his expulsion withdrawn and was allowed to return to his school where he graduated. Three (two males and one female) of 10 youth in the group who were excluded from school between 2008 and 2013 were expelled. None of these youth graduated from school. Janio was the only one to attend a program, but stopped attending after a few weeks because he felt as if he would be “blacklisted” and would be refused re-enrollment to school upon completing the expulsion program.

Although, under PDSS (2007), it was mandatory for school boards to provide programs for students who were suspended and/or expelled, some boards only had one or two programs that were geographically located in areas that were inaccessible or challenging to access for students who were suspended and/or expelled from mainstream...
schools (Janio; Sean). Only three of 10 participants in the pre-2008 sample mentioned being referred to suspension and/or expulsion programs in their school board. Five of 10 participants in the post-2008 sample mentioned being referred to suspension and expulsion programs in their board. Also, the majority of youth (6 of 8) who were excluded from schools and referred to a program did not attend the program in which they were assigned because some of them felt discouraged by the way they were being stigmatized (Barbara, Janio, and Mark), some found it time-consuming (Sam, Barry) and expensive to travel to the program location (Sam, Barry), and others felt as if the program was a waste of their time (Debbie, Janio). Winton (2012a) reported that suspension and expulsion programs are not very effective because the majority of students who attend them do not return to mainstream school. She suggested that suspension and expulsion programs need to be evaluated to better comprehend how they can be improved to more effectively assist students to reform their behaviours and return to mainstream schools.

In this youth sample, students who were suspended under the SSA (2000) were more likely to graduate compared with students who were suspended under the PDSS (2007). Five of 10 youth who were excluded from school between 2001 and 2008 were suspended but not expelled. Of these five youth who were suspended, four of them graduated from school. Seven of 10 youth who were excluded from school between 2008 and 2013 were suspended but not expelled. Of these seven youth who were suspended, three of them graduated from school. Across both the pre-2008 and post-2008 groups of youth participants, females tended to receive a higher number of suspensions than males for fighting, and males tended to stand a higher chance of being expelled for fighting than their female counterparts. Blake et al. (2010) corroborated these findings in their gender
analysis and reported that teachers and school administrators generally perceived Black males as dangerous and Black females as unfeminine and defiant.

The majority of the youth interviewed are currently unemployed, underemployed, or working in an industry in which they are ashamed (e.g., Anna works as a prostitute and Mark, although grateful for the friendships in a gang, is disappointed in himself for not completing high school and finding a more socially acceptable job). Similar to the findings in Abada et al.’s (2009) and Hussain’s (2011) studies with children of Canadian immigrants, career aspirations among the youth interviewed in these studies were centred on their parents’/guardians’ level of educational attainment and/or their parents’/guardians’ conceptualizations of success. The majority of youth interviewed in this study were currently experiencing financial challenges and belonged to families that had been experiencing financial challenges when they were school-aged. Lassen et al. (2006) and Ruck and Wortley (2002) corroborate the narrative that racialized students belonging to economically disadvantaged households are at higher risk for receiving suspensions and expulsions from school. The economic situations of youth participants in this study were, to a large extent, based on having two parents, single-parent, no parents, biological parents, or adoptive parents. Moreover, understanding students’ family circumstances is important in understanding students’ behaviours that lead to them being excluded from school (Williams, 2005).

Eight (six females; two males) of 20 youth participants were unemployed at the time of their interviews with me. All six females (Barbara, Debbie, Kendra, Sierra, Cindy, and Lisa) who were unemployed reported struggles with their mental health, with two of them (Kendra and Sierra) experiencing challenges with their physical health and
collecting disability benefits. In contrast, while Alex and Ken were unemployed, they did not mention anything about having mental or physical health challenges. Mary, a customer service representative at a call centre, and Jason, a local bus driver, were the only two participants who communicated a sense of job security in their current employment. Sean and Glenn were enrolled in certification programs and participating in related paid internship programs. Janio (bouncer at a dance club), Mark (illegal drug vendor), and Anna (prostitute) were employed in unconventional jobs and were paid “under the table.”

Most likely indicative of the growing immigrant population in two of Ontario’s largest metropolitan cities (Cole et al., 2012), all youth participants who were interviewed were either immigrants or were children of immigrant parents. Youth whose parents were not experiencing severe financial challenges were more likely to graduate from school and were employed at the time of our interview. Youth who did not graduate from high school were at greater risk for not finding employment or finding employment in unconventional sectors.

Apart from the common problem of unemployment among several of the youth participants in this study, the problem of homelessness was pervasive for many of them. With the exception of Glenn, Jason, Sam, David, Mary, Cynthia, and Sierra, the other 13 youth participants were either currently experiencing homelessness or had experienced it right after they left high school. Many students in Toronto belonging to racialized groups, especially Black ethnic groups and those coming from war zones, are a part of economically disadvantaged families that are at higher risk for homelessness and other
symptoms of racialized and gendered poverty (Dei, 2008; National Council of Welfare, 2009).

Balfanz et al. (2003) found that youth from economically disadvantaged families living in high poverty neighbourhoods are more likely to experience behavioural challenges and be incarcerated. Six (Mary, Alex, Barbara, Sean, David, and Ken) of the 10 youth who were excluded from school between 2001 and 2008 were taken to the police station because they violated school rules. None of them was incarcerated. Three (Janio, Mark, and Barry) of the 10 youth who were excluded from school between 2008 and 2013 were taken to the police station because they violated school rules. In 2009, Janio was incarcerated for an unspecified amount of time for selling illegal drugs on school property. In 2010, Mark was found guilty for stabbing three people at his school and spent 16 months incarcerated, although he justified his actions by explaining that he was merely defending himself.

According to Pal’s (2006) policy framework regarding problem definition, the impact that school safety policies have on racialized students can be traced back to how the social problem of school violence was defined, by whom, and with whose best interest in mind. It is important to explore what political, economic, social, and educational contexts shaped (and continue to shape) the framing of the social problem of school violence.

**Research Question 3: How might have the suspension and expulsion experiences of racialized students influenced school safety policymaking and development in Ontario?**
In response to complaints from concerned parents/guardians of students who were being suspended and expelled excessively and/or for questionable reasons after the SSA (2000) was implemented, the OHRC and the SSAT evaluated the impact that the policies were having on students in Ontario. The OHRC and SSAT reported that the SSA (2000) was being inconsistently implemented across Ontario schools, and it was having disproportional effects on racialized students and students with exceptionalities.

These evaluations of the SSA (2000) allowed for a reconceptualization of the policy problem and plausible solutions. The reports generated by the OHRC and the SSAT alerted the mainstream media and undoubtedly motivated organizations concerned with safety and discrimination in schools (e.g., People for Education) to delve deeper into issues around school safety and inclusive strategies that could improve the experiences of all students in Ontario. For example, People for Education’s Safe Schools Tip Sheet to help parents better understand safe schools legislation in Ontario is only one of many relevant resources put forth by People for Education (2009). Additionally, over the years People for Education has conducted research that informs our understanding and supports school safety, student success, and parental engagement in students’ education in Ontario (People for Education, 2013).

Additionally, the OHRC and SSAT reports provided useful race-based statistics of suspensions and expulsions for the first time. These reports were the driving force behind school safety policy development in Ontario, resulting in PDSS (2007). Race-based quantitative and qualitative studies that explore the disproportional exclusion of racialized students in Ontario schools have motivated the development of resources such as the “Supporting Bias-Free Progressive Discipline Placemat” (Ontario Ministry of
Education and the Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2013) developed by the Ontario Human Rights Commission and the Ontario Ministry of Education. This resource was created to teach all adult members of the school community ways in which they could investigate and interrogate current safe schools practices in their environments and to provide strategies to better implement safe schools policies, with equity as a main priority. Although the title of this resource assumes that a person is able to transcend personal biases, the document that accompanies the resource guide invites members of the school community to deeply examine their stereotypes that lead to prejudices, individual discrimination, and systemic racism. As useful as this resource seems, it would be more useful if members of the school community were taught about how implicit understanding plays a role in their beliefs and behaviours.

Moreover, race-based findings in school safety research in Ontario shaped the equity and inclusive education policy development in Ontario (Segeren & Kutsyuruba, 2012). Race-based research findings encouraged the development of tools that address exclusionary practices in schools. Ultimately, racialized students’ experiences have motivated further research that impacts policy.

**Discussion: Multiple Contexts**

Understanding school safety policy development in Ontario between 2000 and 2013 along with racialized students’ experiences of school exclusion under these policies required an examination of the political, economic, social, and educational landscape in Ontario during that time period. In this section, I draw from relevant literature and reports, the four policy documents, and interview data from 20 racialized youth who were
suspended and/or expelled from Ontario public schools between 2001 and 2013 to explore each of these contexts in turn.

**Political Context**

Political context refers to the governmental landscape in which the SSA (2000), PDSS (2007), KOKSS (2009), and ASA (2012) were passed. The SSA (2000), commonly known for instructing punitive punishments for specific behaviours heralding an unwritten “zero tolerance” message (Daniel & Bondy, 2008), was passed under the Progressive Conservative majority government led by Premier Mike Harris. Based on much criticism for the disproportional effects it had on racialized students and students with exceptionalities (Marlow, 2007; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2006; SSAT, 2006), some of the shortcomings of the SSA (2000) were addressed in the PDSS (2007) that was passed under a Liberal majority government led by Premier Dalton McGuinty (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2006). The PDSS (2007) addressed mitigating factors more explicitly than the SSA (2000) and required school boards to provide programs for students who were suspended or expelled from school. In 2009, Ontario’s safe schools legislation was reviewed again. The KOKSS (2009), passed by a McGuinty-led majority Liberal government, increased accountability among members of the school community; the Act required all school board employees to report incidents threatening the school climate that happened at school and required employees working directly with students to respond to these incidents. With an increasing emphasis on creating and sustaining a positive school climate, safe schools legislation in Ontario was further revised in 2012 to particularly address incidents of bullying in schools through the ASA (2012), passed under a McGuinty-led minority Liberal government.
Power and authority were the two sub-themes found across all data sources in this study with respect to the political context. The policy analysis of the four pieces of school safety legislation examined in this study found that governmental power and authority were evident in instructing various parties in the school community and the general public of what was deemed acceptable and unacceptable behaviours, and if/how particular groups of individuals employed by school boards and those not employed by school boards (but who frequently interact with students) should respond to incidents that are defined by the policy as threatening to the school climate. The Minister’s authority was mentioned throughout the documents. While there were parts of the documents that discussed school board autonomy in creating local policies, programs, and practices that promote a positive school climate, the documents also clearly stated that school boards were always answerable to the Minister for decisions.

