

SSH VISIONING SESSION
MAY 31, 2024

BLACK-LED RESEARCH NETWORK INITIATIVE



KIAS | Kule Institute
for Advanced Study



**UNIVERSITY
OF ALBERTA**

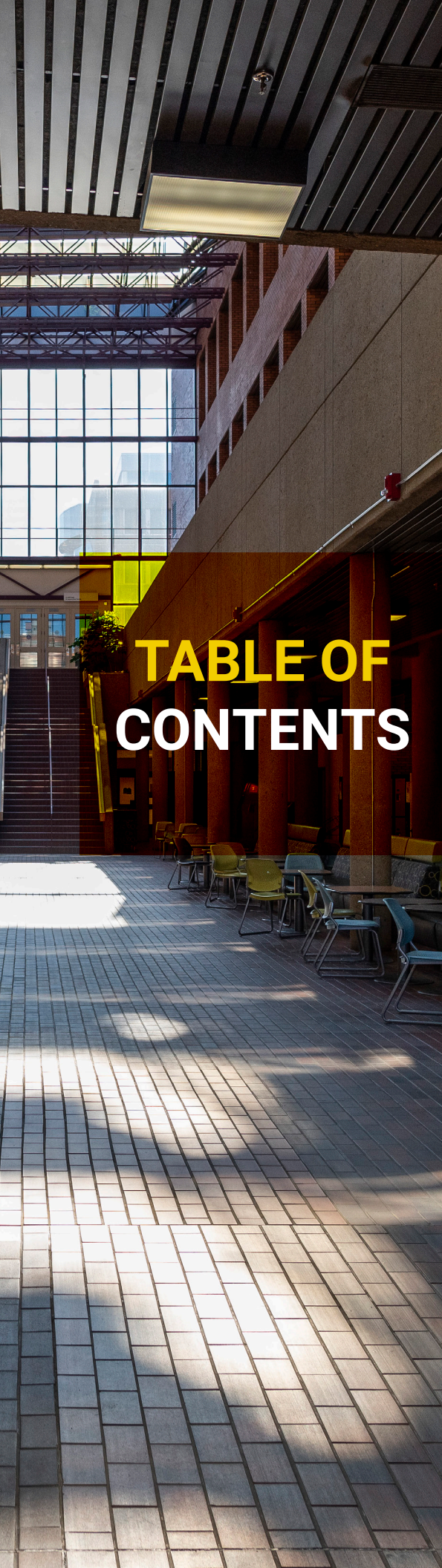


TABLE OF CONTENTS

03

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION

04

THE SESSION

SESSION 1 REFLECTION

ISSUE IDENTIFICATION / EXPLORATION

09

IDEATION AND EXPLORATION

12

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

REFERENCES

13

APPENDIX A

18

APPENDIX B

21

APPENDIX C

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an overview of the second phase of the Visioning Exercise conducted on May 31, 2024, for the Black-led Research Network Initiative (BRNI). The exercise was key in the ongoing efforts to foster a supportive and innovative Black research community at the University of Alberta. This report serves as a comprehensive review for all BRNI members, including both those present and unable to attend, highlighting the collective effort and the significance of everyone's unique and valuable contribution.

The document details the day's processes, structured around human-centered design thinking, and addresses the felt needs and barriers to researcher success within BRNI community. The session, held in partnership with the Kule Institute for Advanced Studies (KIAS) aimed to develop discipline-specific visions and directions for diverse communities within BRNI.

Throughout the session, participants engaged in insightful discussions, focusing on key themes such as workload management, resource access, diversity, and systemic structures. These discussions shed light on the complex challenges faced by Black researchers within academic settings, highlighting the need to address systemic inequities and promote inclusivity. While the session centred the experiences of social sciences and humanities researchers, this report offers valuable insights and guidance for a continued collaborative journey for all members of BRNI including graduate students and early career scholars from other disciplines across campus.

INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes the contributions from members and supporters of the Black-led Research Network Initiative (BRNI) during the second Visioning Session on May 31, 2024. Participants used a facilitated human-centered design approach to identify felt needs and barriers to success for early career scholars specifically in social sciences and humanities discipline areas within BRNI community. The session employed the iceberg model approach, which examined root causes and leverage points for driving systemic change.

BACKGROUND

On May 31, 2024, BRNI members in the social sciences and humanities discipline areas were invited to participate in an extension of the October 2023 broader visioning work. This session was designed to surface key barriers to achieving the BRNI vision:

The Black-led Research Network Initiative (BRNI) cultivates excellence, fostering a thriving ecosystem of Black-led research and innovation at the University of Alberta. Through local, national, and international collaboration, research, administration,



engagement, and professional development, BRNI creates the space to empower Black researchers and scholars, elevate their work, and amplify Black perspectives, enriching our university, communities, and the world. Through rigorous research and mentorship, BRNI aspires to create a sustainable Black research community that drives positive change, secures funding, and inspires a future where Black excellence thrives in academia and beyond (BRNI, 2023).

To catalyze this work, BRNI partnered with the Kule Institute for Advanced Study (KIAS), a major endowed research institute based at the University of Alberta. KIAS supports research in the Social Sciences, Humanities, and Arts at the University of Alberta, focusing on projects with potential national or international recognition. This partnership is a key

part of our strategy to foster a thriving ecosystem of Black-led research and innovation at the University of Alberta.

THE SESSION

The Visioning Exercise was led by Wayne Thomas, an external professional facilitator and supported by two graduate students from the University of Alberta, Sewordor Toklo and Samuel Iwuchukwu. Wayne Thomas, who also facilitated the October 2023 Visioning Session for BRNI, led this discussion utilizing human-centered design methods. This approach focused on identifying the needs and barriers to researcher success among BRNI members, including early career scholars, specifically those within the Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) discipline areas. This visioning session aimed to provide university research leaders with priority initiatives and pilot project ideas that can be developed into practical and impactful tools to support the success of Black researchers on campus.

The session was attended by 14 participants from the University of Alberta community, including faculty members, allies, and graduate students. Dr. Michael O’Driscoll, Director of the Faculty of Arts at the Kule Institute for Advanced Studies (KIAS), represented the Institute, offering assurance of their continued support for BRNI.

Workshop participants were advised early on in the session that the purpose of the gathering was to: understand the needs and barriers, explore support opportunities, build community, practice inclusive design, and develop innovative strategies. The session then went on to collect the lived experiences and opinions of BRNI members present through a collaborative and exploratory dialogue.

SESSION 1 REFLECTION

The session began by revisiting the personas created from the empathy exercise conducted during the October 2023 workshop (see Appendix A). Participants were asked to think about these individual personas as they progressed through the day’s discussions. A package was presented to participants with a recap of each of the five personas generated in the October 2023 session. This step allowed participants to reconnect with the “who” of the workshop. This work is being done for BRNI members whose lived experiences are partly represented by the personas generated in the initial session.

ISSUE IDENTIFICATION / EXPLORATION

The day’s activities were structured based on the Iceberg model with Z.I.P analysis (Weinlick, 2022), which is a systems-thinking tool used to approach complex challenges and seek solutions that can drive meaningful change collectively. This approach encourages a deep exploration of potential underlying structures and root causes of the barriers facing BRNI members. Participants were invited to focus on four key elements—Events, Patterns, Systemic Structures, and Mental Models. In small groups, participants had in-depth discussions on each of the four elements and shared their highlights back to the larger group.

EVENTS

At their respective tables, BRNI members were encouraged to identify events related to the needs and barriers to the Black researcher’s success. For the purpose of this workshop, “events” were defined as: surface-level issues and challenges seen, heard, and experienced around the needs and barriers to the success of Black researchers. This involved considering what they have observed or heard from those around them and reflecting on their personal observations and experiences in their day-to-day lives and work. Through this exercise, the following themes emerged from the events identified by the group. An itemized version of the responses is found in Appendix B.

