From exclusion to impact: Influencing course content towards educational justice

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Abstract

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This thesis explores ways to work towards educational justice at a small alternative educational program working alongside 18-25 year old Black youth who are returning to school. Intentionally and integrally framed by the interests of the coordinators at this educational program and structured to benefit the research participants, I began this research to determine how the needs, interests, and cultural backgrounds of students could be included in the courses available to them. To better understand the context of this question and guided by theories of social justice, I explored the role of schooling in perpetuating marginalization, approaches to educational justice, and ways in which people who have been marginalized by school systems can influence course development in Quebec. I discovered the possibility of students and community members co-developing an accredited Black history course as a 'local course'. This process of co-developing a course that is clearly connected to the telling of stories by and about a community of people puts students in control, creates course content that is better suited to students, and is an effective way of working on issues of educational inequity. This research is one aspect of a necessary process of larger educational change, whereby people who are marginalized within education are influencing all aspects of education.

Dedications

Throughout this process I have felt very appreciative of many people.

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This list could go on.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

I started this study with a vision of teaching about issues of social justice. This idea began while I was completing high school, ten years ago. At that time I was reading Paulo Freire's (1970) 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed', a book that contributed, perhaps as greatly as my own schooling, to my understandings of the possibilities of education. Accompanied by a dictionary and my imagination, this book gave me insight into what education could be. By extension, it also underlined more clearly the state of what schooling currently was. I was finishing five years at Malvern Collegiate Institute in Toronto; a high school that, during the time, received a D grade in a study conducted by the Students of Toronto Against Racism (STAR) on the inclusiveness of English high school courses (McCaskell, 2005). STAR noted, "in general, English courses [at Malvern Collegiate Institute] provided very little or no mention of women, people of colour, out lesbian/gay authors or social justice issues" (McCaskell, 2005, p. 222). While I was in the majority at this "predominantly White middle-class school" (McCaskell, 2005, p. 222), I was irritated and affronted by the limited course content. Troublingly, there were also many moments during my schooling when the limited perspectives that were offered was predominant enough that I was convinced of its worth and broader legitimacy. These moments included not questioning why there were no First Nations speakers invited to my Canadian history class, why we were reading Shakespeare before Tomson Highway and Joy Kogawa, or why the vast majority of my teachers were White. Freire offered timely clarification of the connection between schooling and broader

sociopolitical realities. Most importantly, his writing illuminated the possibility that education could serve not to domesticate but as a tool through which students could examine the roots of oppression.

When I began this study, I was focused on ways that schools could teach about social justice issues. I intended to research the effectiveness of using schoolyard gardens to teach elementary school students about inequities in the global food system. Yet as I delved more thoroughly into the literature and lived experiences, my understandings of the relationships between education and social justice became more complex, my reading of Freire returned. As I learned more about the impact of schooling, especially on 'marginalized' youth (the term 'marginalized' and others used in this thesis are explained in the latter part of this chapter), I was faced with the extent to which the same schooling that had contributed to my privilege had excluded and further marginalized many of my peers. I began to more fully understand the impact of limited course content at high schools like mine on all students and particularly on students who experience marginalization. My focus shifted from *teaching* about social justice in schools, to *working towards* social justice within education.

With this shift in orientation, I immersed myself in learning about issues of educational inequity and approaches to educational justice. I read related literature and I met with people working on these issues. I felt very inspired by many of the people with whom I met. I often found myself feeling critical of the involvement of White, middle-class people in work towards educational equity, when people more intimately connected to the issues were not otherwise leading it. I was inherently suspicious of their, and often

of my own, approach and motivation. I believe that White, middle-class people should organize to create change within their own communities, not the communities of other people. I have been particularly inspired by the words that a staff member at a shelter for battered women, an African-American woman, said to a White woman who had given up a successful business career to work at the shelter, feeling that it would be more rewarding to help people. She said, "Ma'am, if you really want to help us, go back to your White folks and tell them to keep the wall of racism from crushing us" (Macedo, 2006, p. 180). I also feel that it is essential to work on social change in solidarity with groups who experience marginalization. From these understandings, I approached this research as an opportunity to learn from and contribute to work that was being done by, and with, people who have been marginalized by the educational system. Through this I hoped to better develop my understanding of how to work towards educational justice.

Through my meetings with different people working on issues of educational inequity at the community level I was referred to DESTA and one of its initiatives, the Lion Wolf School (which I explain in further detail below). Upon first meeting the coordinators at the Lion Wolf School, I was taken by their focus on creating educational opportunities that worked for youth. Unlike other programs of which I had heard and seen, the goals at the Lion Wolf School were explicitly related to finding ways to meet the students' needs, not on finding ways for them to return to a school system that they had left. Though the focus was on close connections with the youth, the coordinators and the documents they produced emphasized broader understandings of the systemic forces of marginalization and the underlying reasons for which students leave school. I was inspired by the approach and the analysis that framed the work being done at the Lion

Wolf School. Yet, most importantly for me, I choose to work with the Lion Wolf School because two of the coordinators suggested a research direction that would be beneficial to their work. This was essential as I was only interested in engaging in research that originated from the people with whom I was working. Before this study began, I met with the educational coordinator and the volunteer coordinator at DESTA and they outlined that research that would benefit their work would determine *how the needs, interests, and cultural backgrounds of students at the Lion Wolf School could be included in conventional courses.* As I set out to respond to this question, I realized that I needed to do further research to be able to better understand this issue and ways to work towards change. As such, the focus of this research broadened to also include the following three questions: *how are 'marginalized' groups further marginalized by the school system?, how have 'marginalized' groups worked towards educational justice?, and how can 'marginalized' groups influence course development in Quebec?* I explore the initial question and these three accompanying questions in this thesis.

Context

In Canada, youth who are Black, First Nations, and/or living in poverty have a significantly increased likelihood of not obtaining a high school diploma. While an average of 7.4 percent of Canadian youth drop out of school (Zeman, 2003), more than twenty-five percent of First Nations youth drop out of school (Canadian Policy Research Networks, 2005), and youth from the lowest family-income quartile are more than three times as likely to drop out of school than those from the highest family-income quartile (Zeman, 2003). A study conducted by Marie McAndrew and Jacques Ledent (2005) in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Leisure and Sports (MELS), showed that

the graduation rate for Black youth in Quebec was almost twenty percent less than that of the population as a whole. The resulting lack of a high school diploma results in lower paying jobs: in Canada, the median 2005 earnings for people with a post-bachelor university degree was $66,535, while the median income in the same year for people without a high school diploma was less than half, at $32,029 (Statistics Canada, 2006).

The Quebec Ministry of Education highlights these statistics in a document entitled 'A new direction for success: Supporting Montreal schools'. This document specifies actions to be taken to resolve the "greater difficulties in school [faced by] students living in disadvantaged areas and students from cultural communities" (Ministère de l'éducation du Québec, 1997a, Why Focus on Montréal Schools?, para. 2). These actions, which focus largely on greater funding for specific programs at specific schools, are driven by an acknowledgment that "the percentage of students who graduate after seven years varies widely from one school board to another (between 59.8 percent and 95.9 percent)" (Why Focus on Montréal Schools?, para. 2). This document indicates a clear recognition by the Ministry of Education of both the different educational experiences being had by students from 'marginalized' groups and the need to work towards equitable educational opportunities for all young people.

The negative school experiences of 'marginalized' youth are caused by many different factors. The focus of this thesis is on one of these factors – the lack of course content that reflects students' cultures. Limited course content has been shown to negatively impact excluded students' self-esteem and overall school experience (Vanhouwe, 2007), and contribute to the high drop out rates amongst 'marginalized' youth (Kunjufu, 2002). Since students whose cultural backgrounds are ignored or

discredited within course content are more likely to leave school before completing the credits required for a high school diploma, they are less able to attain the education requirements that contribute to economic and social stability (Kincheloe and Steinberg, 1997; Chomsky, 2000; Cooper and Jordan, 2003).

Overview

From the onset, this research was driven by my own interest in, and commitment to, educational justice. Yet this research has also contributed to my understandings of what educational justice can, and should, be. I document this learning throughout this document. I complete this chapter by outlining some of the terminology that I use throughout this thesis. I use this terminology both because I find that it best describes the context and reality in which this research is based, and also because they are words used by people working to create social change. These words are both pragmatic and inspiring.

In the chapter that follows, Chapter II, I outline the literature that has deepened my understanding of educational inequity and justice. In this chapter, I respond to the second and third questions outlined above, *how have 'marginalized' groups worked towards educational justice?, and how can 'marginalized' groups influence course development in Quebec?* To do so, I focus on the relationship between educational inequity and social inequity, approaches to educational justice, and ways in which educational change can contribute to broader social change. While this theoretical framework has provided a base from which I can build my understandings of inequity and ways to work towards justice, this degree would have been incomplete without the

practical research in which I engaged, which I outline in Chapter III. Through the 'methodology and findings' section of Chapter III I respond to the following question, which was suggested by two of the coordinators at DESTA: *how can the needs, interests, and cultural backgrounds of students at the Lion Wolf School be included in conventional courses?* In the 'subsequent actions' section of Chapter III I respond to the following final question: *how can 'marginalized' groups influence course development in Quebec?*

Through this research, I have come to better understand the complicity of my involvement in an educational system that prioritizes people with pre-existent privilege, people like me. I more thoroughly understand the concrete ways that my privilege is built on the exclusion of other peoples. These understandings have intensified my motivation to work towards change. I explore my learnings in the final chapter, Chapter IV, wherein I also make suggestions for future research.