Around the same time that the SSA (2000) was being evaluated by the SSAT and the OHRC and a court settlement between the OHRC and the OME was reached, the provincial government changed from a Progressive Conservative government to a majority Liberal government that supported the need to amend the SSA (2000). According to the youth interview data collected, although it seemed that student suspensions and expulsions in schools were directly and indirectly a product of the politics in our province, youth participants in the pre-2008 sample did not explicitly link the political climate with student exclusion. However, youth participants in the post-2008 sample seemed to be more aware of the budgetary changes that teachers were experiencing and tended to mention the shift in authority for teachers and principals related to the PDSS (2007) requirements—specifically, teachers were no longer allowed
to suspend students and principals were required to consult with the school board first before making expulsion decisions.

Depending on the provincial government in power, certain priorities are formed, which influence the safe schools policy process at various stages. Regardless of the type of government in power, the OME’s longstanding goals that are rooted in increasing equity in Education should be reflected in the government leaders’ policy priorities. Government leaders’ priorities not only influence policy content and the policy development process, but they also influence the attitudes and practices of school board officials and members of the school community (e.g., principals, vice-principals, teachers, educational assistants, guidance counsellors, social workers, and parents), contributing to a broader culture that dictates practices at various levels (Kitchen & Bellini, 2013; Mosher, 2008; SSAT, 2006; Way, 2011).

Kitchen and Bellini (2013) discussed the necessity for school board officials and principals to use their positions of power to create a positive school climate, and recognized the role that the broader culture in which school board officials and principals exist, dictate their approaches. Principals’ attitudes and leadership approaches largely determine school climate (Mosher, 2008; Way, 2011). If a school has high levels of monitoring, control, and/or suspensions and expulsions, it can be indicative of problems with authority and disorder stemming from poor leadership (Way, 2011).

Principals and teachers need to sufficiently and effectively communicate with students about their roles as persons with power and authority to increase students’ awareness of rules and consequences. Racialized youth interviewed in Mosher’s (2008) study acknowledged that they were largely unaware of their principal’s legislative
authority in terms of mandatory suspensions, expulsions, and mitigating factors. It is important for all students to be aware of safe schools policies and practices that govern their educational experiences for them to more actively engage in their educational processes and larger society.

**Economic Context**

The economic context refers to the ways in which money influenced school safety policy development and policy outcomes. This context describes financial contributions (or lack thereof) from the government and the financial circumstances of youth who experienced suspensions and/or expulsions under the policies. With the exception of the *KOKSS* (2009) document, the pieces of legislation mentioned students’ socio-economic backgrounds when considering mitigating factors. Phrases alluding to consideration of students’ geographic location appear in the *SSA* (2000) and *PDSS* (2007). Balfanz et al. (2003) and Kutsyuruba, Klinger, and Hussain (2015) noted how the average socio-economic status of schools influences various parts of school climate, and should certainly be considered when schools strategize about ways to improve school climate.

While the policy documents examined in this study do not mention students’ socio-economic circumstances to a significant extent, 18 of 20 youth participants (except for Cassie and Anna) shared information about their financial circumstances while in school, although they were not questioned directly about the topic. Balfanz et al. (2003), Joong and Ridler (2006), Williams (2005), and Winton (2012a) emphasized how students’ financial circumstances can be an important factor in their educational outcomes. Three (Jason, Cynthia, and Cindy) of 18 youth participants talked about their family’s healthy financial status during their schooling. Alex and Barbara who are both
Aboriginal, along with David, whose parents are from Jamaica, shared a similar feeling of frustration about their family’s financial health. Holding Barbara’s hand (they were a couple who were interviewed together), Alex made a poignant statement when he explained his inherited financial hardship, “Dirt poor is what we are. My grandparents were dirt poor, my parents were dirt poor, and I’m gonna die dirt poor.” Alex seemed to have little hope in a financially secure future for him and his pregnant girlfriend. In contrast, David expressed some amount of hope in a financially secure future: “Things will be different for my children one day when I get them. No more of this bullsh*t. Too much money to be made out there.”

Gregory et al. (2010) explained that students’ circumstances (e.g., having part-time employment while in school) should be taken into consideration as teachers and school administrators interact with them. Ken, Kendra, Sean, Debbie, Lisa, Mark, Janio, Barry, Glenn, and Sierra shared stories about their family’s financial struggles and how many of them had part-time jobs during their time in high school. Sam, for instance, did not report having experienced too many financial struggles during his schooling, but towards the very end of his schooling, his mother fell ill and he was her sole caregiver. These circumstances necessitated Sam finding a job, with his employment impacting his experiences at school socially and academically. Sam avoided certain school trips that cost money, spent less time socializing with his friends because of his demanding schedule, felt isolated because he did not feel as if he could have spoken to his peers or teachers about his mom’s condition, felt tired all the time, and became involved in fights more often.
All youth participants in this study resided in and attended schools in neighbourhoods that they identified as low-income. Monetary challenges have often resulted in limited time spent on principals’ and teachers’ professional development related to school climate and equity training. Inadequately trained principals and teachers can result in their inability to equitably serve students from diverse backgrounds. Additionally, schools that are located in low-income neighbourhoods tend to have fewer resources available for extra-curricular activities or programs that promote equity in schools and, ultimately, a positive school climate (Balfanz et al., 2003; Kutsyuruba et al., 2015; Lassen et al., 2006).

Merely understanding that all students are not on an “equal playing field” in terms of finances can influence principals’ and teachers’ understanding of individual students and how they treat them. Without being questioned about their families’ socio-economic status, the majority (n=18) of youth participants in this study were very vocal about how their families’ financial challenges impacted their educational experiences, indicating that youth would like their financial challenges to be acknowledged and considered as principals and teachers made decisions about their behaviours. Some youth participants emphasized how their families, more or less, inherited their poor financial status because of their racial and cultural backgrounds. It would be helpful if safe schools policies explicitly stated how principals and teachers could better accommodate the circumstances of students from families with low socio-economic status. Considering that financial challenges were so prevalent among youth participants, principals and teachers need to be better trained to connect with individual students who are experiencing financial struggles that are significantly impacting their educational experiences, including
academic achievement, time spent socializing with peers, and general understandings of themselves in comparison to peers who are more financially stable. To increase equity in Ontario schools, the provincial government and school boards need to understand that some schools will require more financial support than other schools depending on geographic location and student population.

**Social Context**

For the youth participants, the sub-theme of identity entailed how youth self-identified by race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender identity. All youth participants self-identified as racialized. Three participants self-identified as their ethnic background as opposed to a race (Mark identified as South-Asian, Cassie identified as Chinese, and Sam identified as Spanish). Four participants highlighted their dual-identity: Cynthia (parents adopted her from Poland) and Debbie (parents from Israel) identified as racialized and White, while Alex and Barbara identified as racialized and Aboriginal. Cindy (Chinese and Jewish) and Lisa (Irish and Aboriginal) identified as mixed-race. Mary, Sean, David, Kendra, Sierra, and Barry identified as Black. Ken, Jason, Janio, Glenn, and Anna identified as Brown. In her study about classrooms as racialized spaces in relation to teachers’ continuous reconstruction of students’ ethno-racial categories, Nunn (2011) found that students’ identities are complex and not solely based on race. Teachers need to be mindful of the intersectional identity of each student and provide opportunities in classrooms for students (and teachers) to nurture each other’s intersectional identity (Nunn).

Some participants highlighted gender in describing their struggles with gender identity and/or challenges related to exploring their sexual orientation. Central to my
conversation with Sean was his challenging journey transitioning from female to male during his high school years and how the challenges he faced motivated numerous suicide attempts, resulting in his expulsion from school. Cindy and her partner, Lisa, self-identified as bi-sexual females. Cindy discussed her struggle with sexual identity while in high school, and shared feelings of isolation and shame as a result of that struggle.

Considering that Ontario’s safe schools legislation has been enforced inconsistently over the years (Bhattacharjee, 2003; Mosher, 2008; Raby & Domitrek, 2007; SSAT, 2006), more needs to be done to ensure consistency and at the same time practice the distribution of consequences in consideration of mitigating factors. Therefore, there needs to be more communication among everyone within a school community about safe schools policy content. For instance, all members of a school community should have a shared understanding of what are deemed to be acceptable and unacceptable behaviours. Resources such as “A Guide to Ontario School Law” (Kutsyuruba, Burgess, Walker, & Donlevy, 2013), for instance, should become a staple in Ontario schools for members of the school community to share and explore. Such a resource contains vital information about the rights and duties of teachers in regards to school safety and other areas that are necessary for learning. More information-rich sources can help increase awareness, accountability, and activism. Achieving shared understandings of safe schools legislation among members of the school community and openly communicating about mitigating factors can prevent preferential treatment for some students and encourage a stronger element of fairness for treatment of all students. To arrive at shared understandings, each member of the school community needs to first
understand the basis of their individual understandings. Everyone operates from a place of bias, and it is important to understand if those biases are positive or negative.

Social inequities related to students’ identity, immigration, and parental involvement need to be acknowledged by school boards and members of the school community to make necessary changes to policies and practices that better address such inequities. Ontario’s safe schools policies and practices have been amended over the years to produce more equitable educational outcomes for racialized students (Winton, 2012a). Undoubtedly, these amendments have been largely the result of collaboration among school boards, members of the school community (including parents), and community organizations that have been working together to achieve more equitable outcomes for all students. Davies (2011) noted the importance of having teacher educators who have strong backgrounds in social justice education collaborating with various stakeholders to work towards improving equity in public education.