A. Workload *Management* and Time *Constraints*

Participants focused on the challenges related to managing workload and time effectively. They expressed concerns about having too many tasks to handle, which led to feelings of being overwhelmed and stretched too thin. The overlap of work and insufficient time in which to complete it contributed to high stress and made it difficult to prioritize tasks effectively. As Black researchers, these feelings were amplified by pressures to break down systemic barriers through mentorship of junior scholars and lead or support institutional Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) initiatives.

B. Resource and Support Needs

Participants focused on the challenges related to accessing resources and support for their research endeavors. They highlighted difficulties in securing funding for their projects and pointed out the lack of information and guidance available to them about

general research supports and exclusive opportunities for them as Black researchers. Additionally, their reliance on personal connections for funding information emphasized the need for more transparent and accessible avenues for support.

C. Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

Participants emphasized the challenges regarding diversity and inclusion within academic settings. Checkbox approaches to EDI perpetuate systemic barriers to meaningful change and support within academic institutions. They often result in superficial compliance rather than substantive change. These token efforts fail to address the underlying systemic issues and do not lead to meaningful inclusion or equity for Black researchers. As EDI initiatives are often very broad, they can also paper over the unique challenges and opportunities faced by Black researchers. They expressed concerns about the lack of equity in hiring practices, which affects the composition of research teams and restricts opportunities for collaboration. Furthermore, participants described feelings of being tokenized and undervalued, which significantly contributed to a sense of exclusion and dissatisfaction among Black researchers in academia. Some institutional policies meant to address EDI are often more rhetorical than practical, and without genuine commitment and actionable steps, these policies fail to bring about real meaningful change and can even contribute to cynicism and frustration among Black researchers. These sentiments reveal an urgent need for comprehensive efforts to address systemic barriers and promote genuine inclusivity and belonging for Black researchers within research environments.

PATTERNS

Following the examination of events, participants went on to identify patterns by considering recurring themes or trends among these observations. Using the question “what keeps happening?” participants reflected on their experience and shared the following insights, which have been themed and summarized.

A. Lack of Access to Space and Resource

Participants noted the devaluation of SSH research on campus (and beyond). This manifests itself restricted funding and support opportunities for SSH research in general and Black researchers in those fields, in particular. The uneven access to research support exacerbates existing disparities, creating obstacles to advancing Black researchers in academia. Poor

maintenance of facilities, crucial for conducive research environments, was highlighted. The absence of communal spaces to support collaboration and mentorship were also cited as additional obstacles, contributing to feelings of isolation and hindering the advancement of BRNI. Isolation and lack of communal spaces hinder the development of a supportive academic community as physical spaces for collaboration and social interaction are vital for fostering a sense of belonging and mutual support among researchers. Given the concentration of many Black scholars in career stages and disciplines that are low on the university’s capital spending priority list, the lack of investment further impedes the productivity and morale of Black scholars. Limited access to travel funds to conduct and mobilize research and a general lack of interest in the work of Black researchers makes for a hostile research environment. Disparities in opportunities for professional development was also noted. Stagnation in research funding and culture also adds to the difficulties faced by Black researchers in advancing their academic careers.

B. Challenges in Academic Recognition

Within this identified pattern, participants emphasized the challenges with academic recognition faced by Black researchers. The lack of acknowledgment in tenure, promotion, and awards processes exacerbates feelings of otherness and inferiority among some Black researchers. They struggle with aligning their personal research interests with academic expectations, facing pressure to conform to institutional norms and expectations that are misaligned with Black-led and Black-focused research. BRNI members also shared that they face pressure to divert research agendas away from their areas of expertise, while instances of white researchers taking over opportunities intended for Black researchers further contributes to the disparities. Barriers such as lack of appreciation for Black-led research from funding bodies and threats to equity, diversity, and inclusion initiatives add to the challenges. Additionally, issues such as imposter syndrome, lack of recognition for Black-led research, and being tone-policed when raising concerns further contribute to a challenging academic environment for Black researchers. Moreover, the exclusion of certain topics and works that do not align with the colonial models of the university adds to feelings of marginalization and exclusion.