Terminology

Educational inequity and educational justice are complex issues that are inherently connected to larger social and political contexts. I define key terms that are connected to these issues and are, as a result, of essence to this thesis. I differentiate between the terms 'schooling' and 'education', and I explain 'educational equity' and 'educational justice'. As they have direct relationships to the sociopolitical context in which educational inequity exists, I also define the terms 'social oppression', 'social privilege', and 'marginalization'. The concrete ways in which these three outcomes of inequity are enacted are demonstrated through last three terms that are defined: 'push-out', 'at risk', and 'othering'.

In this document *schooling* is considered to be the learning and teaching processes in which students and teachers engage in conventional school settings, whereby course content is provided by educational professionals (teachers, administrators, and directors). *Education*, on the other hand, while potentially an aspect of 'schooling', is a more encompassing term that refers to all learning processes, regardless of the context or the relationships involved. Many authors have expanded upon the difference. Dewey (1966) underlines that education is broader than the instruction that happens within schools, and Freire (2005) emphasizes that learning happens through dialogue, not through content imposed from teachers. Chomsky (2000) focuses on the detrimental role of schools, which he argues have negatively impacted educational processes and "played an institutional role in systems of control and coercion" (p. 16) by imposing obedience and blocking the possibility of independent thought. He contrasts learning in schools, wherein people in positions of authority impose the 'truth', with the learning that happens when students are able to discover truth themselves. Zinn (2007) expands that not only is education separate from schools and other social institutes, but it "can, and should, be dangerous to the existing social structure" (p. 230).

Herein *educational equity* is understood to mean the distribution of resources and opportunities to meet students' different needs. Equity does not mean equal (or the same), as when students' needs are different, *different* (not just *more of the same*) resources should often be allocated (Madison Metropolitan School District Equity Task Force, 2007). Also, as outlined below, equal access to resources (e.g. curriculum, teacher time, time in class) will not be beneficial when the resources provided disadvantage specific groups of students. Secada (1989) outlines, "the heart of equity lies in our ability

to acknowledge that even though our actions might be in accord with a set of rules or laws, their results may be unjust" (p. 68). As the focus in education has often been on equality not equity, efforts have more frequently been made to ensure that "the goods which the educational system can distribute are equally distributed among ... different groups of students" (Secada, p. 70). Byrne (1985) underlines that the goal of education must be not only to fairly distribute the quantity or amount of education, but also the privileges, power, and dignity that result to which one has access. While it is important that students have common access to schools, it is also important that students have access to different resources than those currently offered in schools. Evans and Davies (1993) underline that "a commitment to [educational] equity demands that we scrutinize the nature of the experiences that are distributed through the curriculum" (p. 24-25). These authors explain that equality in education is important but without equity in education it is not only problematic but also potentially very harmful.

Educational justice is a term used by some groups working towards educational change. Educational justice often involves the co-creation of alternatives that respond to peoples' needs, by people excluded from education. Similar to educational inequity, educational justice will not be achieved merely through more fair distribution of resources that currently exist within schools. Rather, different resources must be available and influenced by people who have been excluded from the school system. Oakes, Renée, Rogers, and Lipton (2006) outline that educational justice initiatives often "work directly to build the power of low-income students, parents, and community members of color in order to expose and disrupt schooling inequalities" (p. 144). One example of such an initiative is the Coalition for Educational Justice (2007), which is

made up of parents that are working "to end the inequities in the [New York City] public school system" (para. 1).

Social oppression "signifies a hierarchical relationship in which dominant or privileged groups reap advantage, often in unconscious ways, from the disempowerment of targeted groups" (Adams, Bell, and Griffin, 2007, p. 3). These authors highlight that social oppression is "woven throughout social institutions as well as embedded within individual's consciousness" (p. 3). They continue that a condition of social oppression exists when (1) the group(s) with social privilege are able to define that which is understood as 'normal', 'real', or 'correct'; (2) systematic differential treatment of people, based on their identities, is entrenched within social institutions; (3) oppressive systems and behaviors are internalized by both people who experience oppression and those who benefit from it; and (4) oppressed groups' cultures, languages, and/or histories are misrepresented and/or eradicated and the dominant culture is imposed.

Black and Stone (2005) explain that *social privilege* is the "entitlement, sanction, power, immunity and advantage [experienced by those who benefit from systems of oppression] solely by birthright membership in prescribed identities" (p. 245). Similar to oppression, privilege is enabled through norms within social institutions maintained by individuals and groups of people. These authors outline that many members of privileged groups do not recognize, or are not interested in recognizing, the 'benefits' of racism, or other forms of discrimination, on their life. These 'benefits' include greater access to employment and housing, and increased social status. These authors continue that the effects of social privilege on people who experience oppression are "pervasive and

astounding" (p. 252) and include prejudice, bigotry, poverty, physical violence, and/or murder, as well as feelings of incompetence and internalized racism, sexism, heterosexism, and/or ableism.

Marginalization is a "dangerous form of oppression [whereby] a whole category of people is expelled from useful participation in social life and thus potentially subjected to severe material deprivation and even extermination" (Young, 2002, p. 55). Young further explains that marginalization happens in part through systematic exclusion from social institutions, which denies individuals and communities access to resources and opportunities. Traditionally marginalized populations in Canada include people living in poverty, First Nations people, and other people of color (Jenson, 2000).

The term *'push-out'* is often a more appropriate description of situations wherein students leave school before obtaining their high school diploma (Berlowitz and Durand, 1976). While the more commonly used 'drop-out' places the blame on the individual (Dei, Mazzuca, McIzaac, and Zine, 1997), the term 'push-out' emphasizes that students are often "the victims of an institutional syndrome of systematic exclusion" (Berlowitz and Durand, 1976, p. 1) whereby differential treatment, discrimination and/or abuse at school prevents them from completing their high school diploma. The term 'push-out' highlights that students leave school when they "already feel they are being pushed out of a system which does not want, and does not understand, their difficulties" (Dei *et al.*, 1997, p. 210). Dei (2008) outlines that students are 'pushed out' of school by "subtle messages [resulting in] differential (negative) treatment by race" (p. 349-350). In this way, "dropping out is sometimes better understood as a rational response to social

circumstances than as an individual-level manifestation of bad judgment or psychopathology" (Bickel and Papgiannis, 1988, p. 128).

Similar to 'drop-out', the term *'at risk'* is problematic. While perpetuating dangerous stereotypes, this term also inspires "simplistic solutions [and] isolated interventions [that do not recognize] the depth of the problems education confronts" (Apple, 1996, p. 105). This term reinforces a system whereby "African American [and other 'marginalized'] students continue to struggle academically not because of any genetic inferiority but because they are forced to adapt to a system that does not set them up to succeed and continues to perpetuate their indirect oppression" (Davis, n.d., p. 7). A study conducted by Conrad (2004) demonstrated that this term was considered offensive by youth who were considered 'at-risk'. The youth emphasized that the term 'at-risk' depicted them as unable to influence their own lives and did not recognize the extent to which their actions can be a form of resistance through their "potential to undermine unjust social structures" (p. 2). Conrad highlights that the term "seems largely based on the logics of economics, a fear that 'at-risk' youth will not become productive and contributing members of society" (p. 2). Furthermore, she recognizes that the term is based on a deficit model, which portrays "youth, their families, and their communities as somehow deficient or deviant if they do not meet society's expectations" (Conrad, 2004, p. 2; see also National Coalition of Advocates for Students, 1985).

The term 'at risk' puts students into positions of being 'othered'. The term *'othering'* refers to a process through which "groups that are traditionally marginalized in society [are considered] other than the norm" (Kumashiro, 2000, p. 26). Kumashiro

continues that people who are 'othered' includes students of color and students from under- or unemployed families.

Chapter 2: Theories of Educational Inequity and Justice

Throughout this research I became acquainted with the writings of different authors, from community organizers to academics, focusing on educational inequity and justice. Often inspired and/or challenged by their words, these writers became important people in my life. Apple (1996), for example, painted the ways in which schooling and social injustice overlap more clearly for me, stating, "schools are "connected – fundamentally – to the relations of domination and exploitation (and to struggles against them) of the larger society" (p. 4). Dei, Mazzuca, McIzaac, and Zine (1997) point out the complexity in the details of issues of educational inequity, saying, "we recognize that the school system is intent on resolving the dilemma of drop-outs, but it is also incapable of making the necessary changes without dismantling the very structures that allow schools to function" (p. 26). Faries (2004) who, in linking idealism with reality, has helped me understand the directions towards change. She underlines "ideally, education should meet the needs of Aboriginal people rather than Aboriginal people meeting the needs of the education systems. Realistically and historically the latter has remained true and continues into today" (p. 9). Lastly, authors such as Oakes, Rogers, and Lipton (2006), have clearly highlighted from whom educational change must originate. They emphasize that "although professionals must necessarily play a key role in the development and implementation of technical elements of reform, social activists - students, parents, community members, organizers, and advocates - are more likely to blaze a timely, effective, and sustainable route to ending educational disparities (p. 18).

Of course, there are many other authors who write about educational inequity and

justice to whom I do not refer in this thesis. Some of these authors repudiate the arguments that I make; other authors further legitimize these arguments. Many of these authors have tangentially impacted this research. With a focus on three sections of literature research, I have necessarily not included an exhaustive examination of these issues. I focus on the use of literature to answer two of the research questions outlined in the introduction. These questions are the following: *how are 'marginalized' groups further marginalized by the school system?* and *how have 'marginalized' groups worked towards educational justice?* In response to the second question I also outline ways in which co-developed curriculum can contribute to educational justice. To conclude, I draw from these two sections to suggest three principles for educational change.