Some youth participants in this study tended to degrade the racial, gender, and sexual identity they occupied. Their degradation of parts of their identity was the result of larger structural discrimination embedded in social systems in which they existed, such as the education system and the criminal justice system. For instance, teachers’ and principals’ negative stereotypes of racialized males and females (Blake et al., 2011) are a part of that larger structure that contributes to racialized students’ denigration of their race and gender. There needs to be more time spent and more opportunities for critically examining the education system and other social systems in Ontario at the school board, school, and community levels. There needs to be an increased understanding about how various social systems work together to shape the
identities of racialized students. Issari’s (2011) exploration of racism in employment uncovered how racialized employees who experienced racism in the workplace viewed their public education experience as a microcosm of the larger society, including their workplace. Several participants in Issari’s study shared the expectation that schools should be more actively addressing racism to avoid it being perpetuated in other social systems.

Racialized immigrant students’ degradation of their place of birth or merely their immigrant status in Canada was also a result of larger social systems at play. Moreover, a negative understanding of one’s immigrant status is often linked to one’s family’s low socio-economic status. For example, Sierra who was originally from Somalia, explained that she hated being an immigrant in Canada, and her school environment combined with her family’s low socio-economic status ensured that she would not escape the negative connotations associated with being an immigrant who did not belong in Canada. Racialized students’ families’ low socio-economic status, for the most part, meant that their parents were less involved in their education. Although the majority of the parents of the youth in this study communicated the importance of education to their children, they had limited involvement in their children’s educational experiences because of financial challenges that created time constraints. Fitzgerald (2010) noted that lack of parental involvement and monitoring often allowed for students’ violent tendencies and delinquency. There needs to be more consideration of factors such as families’ socio-economic status and parental involvement when safe school policymakers amend legislation and again when policies are implemented.
Educational Context

Educational context refers to the physical and social environment in which a person goes to school. Several researchers (Daniel & Bondy, 2008; Way, 2011; Williams, 2005) agree that policies and practices impact the educational context. As well, Way (2011) noted how policies are sometimes impacted by the educational context. The following four sub-themes emerged with respect to the educational context across the SSA (2000), PDSS (2007), KOKSS (2009), and ASA (2012): (i) discipline and safety, (ii) respect and responsibility, (iii) decision-making, and (iv) exclusion and inclusion.

The treatment of discipline/safety and decision-making became refined over time in the policy documents. For example, discipline was rigidly conceived, punishment was narrowly and punitively conceived, and power was centralized in the SSA (2000), while the PDSS (2007) was less rigid and punitive with power to suspend and expel students de-centralized. The KOKSS (2009) called for all members of the school community to be responsible for school safety and discipline, creating a clearer set of responsibilities and accountability. The clarification of responsibilities that are represented in the KOKSS likely increased respect among all members of the school community.

Six sub-themes under the educational context emerged from the 20 youth interviews: (i) discrimination/biases, (ii) belonging, (iii) teachers’ negative attitudes, (iv) expectations, (v) respect, and (vi) physical activity/sports team. Fifteen of 20 youth participants reportedly experienced racial and/or gender discrimination/bias in schools. Most of the experiences shared were related to teachers’ discriminatory comments and decisions about punishments. Ruck and Wortley (2002) found that students belonging to racially or ethnically marginalized groups had a higher tendency than their White peers to
report discrimination by teachers. Debbie and Cynthia, the two students who self-identified as racialized and White, mostly shared stories of perceived gender discrimination by their teachers. Debbie, however, talked about times that her peers teased her because of her Jewish heritage; they called her “wigger.” Cynthia and Debbie mainly talked about how isolating it was for them to be one of the few White people in their schools. While Ken shared his experiences of racism in schools, he also talked about the discrimination he experienced as an immigrant. The discrimination from teachers and school administrators that participants reported was a combination of overt and covert micro-aggressions.

Fourteen of 20 youth participants discussed the importance of feeling a sense of belonging in schools. Seven (Ken, Cynthia, Cassie, Anna, Sierra, Barry, and Sam) of the nine youth who were immigrants expressed a sense of alienation and stigmatization they felt as a result of not being born in Canada. The sub-theme of belonging also emerged in Abada et al.’s (2009) study about students’ immigrant status and the immigration status of their parents in relation to educational attainment. Learning happens when students feel connected to their teachers and peers at schools; in other words, when students believe that adults and their peers in school genuinely care about their learning and about them as individuals (Faulkner, Adalf, Irving, Allison, & Dwyer, 2009; Freeman, King, Al-Haque, & Pickett, 2012; Hussain, 2011). Some students’ (Glenn, Sam, Mary, David, and Jason) participation in school sports increased their sense of belonging because it allowed them opportunities to build relationships outside their classrooms. Males were more likely than females to participate in sport teams at school. Longitudinal studies about the health and well-being of students living in Ontario, such as the “Health and
Health-Related Behaviours of Young People: Ontario” (Freeman et al., 2012), should be a staple in schools for members of the school community to utilize and become more informed about the students’ needs and outcomes. Having such reports readily available can serve as an important tool in helping to improve equity in education.

Ten of 20 youth participants perceived their teachers as having negative attitudes. Having predominantly White female teachers who were perceived as operating from a place of bias and, in turn, being culturally unresponsive throughout created cultural tensions between teachers and students. These tensions contributed to students’ decreased sense of belonging in the school environment (Alex, Barry, Mary, Janio, Sean, Sierra; Joong & Ridler, 2006; Nunn, 2011). Teachers also impacted the educational environment by complaining about their workload and insufficient wages (Kendra, Mary). Teachers’ attitudes and actions can significantly impact the educational environment and students’ educational outcomes (Joong & Ridler, 2006; Vavrus & Cole, 2011). According to Vavrus and Cole’s (2011) findings, teachers’ decisions about disciplining students are largely influenced by their negative racial and gender attitudes.

Students’ learning increases when their teachers have high expectations of them (Hussain, 2011; Ruck & Wortley, 2002). These expectations can impact the academic success of some students who require certain external motivations (Kendra, David, and Mary). Only 7 of 20 students graduated from high school; four (David, Kendra, Mary, and Jason) of them discussed how some of their teachers’ high expectations served as a motivating factor for them staying in school and graduating. Students can feel when teachers have given up on them improving academically (Barry). Sierra explained that her teachers did not expect her to do well academically; she felt as if they often dismissed
her contributions to classroom discussions because of her Somalian accent. Teachers’ expectations of students, whether high or low, affect student performance.

Three youth participants (Mary, Cynthia, and Ken) talked about respect in three different ways in the pre-2008 sample: (i) respecting oneself, (ii) respecting authority, and (iii) respecting students. Three youth participants (Cindy, Lisa, and Anna) talked about respecting oneself in the post-2008 sample, but did not address respecting authority or respecting fellow students. Females were more likely than males to address the topic of respect in this study. Teaching students about respecting each other should be a significant part of promoting pro-social behaviours that prevent violent incidents (Joong & Ridler, 2006; Lassen et al., 2006).

Five of 20 youth participants (Mary, David, Jason, Glenn, and Sam) discussed the benefits of being physically active on sports teams at school. Mary acknowledged that she felt mentally and physically well when she played field hockey because playing made her expend excess energy related to Attention Deficit Disorder. It also provided her with opportunities to build meaningful relationships with her peers. Faulkner et al. (2009) corroborated the mental and physical health benefits for students who participate in sport-related extra-curricular activities at school and in their larger communities outside of school. David, Jason, and Glenn felt connected with their peers as a result of being involved on sports teams. David added that the connectedness he experienced on his school’s basketball team helped him to become more connected with his peers in the classroom and his teachers because they admired his sportsmanship. Sam recalled feeling very disconnected from school in general after he stopped participating in extra-curricular
activities, the football team being one of them, to have more time to care for his mom who fell ill.

The majority of youth participants in this study explained how they responded to overt and covert racial discrimination at school and were punished for their response by being excluded from school. Although Ontario’s safe schools legislation is emphasizing less punitive punishments and, in practice, the policies are contributing to a decreased number of students being suspended and expelled, there is a need for schools and school boards to address the needs of students who respond in unacceptable ways to racial discrimination in schools. Schools and school boards should more actively try to address the larger systemic racism that allows space for racial discrimination at schools. For instance, in 2014 the Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario (ETFO) started providing a teacher and school administrator course called “Re-thinking White Privilege,” increasing awareness of how White privilege dictates curriculum, teaching practices, student outcomes, and all interactions in schools. This ETFO initiative has been embraced by some and criticized by others. Ontario’s Education Minister, Liz Sandals, seemed uncomfortable about the term “White Privilege” and advised the public that she did not know about the particular content of the course and was unable to comment at length on it (The Canadian Press, 2014).

ETFO courses such as the White Privilege course helps to increase the awareness of students’ diverse identities, the roles that race and power play in general interactions, and ultimately improve teachers’ attitudes. Improvements in teachers’ attitudes about their students increase students’ sense of belonging in school (Abada et al., 2009; Nunn, 2011). Groups such as the Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) as discussed by Kitchen and
Bellini (2013) and involvement in school sports teams as discussed by some youth participants help to increase students’ sense of belonging in schools, and as such these groups and teams should be made a priority in schools. The purpose of schools goes beyond cognitive development; it extends to social development and this broader purpose should be reflected in policies and practices.