SYSTEMIC STRUCTURES

Next, participants explored the systemic structures

in play, acknowledging that certain frameworks exist which uphold the status quo. They investigated what could be driving the observed patterns, considering different structural elements such as physical, organizational, policy or political, and ritual or habitual factors.

A. University Institutions and Policies

Participants spoke to the entrenched systemic barriers within academic institutions that disproportionately impact the advancement of Black researchers. First, things like biased peer review processes, often influenced by historical colonial norms, contribute to the marginalization of research from diverse perspectives, hindering its recognition and dissemination. Secondly, the lack of adequate representation of Black scholars in evaluation committees and leadership roles can perpetuate structural inequities. Additionally, disparities in funding allocation, where Black-led research initiatives receive disproportionately fewer resources, further exacerbate the challenges faced by Black researchers. Lastly, institutional policies inadequately addressing systemic racism fail to create an inclusive environment conducive to the success of Black scholars.

B. Process Challenges, Inefficiencies, and Cutbacks

Participants raised concerns with the functioning of the university bureaucracy. Institutional changes, delays, and a lack of transparency in decision-making processes contribute to a challenging environment. The underrepresentation of racialized individuals in leadership positions in university and government further perpetuate systemic biases and hinder equitable opportunities for Black researchers.

The lack of transparency in financial matters creates an opaque budgetary process hindering clarity and accountability. Financial constraints often lead to cuts or reductions in programs and support services that are essential for fostering an inclusive academic environment. Bureaucratic inefficiency compounds these issues, creating additional hurdles for Black researchers. Complex and slow-moving administrative processes can make implementing changes and accessing necessary support difficult.

Additionally, bureaucratic inefficiencies within academic structures were identified as another barrier to progress, leading to decision-making and resource allocation delays. While informal support structures may emerge to fill gaps left by institutional

shortcomings, participants noted the limitation of informal approaches in providing comprehensive and ongoing support and guidance for career advancement.

C. Intersectionality and Discrimination

Participants emphasized the intersectional challenges Black researchers encounter in navigating academic spaces, shedding light on some of the discrimination they often confront. This discrimination appears in various forms, such as biases that favor academic credentials over lived experiences, and the deeply entrenched systemic racism evident in institutional norms and practices. These discriminatory patterns create additional barriers to advancing and recognizing Black scholars within academia.

MENTAL MODELS

To further investigate the root causes and engage in some sense-making, the Mental Models stage of the Iceberg exercise asked participants to reflect on the possibility that certain pervasive mindsets and ideologies maintain the status quo. They explored how attitudes, beliefs, morals, expectations, and values contribute to the perpetuation of these structures, fostering a culture that sustains the status quo. The following themes emerged from the discussion acknowledging that often, human mental models are the beliefs that are learned subconsciously or collected along the way through life. These models are gathered from family, friends, environment, society, and life experiences, and are likely things that people are unaware that they hold.

A. Structural Inequities and Oppressive Systems

Participants delved into the deep-seated structural inequities and oppressive systems that often permeate academic institutions and broader societal frameworks. The pervasive presence of anti-Black systemic racism, patriarchal structures, tokenism, and white privilege emerged as prominent systemic barriers disproportionately impacting Black researchers. The dynamics of racial capitalism and colorism were also highlighted as increasing the existing disparities and perpetuating the marginalization experienced within academic spaces. Friends and enablers of white supremacy, whether overt or covert, also contribute to maintaining and perpetuating racist structures and attitudes. These individuals and groups can influence policies and behaviors that marginalize Black researchers.

A lack of commitment to pluralism can exclude diverse voices and perspectives, stifling innovation and progress. In addition to these systemic challenges, the discussion also addressed the psychological toll inflicted by such oppressive systems. Racial battle fatigue was identified as a significant factor contributing to the strain experienced by Black researchers as they navigate these environments. Institutional racism also remains a pervasive issue, affecting policies, practices, and the overall culture of academic institutions. This form of racism is embedded in the structures and systems, leading to unequal opportunities and treatment for Black researchers across the institution.