Schooling and social marginalization

As outlined in the introduction, the rates at which First Nations youth, Black youth, and youth living in poverty complete high school is much lower than the general population. Some theorists have linked these decreased rates of school success to individual motivation (Farrington, 1986; and others), parental involvement (Anchor and Anchor, 1974; and others), and student failure to adjust to school culture (Calderon, 1998; and others). While these understandings are important, they fail to recognize the ways in which "schools themselves contribute fundamentally to the problem of student's disengagement and fading out from school" (Dei *et al.*, 1997, p. 145). Dei *et al.* emphasize that "the institutional processes of schooling (e.g. curriculum administration and delivery as well as classroom pedagogical practices) create unequal outcomes, particularly for racial minority students as well as those from working-class backgrounds" (p. 145). This view is echoed by Gale and Densmore (2000) who state that

the increased 'school failure' amongst most vulnerable populations cannot be individualized but rather, demonstrates that "the needs of students from poor and disadvantaged backgrounds are neither well served nor are their interests adequately represented by the public school system" (p.123). Similarly James and Brathwaite (1996) stress that "the education system has failed, and is failing, to meet the needs of African Canadians" (p. 13) and Haig-Brown, Archibald, Regnier, and Hodgson-Smith (1997) outline that "[Canadian] schools have generally failed to develop appropriate cultural spaces for Aboriginal students, with often tragic consequences for the students and for the society which loses them through its inability or refusal to respond" (p. 15). These theorists are not alone. Dei (1996b) notes that the studies of Cummins (1989), Radwanski (1987), Lawton and Leithwood, (1988), Karp (1988), and Mackay and Myles (1989) all underline that there is a "genuine problem in our [Canadian] educational system that needs to be addressed for minority students" (p. 34).

There are different aspects of schools that "reflect the inequalities and inequities of society" (Dei *et al.*, 1997, p. 220), and in doing so, contribute to marginalization of students outlined above. Dei (2008) explains that these inequities fall along racial lines and result in higher rates of students from specific ethnic groups underachieving, disengaging, and being pushed out of school. He references community complaints which state that school practices, such as Zero-tolerance measures, "unfairly target Black and minority youth [and lead to] Black students ... being disciplined at times for being nonconformist and resistant to authoritarian structures of schooling (p. 350). He continues:

> The issue of race and the stigmatization of students arising from their differential treatment by race (e.g., labeling and stereotyping, sorting of students, low student expectations by teacher, lack of curricular sophistication, the absence of diversity in staff representation, and the disciplining of Black bodies with suspensions and expulsions) cannot be underestimated. (p. 350)

This differential treatment is caused in part by negative teacher expectations, which, as outlined by Gay (2000) are often heavily influenced by media-based messages regarding the ethnicity and gender of the students, and have been found to "have no basis in fact [and to] persist in the face of contrary evidence" (p. 58). Differential treatment also results from students' abilities being read incorrectly when they do not speak or write in Standard English. Often the goal of schooling becomes to celebrate students who have already learned (often elsewhere) how to speak in the language of privilege and to force students who have not yet learned this to "adjust to a school system that is maladjusted to them" (Potts, 2003, p. 177). Lastly, course content also contributes to the marginalization of students. As this is most relevant to this study, I will explore this further below.

The impact of course content

Although it is often portrayed as culture- and value-free (Corson, 1998), education "is a vehicle for the values and norms of the dominant society and a primary agent of socialization" (Dei *et al.*, 1997, p. 227). Education that occurs within conventional schools is largely structured on dominant cultural values and ideals, and historical

knowledge told from the perspectives of the dominant culture (Dei *et al.*, 1997). The First Nations Education Steering Committee (2003) underlines that "because the school curricula have been written by and from European perspectives ... most Canadians are unaware of the histories of Aboriginal peoples" (p.1). In a three-year study conducted by Dei *et al.* (1997) in which Black students and youth who have dropped out of school discussed their experiences in Ontario schools, students and parents outlined that the course content "excluded the contributions and achievements of non-Whites" (pg. 210). Many students in this study emphasized the importance of restructuring education such that it was less "limited in its scope and representation of history" (p. 210). Dei *et al.* document that in this study "drop-outs addressed the need for rethinking the efficacy of a strictly Eurocentric knowledge base in a multi-ethnic society and increasingly globalized world" (p. 139). These authors expand,

> Students want their schools to reflect the communities in which they live. They want to be taught about their ancestral histories and cultural heritages. They also want a greater connection between what they learn in school and their actual lived experiences. (p. 151)

The lack of representation of students' cultural backgrounds and contemporary realities within course content has a drastic impact on students. Dei *et al.* (1997) underline that "students who perceive a dissonance between their education and their lived experiences are more likely to disengage from the system" (p. 151). Many students in the aforementioned study conducted by Dei *et al.* reported feelings of invisibility, which they attributed to not seeing themselves reflected in the course content. The students interviewed felt that changed course content would enable greater feelings of

connection for other Black students to their educational experience, and believed that this would contribute to more Black students remaining in school. Similarly, parents involved in the study often "made the connection between learning about one's history and cultural heritage and the eventual academic well-being of students" (p. 170). As a result, "it is not exaggeration to say that Black students and parents are generally critical when discussing their reflections on the Canadian school system, particularly of the fact that not all world experiences are represented in the classroom instruction, discourse, and texts" (Dei *et al.*, p. 150).

Educational inequity leads to further social marginalization

Dei *et al.* (1997) explain that the act of dropping-out can be one of resistance whereby "it is precisely the existence of a strong sense of cultural pride and self-esteem among Blacks which schools seek to contain and which eventually forces students out" (p. 146). This is often motivated by the "persistent and well-founded belief among African Canadians, especially the youth, that the formal education system cannot or will not accommodate itself to their needs" (James and Brathwaite, 1996, p. 13). Yet, this demonstration of cultural resistance leads to a "lack of educational credential [which] consigns drop-outs to almost certain subordination in the labor force [with] the effect of reproducing the stratification of social class" (Dei *et al.*, p. 232). Youth who leave school before obtaining a high school diploma have higher rates of unemployment (Bowlby, 2005). Similarly, people who do not have a high school diploma and people who are from a 'visible minority' have great probability of having repeated low income (Palameta, 2004). Low income and higher rates of unemployment increase dependency

on the welfare system. Dei *et al.* highlight that through this, schools "create the ideological conditions necessary to replicate extant social-class and power relations which maintain social order" (p. 20).

Marginalization in schools is caused by broader social inequity

While school inequity *leads* to broader social inequity, school inequity is also *caused* by broader social inequity. Apple (1996) emphasizes that the source of the inequity that takes place within schools lies beyond the educational system. He states:

> In confining our analysis of dropouts and "at risk" youth to the internal qualities of our educational system, we will miss the economic realities that surround the school and provide the present and future context in which our youth will function. (p. 90)

Furthermore, he outlines that educational inequity is intimately connected to the current economic conditions. He continues,

> It would not be an overstatement to say that our kind of economy - with its growing inequalities; its structuring of what are increasingly alienating, more deskilled, and meaningless jobs; its emphasis on profit no matter what the social cost – "naturally" produces the conditions that lead to dropping out ... the phenomenon of the dropout is not an odd aberration that randomly arises in our school system. It is structurally generated, created out of the real and unequal relations of economic, political, and cultural resources and power that organize society (p. 90).

As inherent within our political structure, these 'unequal relations' will continue, and continue to impact schools, until different ways of organizing are made possible and enacted both within and beyond the school system.

Working towards educational justice

While schools have been, and continue to be, a place in which social inequity is perpetuated, education has also been, and can continue to be, a vehicle for social justice. In the following section, I outline three examples whereby 'marginalized' groups have influenced curriculum as a vehicle towards educational justice and larger social justice. I focus on the Black Learners Advisory Committee in Nova Scotia, the Africentric Alternative School in Toronto, and the First Nations Survival Schools Movement across Canada. A common approach of creating alternatives while articulating demands for broader change weaves these different examples together. From these examples and theories of students and community involvement, I outline the possibilities and limitations of co-developed curriculum as a way to work towards educational justice.

Black Learners Advisory Committee

The Black Learners Advisory Committee (BLAC) was established in Nova Scotia in 1990 to "address historical problems dating back two centuries [related to] unequal access to quality education, a scarcity of Black role models in the education system, lack of race relations policies and inadequate curriculum" (Kakembo and Upshaw, 1998, p. 140). These authors explain that the main goals of BLAC were to improve the educational conditions of Black Nova Scotians through "raising educator's awareness and acknowledgement of racism in the education system, and adopting anti-racist policies and

teaching approaches" (p. 141). BLAC has reached sixty percent of teachers in Nova Scotia to discuss racist assumptions about Black families and communities and classist assumptions about people living in poverty that have prevented Black students from having equitable access to education. Kakembo and Upshaw outline that BLAC has worked to advocate a multicultural anti-racist approach to curriculum, such that "no one heritage takes precedence over another [and] all groups benefit from justice and equality" (p. 149). They outline the emphasis placed by BLAC that to work against "the constraints of racism and to develop anti-racist strategies ... one must look at the whole education system, NOT just curriculum" (p. 149).