When students feel more connected to their school environment, including the people in their school environment, their learning increases. Teachers’ expectations of their students is related to how connected students feel with their school environment. Students feel discouraged from learning when they feel as if their teachers have low academic and/or behavioural expectations of them (Blake et al., 2011). Meaningful relationships between teachers and students helps promote relationship-building in the classroom among peers (Way, 2011). Healthy relationships in school help to increase pro-social behaviours, and students who demonstrate pro-social behaviours are less likely to receive suspensions and expulsions (Joong & Ridler, 2006). Therefore, more time and resources should be dedicated to building positive relationships in schools through programs like Roots of Empathy and The Fourth R. Additionally, a good example of relationship building training for all employees of schools and school boards is called the Healthy Relationships Training Module offered by PREVNet (Promoting Relationships & Eliminating Violence Network). The module is hinged on the understanding that healthier relationships in schools promote mutual respect for all members of the school community.
Emerging Issues

During the research process, three issues arose that deepened my understanding of the researcher as an instrument in qualitative research methodologies: (a) various definitions of the term “racialized,” (b) participants’ use of swear words, and (c) the nature of knowledge.

Definitions of “Racialized”

At the beginning stages of this research, I conceptualized racialized people as being non-White (and therefore expected to only interview non-White youth). When I began collecting data, I had two participants approach me self-identifying as racialized and also self-identifying as White. At that point, I searched for official definitions of “racialized.” I found government definitions that excluded both White and Aboriginal students from being racialized, for example, (i) A Snapshot of Racialized Poverty in Canada (2009), (ii) Early School Leavers: Understanding the Lived Reality of Student Disengagement from Secondary School Final Report (2005), and (iii) Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools: Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation (2014). Finding this information encouraged me to reconceptualise my understanding of the term “racialized.” Additionally, I recognized that differentiating White people from racialized people can be challenging in understanding systemic racism as I would be implying that White is not a racial/social construct based on the pigmentation of one’s skin and the political, economic, social, and educational contexts in which they exist. While the race of people does not have a biological basis, “race is a social construction that is lived and has powerful and real consequences for individuals” (University of Guelph, Human Rights and Equity Office, 2015).
There are undeniable differences in skin pigmentation (brute facts) among groups of people upon which the construction of racial categories exists. The construction of racial categories involves wrongly attributing power/privileges or burdens to certain groups of people largely depending on their skin pigmentation and the political, economic, social, and educational contexts in which they exist. Constructing racial categories is also largely based on the historical experiences (e.g., colonialization, slavery) of various racial groups. Reasons for the construction of racial categories are rooted in economic control and organizing society (Bernasconi & Mann, 2005; Fanon, 1952; Smedley & Smedley, 2005). My judgment about racial categorization presupposes a realist view.

The multifaceted definition of racialization presented by the Canadian Race Relations Foundation [CRRF] (2005) expanded my understanding of what it means to identify as a racialized person, moving beyond the White versus non-White binary that often reduces social problems to race by measuring all racialized experiences against White people’s experiences:

[Racialization is] the process through which groups come to be socially constructed as races, based on characteristics such as race, ethnicity, language, economics, religion, culture, politics, etc. That is, treated outside the norm and receiving unequal treatment based upon phenotypical features. (CRRF Glossary of Terms, 2005)

This CRRF definition does not centre White people’s experiences and “other” the experiences of racialized people. Given the likelihood that the youth participant recruitment stage in this study was influenced by my narrower understanding of what it meant for someone to identify as a racialized person, I continually reminded myself that how participants self-identified was important to understanding their experiences, but
additionally reminded myself of the larger social structures in which my participants’ experiences took place. While the majority of youth participants in this study could fit within the non-White binary, my participants also included White persons who self-identified as racialized persons because of one or more of the following perceived reasons:

(a) They experienced discrimination based on the colour of their skin and/or ethnicity.

(b) They felt that they could not access the privileges of what it meant to be White due to their immigration status, economic circumstances, and geographic location of homes and schools.

(c) They did not see White as merely a physical skin colour. For them, being White meant being powerful, but they often felt powerless.

While I decided to include the voices of youth who self-identified as White and racialized, youth who self-identified as mixed race and racialized but had physical features associated with belonging to the White race, and Aboriginal students who self-identified as racialized, it was not without sound consideration that I made these decisions. I did not make these decisions to centre the experiences of White students or compare the severity of experiences across racial lines, because previous researchers have already provided empirical evidence and sound arguments for the disproportional exclusion of non-White students in schools (Blake et al., 2010; Gregory et al., 2010; Ruck & Wortley, 2002; Vavrus & Cole, 2002). My focus on the constructs of race and how they play out for various racial groups in the context of school safety and discipline in Ontario schools extended to their intersectional identities, recognizing that people are
not solely defined by their racial identities and that identities, including racial, ethnic, and
gender, are fluid. Additionally, there was a need to be cognizant in this study about how
one’s racial identity can extend beyond skin colour. Using a more racially inclusive
understanding of the term “racialized” allows a deeper critique of the larger social
structures that allow for inequities to exist and flourish.

Use of Swear Words

This work bridges two worlds: the world of racialized youth and the world of
academics who experience different levels of presence, privilege, and inclusion in society
and in discourse about school policy. According to Schneider and Ingram’s (1995) theory
about target populations, racialized youth belong to the defiant group and academics
belong to the advantaged group. The words of these two groups similarly differ in style,
phrasing, and the use of swear words. This dissertation wrestles with the power of voice,
whose voices are valued in research, and how they are represented and shared. Reflective
of research as a highly political process (Dei, 2013; Freire, 2004), the question of the
acceptability of including swear words intact within verbatim quotes belonging to youth
participants in this study exemplifies the importance and issue of voice and power, as,
even though swearing was the youth’s voluntary and implicitly preferred choice of
wording, the openness to such expression within academic writing remains contested.

In the field of cognitive psychology, “swearing can be polite, impolite, or neither
and it may be used with any emotional state” (Jay & Janschewitz, 2008, p. 269).
Furthermore, swearing may be appropriate in certain situations and not viewed as being
polite or impolite (binary). In this study, the youth participants who expressed themselves
using swear words were sharing their anger/hostility, frustration, disappointment, and
pain that were a part of their educational experiences. These emotions were being expressed within taken-for-granted social structures that have historically marginalized the needs and experiences of certain groups of people (Dei, 2008). Within these social structures, researchers decide on the research problem, goals, questions, design, methodologies, sample, analysis, and dissemination (Hesse-Bieber & Leavy, 2011), including whether or not swear words should be quoted verbatim. I learned that when researchers live in a world where certain groups of people are disadvantaged, as has been empirically argued is the case for many racialized youth in Ontario, researchers should be more conscientious of how they interact with and represent racialized youth when designing research studies, conducting research, and disseminating research centered on their experiences.

Corden and Sainsbury (2006a) and Ljung (2011) acknowledged that research participants’ swearing can often be attributed to a way of strengthening group affinity. Swearing was a part of their everyday speech for some participants. Explicit consent was received from all research participants to use their verbatim quotes in my work. When many of the participants asked me if it was okay for them to swear during our conversation, I advised them that they should speak with me however they were comfortable and that they should let me know if I should remove swear words from their transcripts. None of them asked me to remove swear words from her or his transcript.

Seven females and nine males used swear words in their interviews. Some of the male participants in this study used swear words more excessively than females. Jay and Janschewitz (2006) and Bird and Harris (1990) concluded that males and females are socialized differently and were taught different coping strategies to a degree; this
differential socialization contributes to males’ frequent use of swear words. Swear words express emotions, and males often experience a certain amount of silencing around their emotions (Blake et al., 2010; Pollack, 2005).

Perceptions of the acceptability of swear words are highly subjective depending on each reader’s experiences with swear words, identities, and social locations. Bowers and Pleydell-Pearce (2011) explored the extent to which the language we speak/hear/read affects the way we think with respect to the use of swear swords and euphemisms. Twenty-four people (ages 18-26; 15 females) were involved in three separate trials that measured their stress level responses to the same eight words (swear words, euphemisms, and neutral words) at each trial. The key finding of the study was that swear words whether spoken or read triggered an emotional response in the reader or speaker (Bowers & Pleydell-Pearce, 2011). Swear words triggered the highest stress response, euphemisms triggered a lesser stress response, and neutral words did not trigger a stress response. Therefore, when swear words stay intact in academic writing, the emotional valence attached to such words may actually decrease the strength of the participants’ voices for readers who focus on the words themselves and not on the message conveyed through the words.

According to Corden and Sainsbury (2006b), few studies have explored the perspectives of research participants’ preferences about being quoted verbatim with swear words intact. In a study where 13 research participants were questioned about their feeling about their verbatim interview transcripts, some of them believed that editing their swear words was unacceptable, and “it was important that spoken words were not changed in any way” (Corden & Sainsbury, 2006b, p. 16). Furthermore, they noted that
editing their swear words in the transcripts would mean that their “words were not real and the report would be ‘untrue’” (Corden & Sainsbury, 2006b, p. 16). On the other hand, other participants noted that, “Speech containing swear words produced a negative image of the person concerned as ‘an ignorant person’ or somebody ‘not very nice’…many people had learned generally not to take much notice of people who swore” (Corden & Sainsbury, 2006b, p. 17). According to Corden and Sainsbury (2006b), policy researchers especially remain generally uncertain about what good practice might be for editing swear words in their work.

Researchers’ decisions about using participants’ verbatim quotes containing swear words are primarily based on their philosophical beliefs, chosen methodologies, and expected readership (Corden & Sainsbury, 2006b). Researchers hold power that determines what is to be known, when it should be known, and how it should be known (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011; Martinez, 2008), but they need to be cognizant both of their participants and their audiences. I struggled tremendously with how to do so in regards to participants’ swear words in this study, digging deep to comprehend and interrogate my own perspective about this issue, and taking into account multiple perspectives. Masking participants’ swear words in this dissertation through the use of asterisks (*) and including verbatim quotes with swear words intact in Appendices represents a thoughtful solution for the current work, a decision that will need to be revisited each time I present or publish this research.