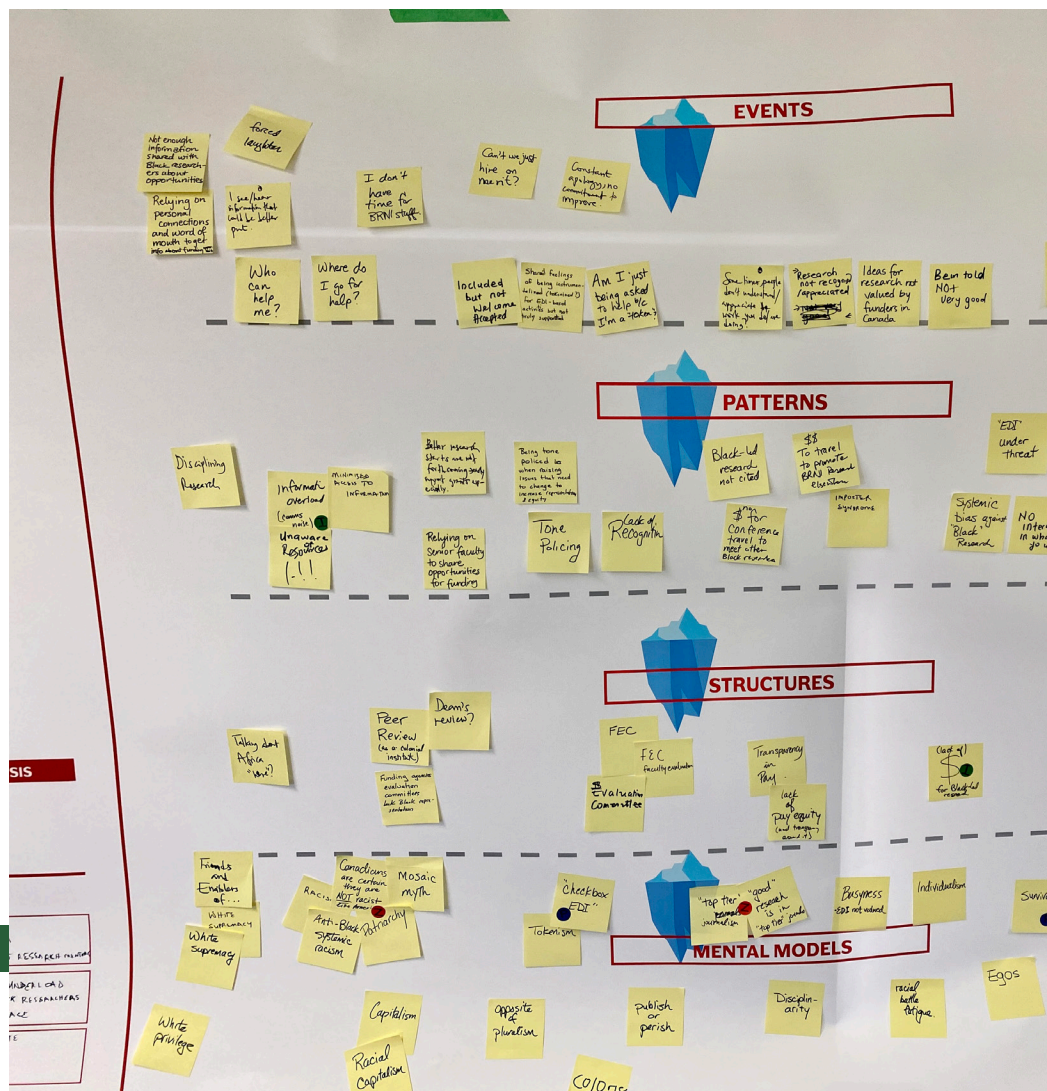
B. Academic Norms and Pressures

Participants highlighted the academic norms, pressures, and institutional priorities that shape the experiences of Black researchers. The emphasis on publishing in “top tier” journals reinforces the pressure to conform to colonial academic norms and impress editorial boards that are, more often than not, dominated by non-Black scholars. This “publish or perish” mentality may disproportionately affect Black researchers, especially when equity, diversity, and inclusion initiatives are undervalued both by faculty evaluation committees and editorial boards. Additionally, it was suggested that corporate and neoliberal agendas may prioritize profit over addressing systemic inequities within academia, multiplying the challenges faced by marginalized groups like Black scholars.