Africentric Alternative School in Toronto

Driven by concerns raised by community members about the high rates of Black youth who were leaving school before obtaining their high school diploma, the Toronto District School Board agreed to create Africentric Alternative School. This decision came in January of 2008 from recommendations from community consultations, which were documented in a report published by the Toronto District School Board (2007). These recommendations outlined the next steps needed to open an Africentric Alternative School and highlighted the importance of "establishing a pilot program in three existing schools integrating the histories, cultures, experiences and contributions of people of African descent and other racialized groups into curriculum, teaching practices and school environment" (p. 1). For many community members the need for the Africentric Alternative School is inspired by the high numbers of youth that are being "'pushed out' of school by a European-centered system" (Brown, 2008, para. 18). Wallace (2009)

underlines that at an Africentric School students will learn not only about European histories and "the creation of European identities" (para. 29), but also learn about African history and "the creation of African identities" (para. 29). He continues that this is "not as simple as inserting a few black faces into the textbook [but] the deliberate inclusion of African history and people is a starting point" (para. 29). Furthermore, Wallace emphasizes that the focus of the 'Africentric project' is beyond the empowerment of 'marginalized' students. Rather it seeks to "transform the traditional approach to public education" (para. 32). He states that the desire of Africentric School advocates is to "help those who need it while also changing the way children are taught everywhere-regardless of their race. ... The larger project is to create a truly inclusive institution" (para. 32). The Africentric Alternative School is scheduled to open in September 2009 at Sheppard Public School where it will initially offer Junior Kindergarten through Grade Five, and may expand to include secondary school levels.

First Nations Survival Schools

> In Canada, the public education system continues to serve as an instrument to prevent First Nations from gaining de facto political, social and economic independence from colonial powers. Native control of Native education and Native inclusiveness in both the public education system and public system schooling are essential prerequisites to any attempt to achieve self-determination and both economic and political independence from social systems controlled by the culture of domination; the culture of White privilege; and the vicissitudes of colonialism, internal colonialism, non-Native cultural capital, globalism, and

other forces which give structure to coercive relationships of power, domination, control and exploitation (Maina, 1997, p. 144).

The impact of conventional education on Indigenous communities has ranged from "seriously deficient" (McCaskill, 1999, p. 159) to "cultural genocide [which] seeks to brainwash the Native child, substituting non-Native for Native knowledge, values, and identity" (Hampton, 1995, p. 35). Yet, should education be controlled by First Nations community members, it holds great potential for the development of pride in one's culture and the defining of political, economic and social priorities, (Maina, 1997). In this vein, Survival Schools were created "to help ensure that future [First Nations] generations would continue to survive with their language, culture and traditions intact" (Hoover and the Kanien'kehaka Raotitiohkwa Cultural Center, 1992, p. 271). Many Survival Schools emerged in the late 1970's and are located in major city centers such as Wandering Spirit Survival School in Toronto, Saskatoon Native Survival School in Saskatoon, Ben Calf Robe Program in Edmonton, Plains Indian Cultural Survival School in Calgary, and Spirit Rising Cultural Survival School in Vancouver. Other Survival Schools are on reserves near cities, such as Kahnawake Survival School near Montreal and Akwesasne Freedom School near Cornwall, or in rural settings such as the Bidassigewak Indian Way School near the Village of St. Charles, Ontario. Some schools are entirely independent while others maintain direct relationships with the provincial Ministries of Education or local school boards. Survival School funding comes from a variety of sources, including the federal Department of Indian Affairs, the provincial Ministry of Education, government grants, and donations (McCaskill, 1999). Survival Schools have different approaches to curriculum, from a focus on the survival of the

Mohawk Nation in terms of sovereignty and self-sufficiency in Akwesasne and Kahnawake, to 'Native way' education at the school in Bidassigewak (McCaskill, 1999). The curriculum, which often includes both conventional academic subjects and traditional and contemporary cultural material, is recognized as a key contributor to the success of the Survival Schools.

The history of the Kahanawake Survival School (2006) demonstrates one approach used to gain control over education. In 1976, the Parti Quebecois introduced Bill 101, which forced all Native students who were going to school off-reserve (which was all high school students, as there was no high school on the reserve) to apply for an Eligibility Certificate to attend English school. Although they protested, they were denied exemption from this legislation. In 1978, the students from Kahnawake left the high school in Chateauguay and with the energy of volunteer teachers and administrators, the Kahnawake Survival School was begun. Two months later the federal government offered funding. While there is the use of the Quebec curriculum in the school, Mohawk and First Nations history and culture are essential aspects of the learning. This community re-appropriation of education demonstrates to students that they can hold power and control decisions within the community.

All three examples involve the coming together of people who had been excluded from the education system to influence decisions that were of importance to their lives. While these examples have varied approaches to gaining power, they were all based in creating alternatives while articulating community demands. The Black Learners Advisory Committee offers an example of working towards educational justice whereby

people from outside of the educational system are making demands on those within the education system. They are insisting that the educational system change to recognize the needs of more of the students and community members. Simultaneously, they are educating teachers about issues of educational inequity. The Africentric Alternative School in Toronto has come to be through demands for the creation of an alternative structure within the conventional education system, whereby students can access an alternative based on social justice ideals. Lastly, the Kahnawake Survival School is an example whereby community demands and actions resulted in the creation of a community-based alternative that is connected to, though distinct from, the conventional school system. While this Survival School has recognition by the provincial Ministry of Education, it exists as a separate entity built on structures articulated by members of the community.

Co-developed curriculum

Built on a social action approach (further outlined below), the three examples discussed above demonstrated ways to work towards educational justice through creating alternatives (either within or outside of conventional structures) while making demands for broader change. The importance of working on many aspects of education, including but not limited to curriculum, is emphasized by all three approaches.

The involvement of students in the development of course content, particularly students who have been excluded from education, is another way of ensuring that excluding voices can influence education. Stovall (2006) underlines that "practice[s] that include young people in the decision-making process [has been understood as] one of the

most viable means through which to foster sustainable community collaboration" (p. 97). Student involvement is a method through which "democratic principles can be fostered and realized in the classroom community [which allows opportunities for students to be] participating in the classroom as well as becoming active agents in making change in our democracy" (Schultz and Oyler, p. 444, 2006).

Yet, co-developed course content is not inherently progressive, and progressive outcomes will only result if people who have previously been excluded from education have opportunities to create and use "tools [through which] to not only talk about injustice and oppression, but also to do something about it" (Grant and Sleeter, p. 180, 2007). Anderson (1998) similarly cautions that the power of community involvement should be neither under- nor over-estimated. This author highlights that "participatory reforms that truly give voice to the interests of subordinate groups often have a ripple effect that impacts power relations in other settings such as district offices, state legislatures, community organizations and corporate offices" (p. 194). Yet, the likelihood that involvement of community members will lead to the creation of on-going truly participatory reforms should also not be assumed. Anderson continues:

> To the extent that participation enhances institutional legitimacy without extracting too many costs, it will be tolerated ... to the extent that it threatens structured power relations at other levels, a backlash should be expected from those who see their privileges threatened. (p. 194)

The above examples illustrate that curricular change, and even involvement of excluded members in curricular change, is only one aspect of educational justice.

Students and drop-outs in the study conducted by Dei *et al.* (1997) outlined above echo that it will take more than altered curriculum to change inequities within the education system. In this way, social equity cannot be achieved through working solely in the education system (and certainly not through focusing exclusively on pedagogical curriculum or course content). For educational change to result in larger-scale social change and for such educational and broader change to not be resisted, focus must be placed on the creation of democratic processes in all aspects of society. Any impact on educational equity will only be lasting should it be accompanied by "the removal of the very real material obstacles – unequal power, wealth, time for reflection – that stand in the way of such participation" (Apple, 1996, p. 39). Apple further outlines that this would require that "all people – not simply those who are the intellectual guardians of the 'Western tradition' – can be involved in the deliberation over what is important" (p. 39).

Principles for educational change

While education has tremendous potential to contribute towards peoples' liberation (Freire, 1970), educational change does not inherently lead towards larger social change. How do we ensure that work towards educational change contributes to larger social justice? In an attempt to clarify this, I have pulled together three principles drawn from the examples outlined above and from literature on anti-oppressive education (as outlined by Kumashiro, 2000), culturally relevant education (as outlined by Ladson-Billings, 1995), and community organizing (as outlined by Shragge, 2003; Staples, 2004; Fisher and Shragge, 2007; and Delgado and Staples, 2008). The three principles are the following: people who are marginalized by school systems need to be making the decisions; misconceptions within course content need to be changed, while not merely

adding information but also disrupting knowledge; and educational change needs to be approached from both societal and individual angles.

People who are marginalized by school systems need to be making the decisions

Students are much more able to "relate socially, politically, ideologically, spiritually and emotionally to the learning process" (Dei, 1996a, p. 83; see also Asante, 1991) when it is structured within their own cultural frame of reference, integrates their culture into the learning experience (Lipman, 1995; Smith-Maddox, 1998), and is made relevant and meaningful to their lives (Davis, 1975; Gorski, 2006). This is enabled through the involvement of students, particularly those who experience marginalization, in the creation of new course content within which they can integrate their experiences of prejudice and oppression (Herr, 1999). The First Nations Education Steering Committee (2003) in British Colombia advocates the importance of locally developed, culturally relevant curriculum. They have designed an education model built on the community's interests, whereby parents and community members actively participate in the decision making, course content is relevant to students' lives, and anti-racist policies are integrated into the schools. This model underlines the inclusion of Aboriginal people's perspectives, languages, histories, and involvement as role models and planners in the curriculum.