**Nature of Knowledge**

In my work, I explored the philosophical question of the nature of knowledge and its relationship with human experience. The question arose because of the critical nature
of my project and because I recognized that my position regarding social understanding presupposed access to beliefs, the approximate truth of which cannot be explained in terms of social understanding. Because it might look as though my project is open to the criticism that either I presume the superiority of my own values or some unlikely position of objectivity beyond all social values, I found it necessary to explore the possibility of knowledge of social values. I discovered that when we consider the dialectical nature of all knowledge – including of the social world and human experience – it is easy to see that, at least occasionally, values that might be thought to be “subjective,” and therefore arbitrary, are explained by engagement with what I have referred to as “brute facts.” Philosophers have discussed this idea for over a century in analytic Anglo/American philosophy and so I took up the task of examining some of that work. Mindful of the fact that exploring the question of the nature of knowledge is not new, I explored some of the large body of work that explores this very question, and chose some of John Searle’s (1995; 2010) philosophical contributions to this topic to provide me with tools to guide my own questioning.

I drew from Searle’s (1995; 2010) realist standpoint that all social understandings are rooted in brute reality (physical and mental brute facts). Searle’s physical brute fact refers to something that undeniably exists without the need for human agreement about its existence. I used Shotwell’s (2011) work to help develop my understanding of Searle’s mental brute facts. According to Shotwell (2011), a mental brute fact can be explained as judgment that exists because of one’s implicit understanding (beliefs that are taken-for-granted and not expressed or even expressible) and propositional knowledge (beliefs that are articulable and which can be true or false).
When using a realist framework to think about the findings in this study, it became clear that the role that one’s implicit understanding plays in upholding a systemically racist society has been underestimated, under-interrogated, and insufficiently studied. It is not enough to merely recognize the influence of implicit understandings in the safe schools policymaking process. People in politically powerful positions, such as policymakers, need to have a deeper recognition of the comforts they enjoy because of their implicit understandings that significantly contribute to their judgments, and, in turn, mental brute facts that are necessary for the creation of social understandings. Besides safe schools policymakers, others who could be considered members of the advantaged group (Schneider & Ingram, 1993b) such as provincial government leaders and the Minister of Education, need to be more cognizant of their implicit understandings about race and racism, and show a willingness to actively correct some of their understandings that may be reproducing racial inequities.

It is also imperative for school principals, teachers, and all other members of the school community to explore how implicit understandings contribute to decision-making about disciplining students and keeping them safe in schools. Parents’ and students’ implicit understandings of race also influence how they interact with the world, and they should explore this often unexplored element of knowledge. In theory, how can various stakeholders work together to move racialized students out of the deviant group (Schneider & Ingram, 1993b)? Currently, the unrecognized role of implicit understanding of race in our society is limiting the political transformation required for racialized youth to thrive in Ontario.
In exploring the nature of knowledge in this study, I had to explore my own implicit understandings of race, gender, sexuality, and ability. I particularly thought about engrained stereotypes that coloured my interactions and experiences in cities where I lived in Guyana (British Guiana prior to 1966) and Canada. I was able to easily identify when, how, and why some of my stereotypes developed, and there were a few stereotypes that took me a little longer to interrogate. For instance, I learned the stereotype that ‘all White people are rich,’ when I was growing up in Guyana where the only White people I saw were those who were employed at the British High Commission where my father worked. Whenever I visited him at work, where he was employed as a driver, I entered a space where the air conditioner (then, a novelty in Guyana) was on full blast and there was a large, beautiful swimming pool (then, a novelty in Guyana) in front. All the White people at the British High Commission were in positions superior to that of my father’s, and all the racialized people employed there were either my father’s peers or working in positions as couriers, cleaners, cooks, or gardeners. Although in my mind I now know that all White people are not rich, the fact remains that the people with the most political and economic power in Canada are White people. Having been born and educated (until high school) in Guyana, a country where White Europeans greatly benefited from Black slavery and Indian indentureship, my understanding of White people being politically and economically superior to racialized people was engrained at a very early stage of my life. I do not know exactly when it was engrained, but I understand why. Therefore, it is my responsibility as a researcher and social justice educator to consider this implicit understanding that I have of White people and their power when making judgments that impact my decisions in the field and in the classroom.
While I came face-to-face with many of my own implicit understandings and observed how those understandings might have contributed to my decisions in this study, I started to question why I chose to draw from a realist view of knowledge that was developed by a White male philosopher in the West. Frankly, prior to pursuing graduate studies, my only formal exposure to philosophy had been brief and centered on White male philosophers’ work. While I believe that philosophical stances can be useful in policy studies, I admit that including them in my study was nothing less than daunting. It was clear to me that one of the reasons that policy analysts continue to steer away from using philosophy in their work has to do with the social class divide that still exists between departments of philosophy and the social sciences and humanities. This issue of social class division among scholars can be attributed to the contributions of White male philosophers who have exercised racist beliefs in their philosophical stances (e.g., Locke defended slavery, Berkley owned slaves, and Kant and Hume believed that Blacks were inferior to Whites; Valls, 2005). I am certain that there were those who exercised sexist, ablest, and homophobic beliefs as well. Knowing that some philosophers were blatantly racist can discourage scholars in equity studies from explicitly including philosophical stances in their work. However, it is important for scholars to recognize how our current social systems were founded on some of those philosophies, and we would be doing our work an injustice if we neglected to explore how some of those philosophies have influenced our current reality.

In my work, I argue for the usefulness of incorporating philosophy in public policy analysis to better understand the nature of knowledge, as challenging as it may be, to adequately address the inequities experienced by racialized youth in Ontario.
Philosophers in the South such as Paulo Freire, Frantz Fanon, José Martí, and Che Guevara did not have to defend a realist standpoint because of the context in which they existed, which was one in which it did not make sense to be social constructionist about truth. The element of implicit understanding in knowledge is explicitly discussed in their work. While it can be argued that I have not thoroughly explored the element of implicit understanding as it relates to the nature of knowledge pertaining to the safe schools policy process and racialized students’ experiences in Ontario, I have raised pertinent questions and provided meaningful insight into unexplored avenues of improving the educational experiences of these students. I expect to pursue these issues in future research.

**Implications of the Study**

This study has implications for policy, practice, and research. Implications for policy highlight the need to increase safe schools policy awareness among students and provide more opportunities for them to participate in the policy process and, in this way, become more actively involved in their educational outcomes. Implications for practice suggest ways in which teachers and school administrators can work together to improve racialized students’ educational outcomes and contribute to the empowerment of all members of the school community. Implications for research critically examine the limitations of the current research and suggest directions for future research.

**Implications for Policy**

Being Black was like a disease...no role models anywhere [in schools], nobody standing up for us, school was not safe for us...so when you talk about safe school policy, I don’t know who those were protecting back then. (Sean)
It is unfortunate and unacceptable that some youth participants such as Sean reported feeling unsafe in school. It calls into question, “safe for whom?” School safety policies are put in place to protect all members of the school community by identifying acceptable and unacceptable behaviours that influence the school climate, defining rules to guide behaviours, allotting fair punishments, and providing standards and guidelines to create and sustain a positive school climate that is safe for everyone. To accomplish these goals, it is important for policymakers to be representative of the populations of people in Ontario, to better connect with diverse communities, to learn ways to more effectively address the needs of all communities in Ontario, and to create policies that are equitable for all students.

Several youth participants were unaware of the policies that governed their school’s codes of conduct and various initiatives that were motivated by school safety policies at the provincial and school board levels. Students need to be better informed, possibly through policy requirements, of school safety policies and be aware of ways that they can contribute to policy development. Many of the students in this study felt as if the school safety policies were happening to them as opposed to feeling as if the policies were in their best interest.

Drawing from ongoing research findings in the field of school safety in the Ontario context, school safety policymakers need to critically review and reflect on the policy development process holistically as they move forward with policy reform. School climate surveys that take place every two years are a great tool in informing the policymaking process; however, the findings of these surveys are not made available to the public. The lack of public accessibility to school climate survey findings contributes
to public ignorance about schools’ improvements and setbacks in regards to their school climate. A more informed public will likely result in increased public participation in the school safety policy development process.

Implications for Practice

I was suspended 10 times...they were trying to reclaim control. The fact that they were authorized to send us home whenever we p*ssed them off was a big deal for them to get control back. They’re only human, man. (Cynthia)

Many youth participants in this study shared stories of the differential treatment they received from teachers in response to their behaviours. Many of the participants were shocked, disappointed, hurt, and angered by their teachers’ treatment of them; however, Cynthia also expressed empathy towards teachers’ circumstances of increased workloads and budget cuts under the Progressive Conservative majority government. Cynthia acknowledged that teachers were struggling with power in their work life and this struggle impacted their relationships with students.

It would be useful for teachers and school administrators who implement school safety policies to recognize the importance of empowerment, sharing power, in their schools. Several youth participants felt powerless, not only in the school safety policy process, but also as contributors to their own educational outcomes. Since teachers and principals play a pivotal role managing school discipline to ensure safe schools, it is important for them to prioritize self-reflection on their practice to explore how they may be intentionally or unintentionally reinforcing the status quo that disenfranchises some students.

Over the years, policymakers have responded to inconsistent implementation of the safe schools legislation by passing more legislation that provides teachers and school
administrators with specific responsibilities and protocols to respond and report to incidents that threaten the school climate. Organizations like People for Education and the OHRC have developed resources that assist teachers and school administrators in effectively implementing policies.

What else can we do to prevent the disproportional exclusion of racialized students when a great deal of research has been done, legislation is being continuously reformed, and teachers and school administrators are receiving specific instruction and professional development to improve policy implementation? Teachers and school administrators need to be more creative in finding ways to get at the root causes of racialized students’ poor educational outcomes. The first step would be to understand the diversity in racialized populations and consider their intersectional identities. Next, to explore the physical world we share and examine particular systems in place, teachers and school administrators should begin by exploring anti-oppression tools that they can learn to use in the classroom. Finally, we need to move beyond individual classrooms, schools, and school boards, to address larger systems that continue to hinder positive educational outcomes for racialized students. Placing blame is not helpful. We need to instead explore the structural issues that contribute to violent incidents in schools and the disproportional exclusion of racialized students in Ontario. With the intention of increasing equity for racialized students in schools, we need to interrogate the understandings embedded in large social structures that accommodate violent incidents in schools.
Implications for Research

Considering all researchers, whether quantitative or qualitative, operate from a particular set of social values and locations, transparency about study limitations can help increase validity and provide insight for future researchers who are interested in using similar qualitative approaches in their work. This study was limited in five ways: (i) no first-hand quantitative data, (ii) lack of initial clarity about the term “racialized,” (iii) no school board analysis, (iv) exclusion of the voices of parents, and (v) exclusion of other government policies that might have impacted the four policies analyzed in this study and the experiences of youth participants.