C. Societal Ideologies

Participants highlighted the prevalence of Western cultural beliefs that shape attitudes and behaviors within academic environments. Individualism and ego-driven behaviors may perpetuate systemic biases and discriminatory practices. Neoliberalism, in particular, can hinder collective efforts to address systemic issues. A focus on individual achievement and responsibility often ignores the structural barriers and group-based discrimination faced by Black

researchers, making it harder to implement supportive and inclusive policies. Ego-driven behaviors contribute to a competitive and exclusionary environment. When academic success is linked to personal ego and status, it can foster a culture that marginalizes and undermines the contributions of Black researchers. Additionally, institutional racism and societal beliefs about race and diversity highlight the need for addressing deeply ingrained prejudices and promoting inclusivity within academic spaces. The myth of Canada being a harmonious, egalitarian, “mosaic” society papers over many of the inequalities faced by Black people, including researchers. This myth can lead to complacency and resistance to acknowledging and addressing the systemic inequalities that exist



within universities. The belief that Canadians are not as racist as Americans is an incorrect concept that can lead to denial and minimization of the racial issues that do exist in Canada. This complacency can hinder meaningful discussions and actions aimed at addressing racism within academic environments like the University of Alberta.

The impact of these ideologies and beliefs on the experiences of Black researchers highlights the importance of challenging these norms and fostering a more inclusive academic environment.

Z.I.P ANALYSIS

To help converge on some leverage points for further discussion, participants grouped all of the generated ideas into common themes on the iceberg canvas. Once grouped and themed, they selected some focal points for continuing the discussion. The Z.I.P analysis involved three main areas:

- **Zoom In (Z)** - Ideas or aspects that could be magnified and explored more deeply.
- **Innovation Opportunities (I)** – Potential ways to intervene and improve the system.
- **Problem Areas (P)** – Tricky areas that would be difficult to navigate and require careful attention.

Groups were asked to identify up to three points for zooming, three for innovation, and three for problem areas. While the remainder of this report will focus on the final selected leverage points from the Z.I.P analysis, the full content of the canvasses and each idea shared can be found in Appendix B.

The following leverage points were identified by participants:

A. Zoom In (Z) Issues

- **Uneven Access to Research Support:** There is a significant disparity in the availability and distribution of research support among scholars. This includes access to funding, resources, and information about opportunities. Black researchers, in particular, often face obstacles that hinder their ability to secure necessary support for their work, impacting their research productivity and career progression.
- **Unexpected Success of Black Scholars:** The surprise or disbelief when a Black scholar achieves significant success reveals underlying biases and low expectations.
- **Lack of Diversity in Hiring:** The insufficient representation of Black scholars in hiring practices can lead to less inclusive and diverse research teams. This lack of diversity can limit the range of perspectives and ideas within research projects,

reducing their overall quality and innovation.

- **Racism and Patriarchy:** Systemic racism and patriarchal structures present within academia create significant barriers for Black researchers, particularly Black women and non-binary members of our communities. These issues can manifest in various forms, from microaggressions and discriminatory practices to unequal opportunities and support.
- **Top-Tier Journals:** The emphasis on publishing in top-tier journals can be exclusionary, often favoring established researchers and certain types of research over others. Black researchers may find it challenging to navigate this landscape due to biases in peer review processes and limited access to networks that facilitate high-profile publications.
- **Limited Chances for Mentorship:** Mentorship opportunities are often limited for Black researchers, hindering their professional development and career advancement. Effective mentorship is critical for providing guidance, support, and networking opportunities.