Delgado and Staples (2008) outline that this approach is most effective when large numbers of people, not isolated individuals, are working together to create social change, and the people who are in positions of leadership come from the communities that are affected. These criteria are echoed by Oakes, Rogers and Lipton (2006) who

state, "when educators step in and speak and act *for* less powerful communities, they do nothing to build the local community power necessary to change the cultural and political asymmetries that sustain the very schooling inequalities they seek to disrupt" (p. 31). In the context of curriculum, large numbers of students and community members who have been excluded from curriculum development, and whose cultural histories have been excluded from course content, must not only be involved in making decisions about course content but must also be in the positions of leadership within course development.

Misconceptions within course content need to be changed, while not merely adding information but also disrupting knowledge

More than the insertion of information about unrepresented, under-represented, or misrepresented people and communities into conventional course content by members of dominant social groups, it is important that excluded groups can influence course content such that incorrect information can be challenged. This second principle is built on an understanding that the retelling of biased and/or false information about communities and people silences non-dominant communities' forms of knowledge (Dreeban, 1968) and, in doing so, perpetuates marginalization. By learning about multiple perspectives, including those that contradict generally taught information, students and teachers can learn to question the portrayal of dominant knowledge as universal (Fein, 1971; Anderson, 1978), an assumption that many argue to be insulting and derogatory (Maynard, 1970; Fein, 1971; Sizemore, 1974). This is echoed by the recommendations made by the First Nations Education Steering Committee (2003) mentioned above which include a focus on the education provided to all students, including non-Native students. They emphasize

that education must include a requirement to "learn about the real histories of Aboriginal peoples ... of Canada to challenge the early and present curriculum that omits this information of stereotypes and misrepresents Aboriginal people in the core subject areas" (p.1).

Drawing from culturally relevant education, as developed by Ladson-Billings (1995), this second principle includes an emphasis on the development of critical, broader sociopolitical, consciousness, which "allows [students] to critique the cultural norms, values, mores, and institutions that produce and maintain social inequalities" (p. 160). This is an approach advocated by Freire (1970) through which students can develop awareness of the ways in which individual struggles within their communities are connected to broader sociopolitical systems of oppression. Apple (1996) expands that *all* people involved in education must develop critical literacy; such that teachers, administrators, and education ministers better understand the impact of the economy, cultural conflicts, and role of the state on students and education.

Kumashiro (2000) underlines that the development of critical consciousness must not prevent students and teachers from understandings that while oppression is structural it is also situational (or particular to every person). Kumashiro expands that curriculum content should not seek to tell the 'truth' about the experiences of a marginalized group, but to act as a catalyst for students to examine questions such as: What information is missing from this curriculum? What voices are not included? Who benefitted from the telling of this version of the story? Who was placed at the disadvantage? This can ensure that individual experiences of oppression and multiple identities are not being denied,

while enabling students' to develop critical understandings of curriculum and schooling.

Educational change needs to be approached from both societal and individual angles

To create longer-term social change, curriculum development by 'marginalized' youth and community members must be accompanied by other work that challenges broader inequities within the education system and other social systems. This understanding draws from social action orientation, which "represents an engagement in the struggle for social change through organizing people to pressure government or private bodies" (Fisher and Shragge, 2007, p. 195). These authors continue,

> Central to this perspective is an oppositional politics and the use of conflict strategies and tactics. This kind of organizing may challenge social inequalities and oppressive power by offering an alternative politics, a critique of current conditions and power relations. Or it may focus on specific winnable local demands. It seeks primarily to bring together diverse community interests in a common process that contributes to the well-being of the community as a whole. (Fisher and Shragge, 2007, p. 195)

As educational inequality is reflective of broader social inequality, it will continue (both in the education received and the access to resources once a person is no longer in school) until broader social equality is obtained. Oakes, Rogers and Lipton (2006) outline, "making schools more equitable ... requires strategies that address the norms and politics of education, and, inevitably, of the larger society from which they emanate" (p. 15). These authors outline "creating equitable schools requires challenging and disrupting the social norms that hold inequality in place" (p. 158). Apple (1996) further

details that focusing on short-term changes, such as increasing the school achievement of poor and other 'marginalized' students will not create any real impact in regards to experiences of poverty or inequality. He explains that credential inflation will likely result which would lead to a system of 'queuing' whereby an increase in the quantity of people who have access to the credentials required for more well-paying jobs results in an increase in the credentials required for those jobs. Apple underlines that issues of youth dropping out of school and larger issues of educational inequity must be considered in this regard, in recognition of their intimate connection to broader issues of social inequity. This understanding requires one to examine approaches to equity, both within schools and within broader society.

Chapter 3: Methodology, Findings, and Subsequent Actions

The theories outlined in the previous chapter laid a strong foundation on which to base my understandings of issues of educational inequity and approaches to educational justice. Yet, my goals in this research were to contribute towards tangible changes that were being advocated by people impacted by educational inequity and involved in working towards educational change. In addition, because I would be coming in as an ethnic and geographic outsider, I needed this research to be directly connected, and of importance, to the people with whom I would be working. It was essential to me that the research be based in an exchange, such that the people with whom I was working would benefit from the time that I was there and that I spent on the research. In this section, I outline the process of coming to a research direction that was guided by interests of the group with whom I was working. I also document the findings of this research. Lastly, I explain the subsequent actions that I took that were inspired from the findings.

Methodology and Findings: Including students interests in courses

During the time that I was engaged in the review of the literature, I was also meeting with different people working on issues of educational inequity. Inspired by these meetings I would think of different ways to research educational inequity. While the people that I spoke with often expressed an interest in the research directions that I would propose, I did not get the feeling that it would, in any large way, contribute to the work that they were doing. Most importantly, I knew that that only way to ensure that the research would be touching on issues of greatest importance to the people with whom I was working would be if they determined the direction of the research.

Through meeting with different people working on issues related to education at the community level, I was referred to DESTA Black Youth Network and one of its programs, the Lion Wolf School. The Lion Wolf School is a non-traditional learning environment in which 18-25 year old youth can complete their secondary school diploma. While the program focuses on working with Black youth, the students at the Lion Wolf School with whom I met emphasized that youth of other nationalities were also welcome. Early in my research, I met with Frances Waithe, the program director at DESTA, to talk about the Lion Wolf School and my interest in doing research that would contribute to work their work. We stayed in contact and within a couple of weeks, Barkley Cineus, the volunteer coordinator at DESTA, communicated that it would be useful to understand the process to develop new accredited courses that could better meet students needs. Barkley, Teprine Baldo (the educational coordinator) and I met to further discuss this research idea. Teprine explained that the students at the Lion Wolf School receive course material from a distance education division of a school board, and work at their own pace with support from volunteer teachers and tutors. While these pedagogical practices are distinctive from those used in conventional schools (which are understood as non-alternative public schools attended by the majority of students), Teprine explained that the course content provided by the school board follows the standard curriculum determined by MELS. They were interested in being able to offer accredited courses that were more relevant to the students. Together we outlined the question that would contribute to their work. The question we determined, which instigated this study, was: *how can the needs, interests, and cultural backgrounds of students at the Lion Wolf School be included in conventional courses?* In the process of answering this question,

my research focus broadened to include the following three questions, also outlined in the introduction: *how are 'marginalized' groups further marginalized by the school system?, how have 'marginalized' groups worked towards educational justice?,* (both of which I explored in Chapter II) and *how can 'marginalized' groups influence course development in Quebec?* (which I examine in the second part of this chapter).

Having come from directly from coordinators at DESTA, and clearly linked to directions in which they would continue to work, I felt able to launch into this research. To begin, I interviewed Frances and Teprine and consulted documents written by the coordinators at DESTA to better understand the organization with which I was working. Second, to determine how the needs, interests, and cultural backgrounds of students at the Lion Wolf School could be included in conventional courses, I needed to find out which courses were of interest to the students and if these courses were currently offered at other adult educational programs. If they were not offered, I then needed to determine ways in which new courses could be developed and students could be involved in the process. To do so, I met with the students and the coordinators and talked about their perceptions of current courses that are offered at the Lion Wolf School and courses that they would like to see offered at the Lion Wolf School. (See appendix A, B, C, and D for guides to interview with Frances, Teprine, Barkley, and the students respectively.) I document the information from these interviews below. All of the ethnicities provided were self-identified by the participants. All of the students' names are pseudonyms.

DESTA and the Lion Wolf School

Inspired by "a passion for community", Frances Waithe, who identifies as a Black African, has been engaged with community issues in the Little Burgundy neighborhood of Montreal for the past twenty-two years. For many of those years she worked alongside families, young children, and teenagers. She also coordinated Project Alt, through which she connected youth over 18 years old with resources to complete their high school diploma. Through this work she got to know many older youth and realized both the complexity of the issues with which youth were dealing and the reality that there were few community resources from which they could draw. Upon reaching eighteen years old, many youth would find themselves without support and, for a myriad of reasons (often as a last resort for survival), tended to gravitate towards delinquent behavior and/or criminal activities. Recognizing that broader social change was required to create lasting change in the lives of the youth in Little Burgundy, Frances also understood that the youth needed immediate support. To compensate for the lack of programming available, Frances began providing one-on-one support to 18-25 year old youth: sharing resources, facilitating visioning processes, and offering home-cooked meals. With the mandate of working with 18-25 year old youth, Frances began contacting local community organizations, including members of the Padua Center. Simultaneously, the Padua Center, which is housed in the Saint Anthony of Padua Parish in Little Burgundy, was looking for ways to be more actively involved with the Little Burgundy community.