The number of research participants in this qualitative study did not allow me to make generalizations of their experiences. It can be argued that quantitative methodologies such as surveying students would better examine social problems such as school violence. I understand the importance of drawing from quantitative data to examine school violence and drew from quantitative findings collected by the Ontario Ministry of Education and the Ontario Human Rights Commission. However, future researchers in the field of school safety might want to consider employing mixed-methods approach to produce results that are generalizable.

This study included the voices of two White people (Debbie and Cynthia), although my conceptualization of the term “racialized” prior to data collection was limited to non-White people. When I was approached by Debbie and Cynthia, who self-identified as both racialized and White during the data collection phase, I was forced to explore the Ontario government’s use of the term “racialized.” This exploration led to my reconceptualization of the term. I looked for a way to include Debbie’s and Cynthia’s
voices in my work because I did not want to reduce the disproportional exclusion of students to racial discrimination, ignoring the other parts of students’ identities and circumstances at play. Therefore, I used definition of “racialized” taken from the Canadian Race Relations Foundation. Future researchers in this field should be conscientious of the terms used when recruiting research participants, as these terms can influence the entire research process, findings, and results included. Some of the quantitative and qualitative studies conducted in Ontario in this field use various terms such as “racialized,” “visible minorities,” “people of colour,” and “marginalized.” I decided to use the term “racialized” based on the Ontario Ministry of Education’s findings about Black students being the ones who are most suspended and expelled in Ontario schools. Therefore, my focus was on race. In retrospect, it might have better served my research questions if I had used the term “marginalized.”

Sixteen youth participants attended schools across Toronto and four attended schools in Ottawa. I did not identify the school boards in which participants attended school. School boards have various board-level policies in place that address school safety and discipline. My analysis could be deemed as limited in that I did not do a school board-level policy analysis to accompany the provincial analysis. Future researchers may want to do board-level (e.g., Winton, 2012a) and provincial analyses as school boards’ contexts vary.

Some school safety researchers (e.g., Fitzgerald, 2010; Williams, 2005) acknowledge the importance of including the perspectives of parents in studying students’ disproportional exclusion under school safety policies. The current study does not include the voices of parents/guardians. However, quantitative studies that include
parents’ perspectives are drawn upon in this study. Future researchers may want to include the voices of parents in addition to those of their children to obtain a more holistic understanding of students’ experiences.

Lastly, the political climate should be considered when looking at school safety policy changes (Winton, 2012a) and other education policies (e.g., policies that resulted in shifting to the credit system in high schools and the removal of end-of-school exams to complete graduation requirements in high school) that impact students’ educational experiences when considering the effects of school safety legislation (Anderson & Jafaar, 2003; Winton, 2012b). This study does not provide an analysis of other policies that may have shaped the safe schools policy development or students’ experiences. Future researchers may want to conduct an analysis of these related policies.

**Final Thoughts**

Conducting this study made me think more carefully about my own educational experiences and the larger structures that allowed for those experiences. This research process has transformed me in important ways. This study has significantly contributed to my deeper understanding of race and racism, encouraging me to learn more about these topics and unlearn some of the limiting ideas that previously prevented me from accessing deeper understandings of what is required for political changes to occur. As I continue to work in the realm of public policy, it is important for me as a researcher who conducts research that centres the experiences of racialized youth, to recognize the importance of questioning what I know and how I know what I know. Furthermore, it will be important for me to recognize that my understanding of some issues will be
wrong and some may be right. It is only in this way that I will be able to seek out and find approximate truths.

It is my hope that readers of my work are able to lend some time reflecting on their own educational experiences and larger structures that were at play. The findings in this study highlighted the fluidity of identity and the complexities of a person’s identity. Findings served as a reminder that identity is more than just a person’s visible race. The concept of race creates and maintains political, economic, social, and educational contexts that privilege “non-racialized” individuals over “racialized” individuals.

Understanding that racist, sexist, ableist, and homophobic ideologies are embedded in our physical world (in systems) and in our psyche is important, but it is equally important for us, at the same time, to acknowledge that racism, sexism, ableism, and homophobia are not inevitable or normal. Although systemic structures saturated in such ideologies condition our judgments and our identities, we are capable of changing these structures. Change is inevitable. When we better understand our own and each other’s intersectional identities, then we will start giving more attention to social structures that contribute to our worldviews and the choices we make. History will continue repeating itself unless we dig deeply to understand the structures in place that allow for history to repeat itself, and then work as a collective to critique and improve the structures. It is not enough to learn how to effectively navigate structures that are unfair and violent towards racialized populations. We need to change those structures.
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APPENDIX A: CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT FOR TRANSCRIBER

As the Transcriber:

I acknowledge that a graduate student researcher of Queen's University at Kingston (hereinafter called "Queen's") has in its possession, and with the authority to disclose, in confidence, certain information ("Confidential Information") relating to the study titled, Exploring the disproportional effects of Ontario's school safety, discipline, and violence policies, being conducted by Alicia Hussain in the field of education.

Confidential Information includes, without limitation, computer programs, discoveries, inventions, techniques, documents, data and information concerning the study or other research programs of the Researcher or her affiliates.

The Confidential Information will be given to me in order to perform duties as a Transcriber, that are related to the Researcher’s study. In consideration of working on this study, I agree that I will keep in confidence and trust all Confidential Information and will not directly or indirectly use the Confidential Information, nor disclose any Confidential Information to any person or entity, except in the course of performing duties assigned with respect to the study. I agree that I shall be free to use information that:

1. is known to me prior to the receipt of the said Confidential Information from Queen's as evidenced by written documentation; or
2. lawfully is or becomes public knowledge through no default of this Agreement; or
3. is provided to me by any third party with a bona fide right to do so; or
4. is approved for release by written permission of the Vice Principal (Research) of Queen's University

Upon the termination of the Work, I undertake to return all Confidential Information pertaining thereto which has been provided by Queen's and all copies thereof or to destroy the same at the option of Queen's.

This agreement is to be effective upon the date of signing, and shall be interpreted and construed in accordance with laws of the Province of Ontario, Canada.

Transcriber’s name (print): ________________________
Transcriber’s signature: ___________________________
Dated at ___________ this ______ day of ________________, 201__.
Witness: __________________________
Please retain a copy of this agreement for your records and provide one to the Researcher.
APPENDIX B: RESEARCH ETHICS CLEARANCE

January 25, 2013

Ms. Alicia Hussain, Ph.D. Candidate
Faculty of Education
Duncan McArthar Hall
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Kingston, ON K7M 5R7

GREB Ref #: GEDUC-654-13; Romeo # 6007650
Title: "GEDUC-654-13 Exploring the disproportional effects of Ontario's school safety, discipline, and violence policies"

Dear Ms. Hussain:

The General Research Ethics Board (GREB), by means of a delegated board review, has cleared your proposal entitled "GEDUC-654-13 Exploring the disproportional effects of Ontario's school safety, discipline, and violence policies" for ethical compliance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (TCPS) and Queen's ethics policies. In accordance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (article D.1.6) and Senate Terms of Reference (article G), your project has been cleared for one year. At the end of each year, the GREB will ask if your project has been completed and if not, what changes have occurred or will occur in the next year.

You are reminded of your obligation to advise the GREB, with a copy to your unit REB, of any adverse event(s) that occur during this one year period (access this form at https://eservices.queensu.ca/romeo_researcher/ and click Events - GREB Adverse Event Report). An adverse event includes, but is not limited to, a complaint, a change or unexpected event that alters the level of risk for the researcher or participants or situation that requires a substantial change in approach to a participant(s). You are also advised that all adverse events must be reported to the GREB within 48 hours.

You are also reminded that all changes that might affect human participants must be cleared by the GREB. For example you must report changes to the level of risk, applicant characteristics, and implementation of new procedures. To make an amendment, access the application at https://eservices.queensu.ca/romeo_researcher/ and click Events - GREB Amendment to Approved Study Form. These changes will automatically be sent to the Ethics Coordinator, Gail Irving, at the Office of Research Services or irvingg@queensu.ca for further review and clearance by the GREB or GREB Chair.

On behalf of the General Research Ethics Board, I wish you continued success in your research.

Yours sincerely,

John Freeman, Ph.D.
Professor and Acting Chair
General Research Ethics Board

cc: Dr. Benjamin Kutsyuruba and Dr. John Freeman, Faculty Supervisors
    Dr. Don Klinger, Chair, Unit REB
    Erin Wicklam, c/o Graduate Studies and Bureau of Research
APPENDIX C: CALL FOR PARTICIPANTS

☐ Are you between the ages of 18 and 25?

☐ Do you identify as belonging to a visible minority or racialized group?

☐ Have you been suspended and/or expelled from a school in Ontario between 2001 and 2013?

☐ Are you interested in sharing your school experiences and your experiences with being suspended or expelled from school?

☐ Do you have an hour to spare for a conversation? (You will be compensated with a $15 gift card.)

If you answered “Yes” to ALL 5 questions above, please contact Alicia by April 12, 2013:
alicia.hussain@bell.net

The goal of this study is to help inform/improve school safety, discipline, and violence policies in Ontario. Currently, racialized students are disproportionately suspended and/or expelled in Ontario schools (Safe Schools Action Team, 2006).

Study has received ethical approval from Queen’s University.
APPENDIX D: LETTER OF INFORMATION FOR YOUTH PARTICIPANTS

THE EFFECTS OF ONTARIO’S SAFE SCHOOLS POLICY ON RACIALIZED STUDENTS

This research is being conducted by Alicia Hussain under the supervision of Dr. John Freeman and Dr. Benjamin Kutsyuruba, in the Faculty of Education at Queen’s University in Kingston, Ontario.