B. Innovation Opportunity (I) Issues

- **Information Overload and Underload:** The dual problem of information overload and underload adds to the list of significant challenges. While some researchers struggle with an overwhelming amount of information that is difficult to manage and prioritize, others face a scarcity or lack of critical information, particularly regarding available funding opportunities and resources.
- **Lack of Funding for Black Researchers:** Black researchers often face difficulties in securing adequate funding for their projects. This lack of financial support can impede their ability to conduct meaningful research and advance their careers.
- **No Black Research Space:** The absence of designated physical and virtual spaces for Black researchers to work, collaborate, and support each other can lead to feelings of isolation and a lack of community.
- **Young Scholars Who Feel Alienated:** Young scholars, particularly those from marginalized backgrounds, often feel isolated within academic institutions. This alienation can stem from a lack of representation, mentorship, and support.

- **Unequal Reward System:** The current reward systems in academia often fail to recognize and adequately reward the contributions of Black researchers. This inequality can discourage participation and diminish motivation.
- **Informal Structure:** Informal structures within academic institutions, such as unspoken norms and networks, often exclude Black researchers. This is particularly true for first-generation university graduates. These structures can impact access to opportunities and support.

important work among Black researchers.

- **Budgetary Allocation / Lack of Support:** Inadequate budgetary allocations and lack of institutional support also present significant challenges for Black researchers. Limited funding and resources can hinder their ability to conduct quality research, secure necessary materials, and access opportunities for professional growth and development.

D. Focus Points

C. Problem Area (P) Issues

- **Ideal Researcher is White:** There is a pervasive and problematic perception within academia that the “ideal” researcher fits a certain profile, and it is predominantly white. This stereotype perpetuates racial biases and marginalizes Black researchers, affecting their opportunities for advancement and recognition.
- **Survivance:** Survivance refers to making light of serious issues as a coping mechanism. This often occurs among Black researchers who use humor or downplay significant challenges to cope with the systemic racism and bias they face. While this can be a way to manage stress, it also highlights the need for deeper structural changes to create a genuinely supportive and inclusive environment.
- **Checkbox EDI:** Checkbox EDI refers to superficial diversity and inclusion initiatives that exist only to meet basic requirements or quotas, without making meaningful changes. These initiatives often fail to address the root causes of inequity and do not provide substantial support or opportunities for marginalized groups.
- **Capitalist Culture / Neoliberal Agenda:** The dominance of capitalist and neoliberal values in academia often prioritizes profit and efficiency over equity and inclusion. This culture can undermine efforts to support Black researchers and devalue research that does not align with these priorities.
- **Government Not Supportive of SSH Research:** Political and governmental bodies often show limited support for SSH research, which disproportionately affects researchers in these fields. Combined with threats to eliminate EDI structures, this lack of support can result in reduced funding, fewer opportunities, and diminished recognition for

Participants were asked as a group to identify issues from the ZIP analysis that they felt they wanted to focus on and begin generating possible solutions. The selections could come from any area within the Z.I.P analysis as all areas were equally eligible for further exploration.

Participants reached consensus on the importance of the following priorities:

- **No Available Black Research Space**
- **Limited Chances to Get Research Mentorship**
- **Young Scholars Who Feel Alienated**
- **Unequal Reward System**
- **Ideal Researcher is White**

IDEATION AND EXPLORATION

HOW MIGHT WE (HMW)

Next participants were asked to carry out a “How Might We” (HMW) exercise using the five selected topic areas. HMW questions help initiate brainstorming on the challenge at hand. By focusing on specific aspects or leverage points of the challenge, these questions help frame the problem in a way that encourages innovative thinking and invites creativity and possibility for solutions.

The following are the exploratory HMW questions chosen by workshop participants. For a complete listing of all of the HMW questions generated during the session, see Appendix C.

A. No Available Black Research Space

- How might we use space as an indicator of institutional priority?
- How might we leverage this movement to force the admin to cede space?

B. Limited Chances to Get Research Mentorship:

- How might we create a mentorship ecosystem?

C. Young Scholars Who Feel Alienated:

- How might we create more welcoming environments for young scholars to feel more included?
- How might we ensure that young black scholars feel welcome, supported, and valued?