Youth Empowerment Project

Within a year, members of several community organizations in the neighborhood,

including the Padua Center, created the Youth Empowerment Project (YEP), a federally funded employment-focused initiative. Frances explained that twelve youth were hired for six months through the project, which, in recognition that barriers experienced by the youth extend beyond a lack of jobs, included a focus on personal development, art, and "a little bit of everything". Upon the completion of YEP, Frances and the other coordinators continued to follow the twelve youth. Recognizing that ongoing support was needed for youth in the neighborhood, the coordinators met to determine ways to continue to do this work. The members of the Padua Center, who understood and supported the vision of reaching out towards 18-25 youth as had been done through the YEP, were interested in paying the salaries of an outreach worker and a youth worker to ensure that this work would continue. Frances and Barkley (a previous YEP participant, who identifies as Black) were hired and the DESTA Black Youth Network was begun.

DESTA

DESTA started in 2007 with a focus on establishing more relationships with older youth in the neighborhood. An acronym for Dare Every Soul To Achieve, the name DESTA is derived from the Amharic language (a Semitic language spoken in North Central Ethiopia) meaning 'happiness'. Frances underlines that the project began with a lot of drive and little certainty, stating, "we didn't know how we were going to do the work, we just knew that we were going to do the work". Frances underlined the importance of receiving support from the Padua Center and explained that through this funding and funding from other sources, the coordinators at DESTA were able to offer a variety of programs. Through referrals from community organizations and agencies,

word of mouth, peer influence, and street outreach, more youth began to come to see what was happening at DESTA. The youth who are currently a part of DESTA identify their ethnicities in many different ways, including: African, Black, Vincentian, Canadian, Vincentian-Guyanese, Caribbean-Guyanese, Canadian-Black, Haitian-Canadian, Jamaican-Canadian, Canadian-Jamaican, Afro-Canadian, Universal Black man, Afro-Canadian-Vincentian, Canadian-Guyanese-African, Black-Afro-Canadian, and Canadian-Jamaican-Black.

Frances outlines, "the brunt of our work [at DESTA] is really to support [youth and to] meet them where they are at". Motivated by this approach, the coordinators at DESTA now offer mentoring, support, and advocacy and establish programs following the interests of the youth, which include camping trips, a digital art project (in partnership with a local university), and a personal trainer program (in partnership with a local gym). Frances underlines that the work being done at DESTA will not create opportunities for all the youth in the neighbourhood. She highlights the importance of advocating for broader change in the areas that impact the youth: housing, education, and the criminal justice system. She also recognizes the downfalls of working with a small staff at DESTA, whereby the coordinators are often too busy supporting youth to be able to focus on advocacy or pressuring institutional bodies.

Lion Wolf School: Mission, Mandate and Mechanics

Many of the youth at DESTA had left school before obtaining their high school diploma. These youth expressed interest to DESTA coordinators in completing the credits required to do so. Frances underlined that the struggles and negative experiences

that many of the students had at school have resulted in little interest on their part in returning to conventional school settings. As such, Frances began introducing interested students to a distance education program. Initially very informal, Frances and Barkley began to see the importance of providing more structured support for students. At this time, Teprine Baldo was introduced to DESTA by Dave Dumouchel from Pops dans la rue. Teprine (who identifies as a Montreal-born Caucasian of mixed descent) was interested in beginning a school for youth who were marginalized within the current education system. Deciding that offering opportunities for youth to work on their high school diploma would be part of the focus at DESTA, Frances and Barkley teamed up with Teprine and created the Lion Wolf School in November 2008.

Built on an understanding that the barriers to social integration are caused by historical stigmatization and racism (DESTA, 2008), the coordinators at DESTA seek to create "a critically engaging, culturally sensitive and traditionally empowering urban learning environment" (Lion Wolf School, p. 1, 2008) at the Lion Wolf School. While the students at Lion Wolf School are currently almost all Black youth the Lion Wolf School was initially created as an opportunity for both Black (as represented by the lion) and First Nations, Métis and Inuit (as represented by the wolf) youth to complete their high school diploma within the DESTA environment. When it first began, Frances, Teprine, and Barkley met with youth in the neighborhood to determine the rules of the Lion Wolf School, which focus largely on respecting other students, teachers, tutors, and coordinators and contributing towards the maintenance of a safe space. Unlike most high schools and adult education programs, students are not required to attend classes or operate by other more strict rules, which have often made it impossible for many of the

students attending the Lion Wolf School to function in such settings. Frances conducts a 'readiness evaluation' with all interested youth, whereby she meets with individual students to discuss their housing and financial situation, as well as whether they feel able to commit to their schoolwork. Once the student decides to be involved, they are matched with volunteer teachers (who offer weekly classes that the students may attend) and volunteer tutors (who meet regularly with individual students). Students are able to apply for the DESTA Education Fund, which covers student tuition, and is allocated based on behavioral integrity, vision/personal development strategy, sound financial strategy, and motivation for learning. This fund, as well as the salary of the educational coordinator, is provided for by a small yearly donation from a private donor.

The coordinators recognize the lack of culturally appropriate content within the courses that are offered and, in the long term, seek to develop curriculums (e.g. course content and teaching approaches) supportive of Black, First Nations, Métis and Inuit learning methodologies, both to be used at the Lion Wolf School and to serve as an example for other Quebec schools. The Lion Wolf School was initially created as a partnership between DESTA and the Inter-Tribal Youth Center of Montreal. Through this partnership DESTA would provide one-one-one support to Black youth (many of whom the coordinators knew) attending the Lion Wolf School, and the Inter-Tribal Youth Center of Montreal would provide one-on-one support to the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit youth attending the Lion Wolf School. Many of the Black youth and First Nations, Métis and Inuit youth shared experiences of homelessness and other experiences that made it difficult to work on high school courses. Yet, the coordinators found that DESTA's location was not convenient for First Nations, Métis and Inuit youth (not many

of whom live in the neighbourhood) and eventually all of the First Nations, Métis and Inuit youth stopped coming. Frances, who speaks to how painful it was to watch the youth disengage from the space, wonders if First Nations, Métis and Inuit youth did not feeling entirely at home in a community space that was coordinated by and largely used by Black youth. It is the hope, for Teprine in particular, that a similar initiative as the Lion Wolf School could be organized at another location more convenient to First Nations, Métis and Inuit youth, such as a Native Friendship Center.

Courses available and courses of interest

I interviewed the students and the coordinators to determine what courses students were interested in taking. I met individually with the program director, the educational coordinator, and the volunteer coordinator to ask them questions regarding the limitations that they see in the course content currently being used by the Lion Wolf School. I asked them to list concrete suggestions for changes to the courses and also list the reasons for which they feel that these other courses should be offered. I also met individually with five students to discuss the courses that they wanted to be able to take for credit towards their high school diploma. These students were all Black youth between the ages of 18-25 years. There were two males and three females. Their identified ethnicities included Vincentian, Canadian Black, Afro-Canadian, and Haitian-Canadian. I asked them to describe their involvement at the Lion Wolf School, including how long they have been involved, why they choose to become involved, and their goals for being involved. I then asked them to list the courses that they were taking and to describe their experience of these courses. Lastly, I asked them to outline the subjects that they would like to learn

and/or courses that they would like to take through the Lion Wolf School, and why they would like to learn about the different subjects and/or courses. From these interviews, I found that students and coordinators want courses that are more relevant to the students' lives and all of the students and coordinators are interested in a Black history course. I also found that students want any additional courses to be able to be used as credits towards their high school diploma and that the learning environment at the Lion Wolf School is important to the students. These findings are explained below.

Students and coordinators want courses that are more relevant to their lives.

Many of the students expressed an interest in taking courses that were more clearly related to their needs and interests, and the perceived needs and interests of other peers. In the words of one coordinator, "curriculum could be more geared towards actual life situations, life skills, [with] some sort of direct relevance in everyday life situations" (B. Cineus, personal communication, April 2, 2009). The educational coordinator echoed that the students would be more present if the learning was more relevant to them, and they were able to take "realistic courses" (T. Baldo, personal communication, March 17, 2009). One student, Darkeem, commenting on the importance of learning about nutrition and physical fitness, emphasized that, to be able to make informed choices, youth need to know "what would happen if they [take care of themselves through what they eat and what they do], and what would happen if they don't". Similarly, Darkeem (who was a parent himself) highlighted that a course in parenting would be helpful to demonstrate to youth the importance of "being responsible [and] knowing that you have to deal with your issues". Another student, Jimar, outlined an interest in a course in communication

skills "where you learn how to express yourself, so that you can express yourself well, so that kids don't just stay there and be quiet, rather than say what they got to say."

The students' excitement about courses that were more relevant to their lives stood in contrast with the general experience of courses that they were currently offered, which, in the words of Jimar "are pretty standard stuff". A coordinator emphasized that what tends to motivate the students is a desire to complete high school, and continued, "I don't know if there is much actual interest in the subjects" (B. Cineus, personal communication, April 2, 2009). This coordinator contrasted that experience with one whereby the students were actively participating in a learning experience, saying:

> I see what we take interest in. ... A couple of weeks ago, we were sitting there on the computer, listening to this rap album, two artists are going back and forth. [This] shouldn't be invalidated, because for those that understand, what is being said, the references, what the objective of that whole dynamic is, it's art. [We] just watched and took interest, him saying this and the other replying that using some of the references that had been said, just the whole thing. I think that that is something that should be studied because people have such interest in it. I was watching us, hanging on every word being said, we take such interest in it. I don't know how that would ever be taught [but] if I had a school I would dissect one of those dialogues. (B. Cineus, personal communication, April 2, 2009)

All of the students and coordinators are interested in a Black history course

Of most relevance to this study was the interest expressed by all of the students in a Black history course. This was the only course in which *all* students and coordinators

expressed an interest. Students' expressed different reasons for being interested in Black history. Many students commented on the importance of learning about Black history and emphasized that they would like to learn about more than the involvement of Black people in slavery. Some were interested in the history of specific geography areas, for example, different parts of Africa, Haiti, or Black history in Montreal or Canada. For some the interest was sparked from a desire to better understand their own history. Cantrice expressed an interest in "learning about my island". Similarly, another student, Sherisha, emphasized that she wanted to learn about Black History "to learn more about my own ancestry".