What is this study about? The purpose of this research is to explore how and why Ontario’s school safety and discipline policies and practices affect particular groups of students. The study will require one visit for an interview lasting approximately one hour. Interviews will be audio-recorded for accuracy. Participants will respond to questions of a personal and sensitive nature, and your confidentiality will be maintained to the highest extent possible. The researcher will provide a list of organizations and/or names of persons in your city that you may contact if sharing your experience during this interview provokes discomfort that you may want to further discuss. Pseudonyms (fake names) will be used to refer to you and any places or individuals you mention during your interview session. By sharing your perspective on this topic, you will play an important role in informing understandings of how school safety and discipline policies in Ontario influence educational experiences of students.

Is my participation voluntary? Yes. Although it be would be greatly appreciated if you would answer all questions as frankly as possible, you should not feel obliged to answer any questions that you find objectionable or that make you feel uncomfortable. You may also withdraw at any time with no consequences. If you should withdraw, your data will be discarded, unless you indicate otherwise. If you choose to withdraw from this study, please notify the researcher by email or in-person.

What will happen to my responses? We will keep your responses confidential to the extent possible. My co-supervisors, the transcriber, and I will be the only people with access to your audio-taped interview and entire transcript. The transcriber will sign a confidentiality agreement binding her or him to conceal your identity. The data may also be published in professional journals or presented at conferences, but any such presentations will use pseudonyms (fake names) and will never breach individual confidentiality. Should you be interested, you are entitled to a copy of the findings. Your data will be retained for five years and then be destroyed by the researcher.

Will I be compensated for my participation? Yes, you will receive a $15 gift card for an hour of your time. You will receive the gift card, even should you select to withdraw from the study.

What if I have concerns? Any questions about study participation may be directed to the researcher, Alicia Hussain at alicia.hussain@bell.net or the researcher’s co-
supervisors, Dr. John Freeman at john.freeman@queensu.ca and Dr. Benjamin Kutsyuruba at ben.kutsyuruba@queensu.ca. Any ethical concerns about the study may be directed to the Chair of the General Research Ethics Board at chair.GREB@queensu.ca or 613-533-6081.

This study has been granted clearance according to the recommended principles of Canadian ethics guidelines, and Queen's policies.
APPENDIX E: CONSENT FORM FOR YOUTH PARTICIPANTS

THE EFFECTS OF ONTARIO’S SAFE SCHOOLS POLICY ON RACIALIZED STUDENTS

Name (please print clearly): ________________________________

1. I have read the Letter of Information and have had any questions answered to my satisfaction.

2. I understand that I will be participating in the study called Exploring the disproportional effects of Ontario’s school safety, discipline, and violence policies. I understand that this involvement means that I will be asked to participate in an interview.

3. I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time.
   I understand that every effort will be made to maintain the confidentiality of the data now and in the future. Only the researcher, her co-supervisors, and a transcriber in the Queen’s Faculty of Education building will have access to my data. The data may also be published in professional journals or presented at conferences, but any such presentations will use pseudonyms (fake names) and will never breach individual confidentiality. I understand that if I am interested, I am entitled to a copy of the findings.

4. I am aware that if I have any questions, concerns, or complaints, I may contact Alicia Hussain alicia.hussain@bell.net, dissertation co-supervisors Dr. John Freeman (613-533-6000 Ext. 77298) john.freeman@queensu.ca and Dr. Benjamin Kutsyuruba (613-533-3049) ben.kutsyuruba@queensu.ca, or the Chair of the General Research Ethics Board (613-533-6081) chair.GREB@queensu.ca at Queen’s University.

   I consent to having this interview audio recorded ______________________ (signature).

   I consent to participate in this study ______________________ (signature).

Date: _____________________________
Research participant’s contact information to receive a copy of the findings (optional):

__________________________________

I have read the above statements and freely consent to participate in this research, and I have kept a copy of the Consent Form and returned the other copy to the researcher, Alicia Hussain.
Central Toronto Youth Services (CTYS): Counseling services for youth 13-24 years old and their families. 65 Wellesley Street East, Suite 300, Toronto, ON M4Y 1G7. Tel.: 416-924-2100, Email: mail@ctys.org

East Metro Youth Services: Mental health services for youth 12-18 years old and their families. 1200 Markham Road, Suite 200, Scarborough, Ontario M1H 3C3 Tel: 416-438-3697, Fax: 416-438-7424 Email: emys@emys.on.ca, Website: www.emys.on.ca

Griffin Centre: An accredited non-profit, charitable, multi-service, mental health agency providing flexible and accessible services to youth 12-24 years old, adults and their families.

Call 416-222-1153, E-mail: contact@griffin-centre.org

JACS Toronto: JACS has several therapists who are available throughout the week. JACS provide counselling to those who struggle with Addiction (all ages).
Call 416-638-0350 (Toronto) or 905-886-0350 (Thornhill) and follow the prompts.

Native Child and Family Services Toronto: Central Office – The Centre for Native Child and Family Well Being. 30 College Street (just west of Yonge Street on the north side).
Telephone: 416-969-8510. Email: info@nativechild.org Youth drop-in: 1 Wood Street.

YMCA: Youth Counselling and Support (locations listed below)
Website: http://www.ymcagta.org/en/youth/index.html

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<th>Brampton</th>
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<td>20 Union Street</td>
<td>151 City Centre Drive, Suite</td>
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<td>Brampton, ON L6V 1R2</td>
<td>Mississauga, ON L5B 1M7</td>
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<td>905-451-1400 ext. 485 or 438</td>
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<td>230 Town Centre Court</td>
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<td>416-296-9907 ext. 401</td>
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519 Church Street Community Centre: Counselling for youth ages 12-29. 519 Church Street (Church St and Wellesley St E). Mon-Sat 8:30 am-10 pm, Sun 9 am-5 pm. 416-392-6874. Email: info@The519.org Website: www.The519.org

City of Toronto -211 Community Information
Dial 2-1-1: information on community, social, health & government services. www.211toronto.ca.

Community Care Access Centre
Wherever you live in Ontario, it is easy to find the in-home community-based health care services for yourself or for a loved one. Search www.310CCAC.ca; or Call 310-CCAC (310-2222) us at toronto.communitycareresources.ca

Ontario Withdrawal Management Services System – information and access to support services. Central Access Tel. 1-866-366-9513 or (416)-864-5040

Yonge Street Mission: Mentoring, addictions counseling, volunteer work, and employment services. Call 416-929-9614 or visit 306 Gerrard Street East. Website: http://www.ysm.ca/
Preamble: My name is Alicia Hussain and I am a PhD student in Education at Queen’s university. I am conducting interviews with youth about their experiences with being suspended and/or expelled in Ontario schools.

If you would like me to stop the audio-recorder at any point or you would like to withdraw from the interview at any point, please feel free to do so without consequences or explanations. Do you have any questions for me before we begin?

(1) Tell me about yourself.
Probes: Age, nationality/cultural background, birthplace, occupation

(2) Tell me about your general experiences attending schools in Ontario.
Probes: Location of school, relationships at school, grades, social life, extra-curricular activities

(3) Describe your school environment.
Probes: Welcoming, comfortable, open, student population, class size

(4) Describe your experiences with being suspended or expelled from school.
Probes: Length of time suspended/expelled, reason, purpose, age, year, effects on you academically and otherwise

(5) What types of conversations do you recall having with those around you about your suspensions and/or expulsions?
Probes: Conversations with parents, guardian, teachers, friends and their reactions

(6) What explanation were you given by school teachers and/or administrators for why you were being suspended and/or expelled from school?

(7) Describe your family/home life during your secondary years of schooling.
Probes: members of your family, chores/responsibilities, homework time, religious/spiritual

(8) Looking back now at your experience of being suspended/expelled from school, how do you feel about it?

(9) Do you have anything further to add about your experience with being suspended and/or expelled from school?
APPENDIX H: YOUTH PARTICIPANTS’ VERBATIM QUOTES FROM

CHAPTER 6

Quote from p. 133 (Debbie)
My mom and dad are not proud of me for not finishing school…that makes me mad because they don’t know what I experienced up in there. They never see my side of the situation. I got a chance to go back after a year, but the expulsion year left a bad taste in my mouth. I lost all my friends that time away and shit. I lost the year, and everything was so new when I went back. I couldn’t stay, so I left…I regret not finishing school because I don’t have that to be proud of, but really and truly high school education don’t mean anything these days. Have to have a master’s to even find a proper paying job and even then job security is shit too. Education ain’t, you know, ain’t what it used to be. My mom still thinks that it’s like it was in her days, but it’s different. Know what I mean?

Quote from p. 133 (Ken)
My parents were so ashamed of me, man. I let them down. They brought me and my sister here to this country to do better {pause} anyway, last year I was all set to go back and finish up the diploma in adult school, but my pops [father] got sick and he passed away. I wanted to show him that I could finish, you know? He never saw {pause}. They never really can understand how hard it is for kids here when they not born here, when they feel like they don’t fit anywhere {pause}. Gang life in my school was the only way I survived…and I wasn’t White so I had to find my place or the bullying wouldn’t stop, man. They called me Paki all the time and told me I smelled like curry and all that shot. Locked me up in a stall. One of the mother-fuckers shit in a cup and throw the cup on me in the stall. The schools here are for the White people, not for people like me. Of course you need a fucking gun or knife or something to protect yourself. I’m not like that. I was never like that when I was living in Trinidad. That’s why Pops couldn’t understand why I was always in trouble here. He totally blamed me when they found the knife.

Quote from p. 134 (Cynthia)
I was tired of being the dunce kid…the stupid ass kid…my grades were shit and all the fucking tutoring that my parents were paying good money for wasn’t working. I felt so stupid and really just wanted to be smart but it is what it is. The higher the grades got the harder the work got and my grades just fucking dropping. I missed a lot of school because I was always in a fight, so some assignments I didn’t do. It was frustrating and I just felt myself getting angrier and angrier, so I left. It’s too bad I didn’t sit it out but I couldn’t and if I did I would have probably failed and failed everything anyway.

Quote from p. 136 (Cynthia)
When you have control taken from you, you just want to take control from anywhere you can get it, you know what I mean? These teachers were like in a
panic I feel and their workload was overwhelming them. When I think back about it, I have a new understanding of what was going on. They were feeling the squeeze of management and were under pressure. Well, I was suspended 12 times for God’s sake! They were trying to reclaim some control. The fact that they were authorized to send us home whenever we pissed them off was a big deal for them in terms of getting control back. They are only human, man.

Quote from p. 138 (David)
My family struggled with money. My father didn’t really have much to contribute, so my mother was pretty much a single parent because he left her before I was born but he was in my life on and off. He is not very supportive of my music business because he thinks it’s not a good way to make money. Now he’s eating his words. I will make it out of the projects because I want to provide for my kids better than he did for me and my sister. I don’t want my girl to struggle like my mom struggled. Things will be different for my children one day when I get them. No more of this bullshit. Too much money to be made out there.

Quote from p. 140 (Cynthia)
Having money in a place where people don’t have much money can be dangerous for the person who has money. Sometimes you must be careful for what you wish for cause you just might get it…money doesn’t always mean power. Sometimes it means you’re fucked. Money can fuck up a kid’s life {chuckles}.

Quote from p. 140 (Jason)
My parents are educated professionals in their field who work hard to provide for us, we weren’t in need of anything growing up…we were lucky…and they spoiled us too…some of the guys I hung with were bullying other kids for lunch money and shit…but lots of gangs there.

Quote from p. 142 (Alex)
For me, life was definitely not like the White man…Aboriginals experience a harder type of discrimination than other minorities…politically we are still scorned and mocked and there is no denying that even if we are living in a white skin…we are primates according to the White man not once upon a time but forever. It’s hard to get over something that is still going on. My white skin colour didn’t protect me in school…it might have protected me if I deny my blood heritage, but fuck that, you know.

Quote from p. 146 (Cynthia)
They [parents] tried so hard with me but I was like a problem child…it wasn’t that I wasn’t happy, it’s just that I felt like I was playing house with these two people. I knew we are rich and finances [were] never really an issue, but that doesn’t solve everything. I was like a stranger living with two strangers growing up. Shit, I probably sound like a fucking spoilt kid, eh?
Quote from p. 149 (Ken)
Never in my wildest dreams did I expect so much racism here…I didn’t expect people to be colour-blind though sometimes they pretended to be, but I didn’t expect to be treated like shit and I mean like absolute shit! {pause} The other kids bullied me and shit but what surprised me more than anything was just how the teachers would let all this shit happen…it’s like they just made it normal…they talked down to me whenever I tried to speak up and always reminded me that this was not Trinidad…I’m talking about my teachers, yo! One time I asked to go to the toilet and my teacher asked me if I found that the kids in Trinidad peed more than Canadian kids…what the fuck, in front of the whole class she asked me that.

Quote from p. 151 (Debbie)
“a pain in the ass.”

Quote from p. 151 (Debbie)
She always ignored me when I told her the kids were calling me wigger and slut and she always told me to ignore them…that ain’t right…no type of solution there…she avoided any kind of confrontation but I was fucking in the line of fire while she sit pretty and enjoy her benefits and salary. She wasn’t there to help me. She just kept saying to me to dress and act like a lady…what the fuck does that even mean? Shit! When guys would complain to her she had all the time in the world to stand up for them…to put them first…but she had no time for the girls in that class, not just me but all the other girls got no type of attention from her. She was all for the boys. That was sexual discrimination…plain and simple sexism bull.

Quote from p. 152 (Cynthia)
I received about 10 or 12 suspensions and wasn’t ever expelled. I was a tomboy always in fights but the guys would get suspended more than me and a lot of them were expelled. My school was famous for expelling people, but mostly guys. I think if I was a guy I would have been expelled too, but being female saved me. Plus, the principal always had the last say about expulsions and he was soft with the girls. He was a dick with the guys though. I guess it was unfair for them.

Quote from p. 153 (Sean)
School was a nightmare because I was Black and transitioning from being a woman to transforming to a man—what I was truly meant to be. People didn’t understand that I was trapped in a woman’s body. They laughed at me and fucking mocked the way I walked, talked, and…man, I didn’t fit in there at all…it was messed up for real…even though I was Black enough to have Black friends, I wasn’t straight enough to have them [Black friends].

Quote from p. 157 (Ken)
“piss off the assistant principal and principal with any of my nonsense because didn’t want them telling my parents I was behaving shitty”
Quote from p. 157 (Alex)
It’s simple…people respect you if you’re not a snitch, but if you’re a fucking snitch you should expect respect from nobody. You’re not worthy of respect if you’re gonna fucking snitch, you know?”

Quote from p. 157 (Ken)
That would have gotten my ass killed. Plus, it was like I earned their respect by shutting the fuck up. You can’t buy respect in a store…that’s for sure.”

Quote from p. 158 (Cynthia)
I learned fast how to gain respect from the people at school, especially my school. Being in the chess club or winning the fucking athlete award wasn’t gonna get you any real respect on a day to day [basis].”
APPENDIX I: YOUTH PARTICIPANTS’ VERBATIM QUOTES FROM CHAPTER 7

Quote from p. 167 (Anna)
“Yeah, I’m 18 and I can go back to school but now my reputation is fucked…catch 22… it was fucked when I was there [school] so I came here. Sad that I left and sad that I can’t go back.”

Quote from p. 168 (Cindy)
Almost all the teachers there were on-edge and always pissed off at the world because the new policy makes them work harder. Can’t suspend kids nor pretend we’re invisible.”

Quote from p. 169 (Cindy)
“were bitches and fucking dicks…just hungry for power…some of them just picked on kids for no reason to feel big…that’s bullying right there but they told us not to bully—irony.”

Quote from p. 169 (Glenn)
Bullying was big in my school…kids couldn’t even swear without being sent down to the office…as soon as you touch somebody they can report you attacked them…people at my school were like targeted under the policy of the school I think because my boys at other schools in the district didn’t get nailed for the same shit. It was ignorant.

Quote from p. 171 (Lisa)
opposite to Cindy’s parents…my parents are lazy asses…we always struggled to make ends meet…I don’t live with them no more though.

Quote from p. 172 (Janio)
if you think you’re a man then man-up and find a job and get your ass outta here.

Quote from p. 172 (Barry)
Of course, it was a shitty job but it was mine…it was me becoming a man…my father couldn’t say shit because I was at least helping out while my mother was just popping babies out.

Quote from p. 172 (Glenn)
Guys in the neighbourhood kept approaching me to get me to sell their shit for them…I just had to say the word and they’d give it to me to sell…good money for
someone like me...my family didn’t have much and we struggled but education came first always...so I bear it until the end.

Quote from p. 173 (Barry)
“just told the other kids that I didn’t want to go on stupid ass field trips…I prefer to stay home and chill.”

Quote from p. 175 (Lisa)
aware of the fact that I had to pretend to be straight because the clientele was straight men…the men came there to see straight women with big titties.

Quote from p. 176 (Mark)
guys fighting is normal and teachers expected that from us, but not if guns and shit were involved.

Quote from p.176 (Cassie)
The Chinese kids were all born here and could speak English fine, so they pulled away from me…called me an FOB [Fresh off the Boat]…they didn’t talk to me much and when they did it was some mean shit.

Quote from p. 176 (Barry)
While Barry was fluent in English, his peers mocked his Nigerian accent and called him a “fag.” In fact, the words “fag,” “ass-fiucker,” and “cock-sucker”

Quote from p. 176 (Barry)
go back to where I came from and take all my shitty behaviour with me.

Quote from p. 178 (Anna)
the girl that the other girls envied…I was exotic looking…so the girls hated me…all my friends were guys and they all wanted to fuck me…I know that’s not right but I felt like I belonged with them.”

Quote from p.181 (Barry)
They [parents] were always asking me foolish questions about drugs and shit…but that energy they spend wasting my time with that kind of talk, they should have shown up at my school…just fucking show up. When I have my kids I’m gonna show up for them…I know how hurtful it was to be bullied in school and all my father said was “suck it up and be a man…that ain’t right.

Quote from p. 183 (Cindy)
bad ass in school and got away with murder…teachers were lenient on me…being half White and Asian helped but what helped more was being a girl {laughter}.
Quote from p.183 (Mark)
I was always seen as a problem child…I complained so many times to teachers about how those guys I fought with called me Paki and they didn’t do anything about it…it spun out of control and nobody considered why I stabbed those assholes…they teased me senseless…they got what was coming to them. A month before that a girl took a knife to another girl but they were both just suspended for 20 days…when guys fight they get kicked out but it’s different for girls.

Quote from p. 184 (Barry)
“I had to deal with the N word written on my locker every few days…it was bullshit…that didn’t make me feel safe and definitely didn’t make me feel like I belonged in that environment.”

Quote from p. 185 (Sierra)
it was clear that they [teachers] were working off of the bad stereotypes of Black people assuming shit left and right...they couldn’t even properly acknowledge my sickness. All they could see was my black skin.

Quote from p. 185 (Janio)
the bureaucratic bullshit in the system.

Quote from p. 186 (Lisa)
did not have a clue about how the school could suspend me for missing school…wouldn’t that mean I missed more school even for in-school bullshit suspension? Clearly, I needed more than a fucking suspension to change my ways.

Quote from p. 186 (Janio)
the kids told me that once the cops are involved in my records, I was blacklisted all over the province…so, what’s the fucking point of starting fresh? They should just suspend me…let me do the program and go back.

Quote from p. 188 (Anna)
Lost respect for myself in the bathroom with that asshole guy…lost it over and over again when I had to talk about it…it was taken by the guy, people at school, and my family…still working hard to get it back

Quote from p. 188 (Glenn)
I would drag my ass to practice [basketball practice] even when I was sick with a cold or something.