For some students, learning about Black history was motivated by a desire to increase their own and other people's understandings of their cultural backgrounds. Cantrice emphasized that learning about Black history "would bring everyone more closer together because if we learn about those things, we won't be as scared of other people, because a lot of people are afraid of what they don't know". Coordinators similarly underlined the importance of offering a Black history course, emphasizing that a focus on Black history would allow the students to feel acknowledged and underlining that the current courses were not suited to the cultural backgrounds of student populations. The program director suggested that a course should be offered through which students can get more connected to different parts of the Black community, such as creating concrete ways to get involved in community events and resources. These ideas stand out against the content of the current history course, which has little mention of Black history in Canada or around the world, and which was specifically criticized by coordinators for its Eurocentric focus and limited perspective.

Many students were also interested in learning about other cultures and felt that, while they were specifically touched by Black culture, it was important to learn about different cultural understandings and geographical areas around the world. In the words of one student, "if you learn about the different cultures and the people, [then] you can better understand the people you interact with". This was echoed by volunteer coordinator, who emphasized that learning about many cultures could help "everyone to think larger scale, more than me" (B. Cineus, personal communication, April 2, 2009).

The students and coordinators want any additional courses to be accredited

All of the students stated that the reason that they were attending the Lion Wolf School was to complete their high school diploma. This was further emphasized by the coordinators who underlined that courses that would not count as credits towards a high school diploma would not be of interest to most students, most of whom sought to finish their high school diploma in the timeliest manner possible. The volunteer coordinator underlined that while students seem to be, for the most part, enjoying the process of working towards completing something that they have started, they are mostly motivated by the opportunity to finish the credits needed for their diploma. He stated that students "have their eye on the destination, the end goal" (B. Cineus, personal communication, April 2, 2009). In this way, while the students were very interested in courses that were relevant to them, and specifically interested in a Black history course, such a course would only be only be useful to them if it would contribute credits towards their diploma.

Students feel connected to DESTA and the Lion Wolf School

Students talk about DESTA and the Lion Wolf School with much appreciation.

Youth often hang around DESTA after completing their schoolwork, or come by when they have spare time. In the words of Clayton "[DESTA] is a community organization that helps the community, helps me be in touch with my community, where I don't have to leave my community to learn. I can stay where I am comfortable". Many of the youth attended a teacher and tutor appreciation dinner and expressed words of praise to individual teachers, tutors, coordinators and the overall DESTA project. Darkeem commended the Lion Wolf School and the teachers stating, "it's a lot better than going to school for me personally because it's more comfortable here, it's not a stressed out environment, the teacher's not stressed out". Darkeem further emphasized the important role of the teachers. He outlined an experience at a conventional school where "the teacher wasn't really there" and contrasted this with the teachers at the Lion Wolf School, who "are volunteering so you know that they actually want to be here". The volunteer coordinator echoed the important role of volunteer teachers. He explained the methods used by one teacher to "ignite different people and engage them in different ways. She's very aware of there being different types of people and of the different ways that they learn" (B. Cineus, personal communication, April 2, 2009). Jimar, who spoke to the negative experiences that he had had in a conventional school setting where he felt that he wasn't respected, emphasized that his experience as the Lion Wolf School has helped him realize "what you could do with just a little help". This enthusiasm as well as the contrast of these positive experiences that students had at DESTA and the Lion Wolf School with much less positive experiences at their previous school demonstrated the importance of the Lion Wolf School in students' educational experience. From this information, I concluded that students would be more receptive to a new course being

offered at the Lion Wolf School then being required to go to a different location to take a new course.

Subsequent Actions: Influencing course content in Quebec

While all of the students and coordinators had clearly indicated an interest in a Black history course there was no such course that was available to them through the distance education program in which they were involved. I decided to inquire whether a Black history course was available at the local adult education institution. As outlined in the introduction, I also wanted to respond to the question *how can 'marginalized' groups influence course development in Quebec?* Of most importance, I wanted to communicate my findings to the students, such that we could determine what we would do next. These actions, and the results from these actions, are outlined below.

Black history courses not offered at local adult education institution

I inquired with the school board that supplies the distance education course material to the Lion Wolf School about adult education institutions that might offer a Black history course. The director at the school board referred me to the Pearson Adult Career Center (PACC), indicating that PACC has a relatively large population of Black students and so might offer a Black history course. PACC has a range of programs including many vocational programs, and academic programs for high school credits leading to a Quebec Secondary School Diploma. Part of the Lester B. Pearson School Board, the tuition fees are paid by the MELS. The students at the Lion Wolf School are familiar with PACC, which is relatively close to DESTA, as they go to there to take their final exams of the distance education courses.

I contacted the director at PACC and received a list of the courses that they offered. While many different option courses were offered, there were no Black history courses available. Yet, the director at PACC emphasized great interest in offering an accredited course of interest to students, particularly one that focused on culturally relevant course material. To accommodate this, the director would attempt to locate a teacher to deliver a course not already offered. Also, the course could be given at DESTA should there be a minimum of twenty-five students enrolled.

Of interest, I was only able to locate *one* Black history course being taught by *one* teacher in *one* high school in the English education sector on the city of Montreal. This teacher had recently been informed that, while this was the first year for the course to be offered at the school, scheduling limitations would prevent it from being offered the following year.

Influence of course development through 'local courses'

Having determined that there were no Black history courses available to the students, I began to research ways that students and community members could be involved in the development of such a course. To do so, I needed to determine how course content is currently developed and understand the process through which new accredited courses can be created. To answer these questions, I searched for names of different directors and administrators associated with 'curriculum development', 'cultural communities', and other similar fields on the MELS website. Without knowing much about their work besides their title and descriptions available on the Internet, I telephoned these directors and

administrators, told them about my research, and asked if they could help me better understand ways in which students and community members could influence course development. For the most part, they were very willing to arrange a meeting in person or converse by telephone. I also met with a few high school teachers and personnel to whom I was referred by coordinators at DESTA and members of other community organization with which I had been in contact. From these meetings and the documents to which I was referred, I came to the following two findings, which I explain below: pedagogical consultants, university professors, and exceptionally, teachers determine course content; and course development can be influenced through 'local courses'.

Pedagogical consultants, university professors, and exceptionally, teachers determine course content

In 1997, the Ministry of Education, Leisure and Sports (which was, at that time, simply called the Ministry of Education) developed a new educational reform. The resultant 'Quebec Education Program', which emphasizes the development of cross-curricular competencies and linkages across subject areas, is organized in two to three year cycles as opposed to single-year grades (Ministère de l'éducation du Québec, 1997b). There are separate programs for the youth and adult sectors. The adult sector, which is open to any student above the age of sixteen, is the sector in which the students at the Lion Wolf School are involved. The adult sector educational program for the cycles that correspond with that previously known as kindergarten through grade 8 (now called the 'common core') was developed over two years by approximately one hundred

teachers, following guidelines set by educational consultants and university professors. The adult sector educational program for the cycles that correspond with that which was previously known as grades 9-11 (now known as the "diversified curriculum") was adapted, by pedagogical consultants, from the program created for the youth sector. In both cases, there appears to be no established mechanisms for input from community members, parents, and youth.

'Local courses' are a way through which a course can be influenced by students and community members

The educational reform, which has a more flexible nature and fewer required hours for mandatory courses, allows for the possible integration of non-standard courses. Yet, integration of such course content is dependent on the individual teacher's discretion. One method to integrate non-standard teaching material, such that the content is recognized as essential to the course, is through the use of institutional programs, or 'local courses'. 'Local courses' are created by teaching staff, non-teaching staff, and resource people at educational institutions or school boards in the goal of providing "course content that is adapted to the social, economic, and cultural realities of their particular environments" (Direction de la formation générale des adultes, 2005, p. 1). The term 'institutional programs' implies that a course that is created by a local institution. While they cannot replace courses that are mandated by MELS, these Secondary IV and V option courses (worth one, two, three, or four credits) count as credits towards a secondary school diploma. 'Local courses' must adhere to the goals of adult education as outlined in the Basic Adult General Education Regulation (Ministère

de l'éducation du Québec, 2000), including increasing the autonomy of adults; facilitating the integration of adults into society and the job market; and contributing towards the development of skills necessary for adults to be a role in the economic, social, and cultural development of their community. While a teacher or school board member would need to be involved in the process, there appears to be a very interesting possibility for students and community members to be involved in the development of a Black history course as a 'local course'.

Students' interest in the co-development of a Black history course

Feeling inspired by the potential of 'local courses' as a way through which students could influence course development, I wanted to meet with the students at the Lion Wolf School to ask them if they were interested in co-developing a Black history course. I met with six students (five of whom had been involved in the interviews and one other who was newly interested in being involved) to discuss the findings outlined above and the possibility of co-developing a Black history course. All of the students expressed interest in co-developing a Black history course. One student, Adalia, who underlined that she is "into this history thing" emphasized that while there is a lot of information about the Caribbean in tourist books, "there is no [mention of the Caribbean] in history books". She continued that this prevents students from knowing why the Caribbean "became the island [and] how the parliament works". The excitement on the part of the students regarding being involved in the development of a Black history course was echoed by Frances, the program director, who emphasized the importance of student involvement of the development of such a course. She underlined, "I think that we need to get youth on more decision making regarding them, where they have input"

(Waithe, personal communication, March 18, 2009). At the time of this research, the Lion Wolf School had only been operating for four months. Frances explained that this research had uncovered an interest in a Black history course that the coordinators suspected was there, but one that they had not yet had the time to explore.

Discussion

In this thesis, I have explained the ways in which marginalization is perpetuated by the school system. Through this I have demonstrated how schooling, which supposedly 'levels the playing field' for all youth, can actually lead to further exclusion from broader social structures. I have also documented three approaches used by different 'marginalized' groups to create change in the education system and work towards educational justice. These approaches include advocating governing bodies for change and creating alternative structures.

Through this research, I have determined ways that the needs, interests, and cultural backgrounds of students at the Lion Wolf School could be included in conventional courses through development of 'local courses'. While no accredited Black history course (the course that is of most interest to all of the students and coordinators) is currently available to the students, they can possible be involved in the co-development of such a course as a 'local course'. This process of co-developing a course, especially one that is so clearly connected to the telling of stories by and about a community of people puts students and community resource people in control of a part of education and disrupts understandings of Black communities and their histories commonly told from the perspective of people in dominant culture. In this way, a more well-rounded

understanding of Black history can be portrayed, whereby students who experience marginalization can influence the creation of new course content. This is not to indicate that the development of a Black history course will be an easy task. As demonstrated by the diverse ethnicities to which the students associate, Black history likely means different things to different people. As such, the goal of the development of this course would not be to tell the 'true' version of Black history, but to serve as a catalyst for students to integrate into the course questions outlined above such as: What information is missing from this course? What voices are not included? Who benefitted from the telling of this version of the story? and Who was placed at the disadvantage? (Kumashiro, 2000). This will minimize the extent to which individual experiences of oppression and multiple identities are denied. It will also contribute to students' critical understandings of curriculum and schooling, an essential aspect of education as advocated by Chomsky (2000), Zinn (2007), and others.

I feel that it is important to underline that doing this research and the subsequent co-development of a Black history course at DESTA and the Lion Wolf School is different than taking the same actions at a conventional school. Unlike conventional schools, the Lion Wolf School is explicitly finding ways to organize such that youth who have been excluded from schools are in control of their education. While the development of a Black history course at conventional schools by students and community members is an important endeavor, it will certainly not, in and of itself, drastically change other inequitable aspects of the school. In the words of Apple (1996):

> Lasting answers will require a much more searching set of economic, social, and political questions and a considerably more extensive restructuring of our social

> commitments [in the goal of] the democratization of our accepted ways of distributing and controlling jobs, benefits, education and power. (Apple, 1996, p. 70)

I believe that offering a Black history course is not a magic solution, and that doing so within a conventional school setting that systematically excludes students would be of little use unless there were changes that were simultaneously happening to end the exclusion and marginalization of students.

Similarly, while the research findings that I outline illustrate the significance of the development of a Black history course, the focus of this research is more precisely on the importance of such a course being co-developed by students and community members. Even more than this, I have approached this research as one example demonstrating that it is essential that *all* aspects of education be influenced by groups of people who have been marginalized and excluded from education. In this way, I feel that it is important to emphasize that I am not advocating that offering a Black history course, or even the process of students and community members co-developing a Black history course, will drastically change the school system. Rather, I am seeing this action as one step towards a different school system where people who are excluded are able to hold positions of decision-making power. This step must be accompanied by other initiatives that are simultaneously working to create broader change in the education system. This understanding draws from a social action orientation, an approach that, according to Shragge (2003) recognizes that:

> What is required is a balance between maintaining concrete struggles in which

people can learn to work collectively and build power and raising the broader political and social questions. The central challenge [is] to keep one eye on winning local, concrete struggles and the other eye on the broader picture, building bridges with the wider struggle. (p. 23)

Chapter 4: Conclusion

Through this research I learned a lot about inspiration. I learned that there was a lot of interest on the part of the youth to be able to take courses that were of more relevance to them, and also a lot of enthusiasm to be involved in the development of a Black history course. I also learned more about both the importance and the limitation of community-based work. The significance of community work was reflected in the environment at DESTA where what appeared to be happening, above and beyond youth working towards completing their high school diploma, was the building of relationships. Clichéd as it may appear, this was a place where people could come and get a warm welcome, food, and support. The limitations of this approach were articulated by some of the coordinators who indicated that all of their time was focused on immediate needs of the youth, and as such, they had little time for broader advocacy work.

Through this research, my understandings of what it means to work towards social justice have deepened, broadened, and become more complex. I have realized that teaching about issues of social injustice in the world could happen alongside many students' experiences of social injustice at school. This concretized issues of social justice for me, and moved these issues from the realm of learning about them to the reality of how these issues are lived. I was reminded of the many ways that we could try to work towards change (such as teaching about injustice) while not challenging, let alone changing, the roots of inequity.

Following this research, the program director at DESTA and I will be organizing a meeting with students at the Lion Wolf School, students from another local institution,

teachers, and community resource people to create an action plan regarding the co-development of an accredited Black history course. While this is in initial stages, we are planning that this course will be developed over the coming year and will be delivered by a teacher from a local school board in September 2010 at the Lion Wolf School. I will be involved in this work as a resource person, not to provide information about Black history, but to offer ideas about how this process can be approached such that it builds from the above-mentioned principles of educational justice. The driving force behind the longer-term goals of these next steps is to demonstrate the importance of many different parts of education being influenced by individuals and groups who have been excluded from education. As part of this process (which is not a part of this MA research) I will document the development and delivery of the course to further validate the importance of the influence by excluded groups on curriculum development and on all aspects of education. Also, the Minister of Cultural Communities at MELS will be informed of the course and subsequent actions will be taken to ensure that other teachers have access to the teaching material and information detailing the process, such that the course may be offered, and new courses can be co-developed, in other educational institutions.

It would be of great use for the process of the co-development of a course by students and community resource people to be documented, which would lead towards greater understandings of ways to influence course development and, in turn, create broader educational change. Better understanding the context and factors that enable such processes could lead to increased awareness of ways that issues of educational inequity can be worked on within Quebec.

Throughout this research, I have come face to face with the inherent paradox of working towards educational justice while I increase my own educational credentials. I have struggled with this irony, made slightly more humorous and simultaneously more real by a comment from a student at the Lion Wolf School. Looking over the ethics form at the onset of this research, Jimar said, "A Masters degree! Sure, we'll help you get that Masters degree". While clarifying that this research would be benefitting myself (the researcher) as well as the participants, Jimar was also extending a welcome: we will help you get what you are going for. I hold no misconceptions that working towards educational justice is most effectively done through research such as that in which I have engaged. Rather this research has allowed for a tremendous amount of learning for me and has structured next steps that I will take as I work to create change in the educational system.

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Appendixes

Appendix A: Guide for interview with the program director

1. What has been the historical evolution of Desta?

2. What are the policies of Desta?

3. What is the relationship between Desta and the Lion Wolf School?

4. What are the limitations to the course content currently offered?

5. What feedback do you get from the students in regards to the course content currently offered?

6. What concrete suggestions for changes to this course content do you have? What courses would you like to see offered? What courses do you feel that students would be interested in taking?

7. What are the reasons for which you want to accredit other courses than those currently offered?

8. What questions do you have that I might be able to answer in my research into the process through which courses become accredited?

Appendix B: Guide for interview with the educational coordinator

1. What has been the historical evolution of the Lion Wolf School?

2. What are the goals of the Lion Wolf School?

3. What are the policies of the Lion Wolf School?

4. How is the Lion Wolf School funded?

5. What are future funding expectations?

6. What strategies have been used for recruitment of students?

7. What are the limitations to the course content currently offered?

8. What feedback do you get from the students in regards to the course content currently offered?

9. What concrete suggestions for changes to this course content do you have? What courses would you like to see offered? What courses do you feel that students would be interested in taking?

10. What are the reasons for which you want to accredit other courses than those currently offered?

11. What is your current understanding of the process through which courses become accredited?

12. What questions do you have I might be able to answer in my research into the process through which courses become accredited?

Appendix C: Guide for interview with the volunteer coordinator

1. What are the limitations to the course content currently offered?

2. What feedback do you get from the students in regards to the course content currently offered?

3. What concrete suggestions for changes to this course content do you have? What courses would you like to see offered? What courses do you feel that students would be interested in taking?

4. What are the reasons for which you want to accredit other courses than those currently offered?

5. What questions do you have that I might be able to answer in my research into the process through which courses become accredited?

Appendix D: Guide for interviews with students

1. What is your involvement with the Lion Wolf School?

2. How long have you been involved in the Lion Wolf School?

3. Why did you choose to become involved in the Lion Wolf School?

4. What are some of your goals in being apart of the Lion Wolf School?

5. What subjects are you learning about through the Lion Wolf School?

6. What has been your experience of taking the courses offered at the Lion Wolf School?

7. What subjects would you like to learn about through the courses offered at the Lion Wolf School?

8. What are your other particular interests? Could you imagine ways that learning about these interests could happen at the Lion Wolf School?

9. What is your cultural background?

10. Are there parts of your cultural background that you would like to learn more about? Could you imagine ways that this could happen at the Lion Wolf School?

11. Why would you like for there to be different courses then those that are currently offered?