D. Unequal Reward System:

- How might we create a more unbiased reward system in support of more equality?

E. Ideal Researcher is White:

- None selected (see Appendix C for inventory of questions).

Note: That while no HMW questions were selected from this final category of “Ideal Researcher is White” for further exploration during this workshop, this is not a reflection of the level of importance. Selections were made based on group consensus and allotted time.

SOLUTIONING

Following the HMW questions, participants engaged in an ideation session. This phase involved rapidly generating ideas to address the selected HMW questions from the previous exercise.

Using a rapid ideation technique, participants generated as many ideas as they could think up to potentially answer the selected HMW question.

A. Leveraging Space as an Indicator of Institutional Priority. How might we use space as an indicator of institutional priority? How might we leverage this movement to force the admin to cede space?

- Mobilize space resources to ensure flexibility and accessibility.
- Start with virtual spaces and gradually transition to physical ones.
- Pursue funding opportunities like Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI) grants to secure physical spaces.
- Engage Black faculty and researchers in leadership roles to advocate for space.
- Issue open letters and commitments to prioritize space allocation.



- Host events celebrating black scholarship to highlight institutional support.
- Secure endorsements from key university leaders.
- Propose initiatives tied to institutional charters and commitments.
- Utilize space audits to advocate for dedicated BRNI spaces.
- Organize regular meetings and workshops to empower Black academics.

B. Creating a Mentorship Ecosystem. How might we create a mentorship ecosystem?

- Establish BRNI programs in high schools to engage students early.
- Collaborate with high school teachers who are already supportive.
- Adopt an Afrocentric approach to mentorship initiatives.
- Establish an agency with dedicated staff to coordinate programs.
- Shift program management away from faculty to enhance efficiency.
- Foster mentorship coalitions with existing professors.
- Organize faculty or departmental “Open Day” events to connect with students.
- Provide funds to match researchers with mentors elsewhere.
- Incorporate mentorship into productivity metrics.
- Host seminars tailored for early-stage researchers.
- Establish Black Graduate groups at all academic levels.
- Implement a buddy system for Black undergraduate students.
- Facilitate lunchtime sessions for scholars to share their work.
- Build upon existing reports on advancing black youth mentorship.

C. Creating More Welcoming Environments for Young Scholars. How might we create more welcoming environments for young scholars to feel more included? How might we ensure that young black scholars feel welcome, supported, and valued?

- Develop a virtual platform for networking and socializing.
- Establish mentorship programs involving senior and junior faculty and graduate students.
- Cultivate a sustainable mentorship culture through volunteer participation.
- Facilitate central professional development sessions for young scholars.
- Formulate welcome committees to integrate newcomers.
- Provide assistance with grant applications and funding opportunities.
- Collaborate with student associations to address specific needs.
- Promote proactive hiring and celebrate the achievements of black scholars.
- Encourage informal networking opportunities, such as coffee chats.
- Establish dedicated gathering spaces for black scholars.
- Compile an information booklet with resources for students and scholars.

D. Creating More Unbiased Reward Systems. How might we create a more unbiased reward system in support of more equality?

- Diversify reward systems to address existing inequalities.
- Research criteria used by other institutions to inform equitable practices.
- Promote accessibility to rewards through multiple channels.
- Advocate for equity policies across student and faculty reward systems.
- Support research initiatives to evaluate and improve existing reward structures.
- Define and audit current reward systems to identify areas for improvement.
- Restructure Faculty Evaluation Committees to mitigate racial biases.
- Provide guidelines and training for committee members to ensure fairness.

- Develop support mechanisms for research funding applications.
- Introduce merit-based point systems to evaluate contributions accurately.

Note: That this ideation activity brought the workshop to a close and participants did not have any remaining workshop time to explore or prioritize these ideas further.

An additional workshop would be for prototyping, exploration, and a building out of the ideas generated above.

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

The ideas generated in this report require further examination for commonalities, overlap, feasibility, and fit. The BRNI leadership team will take this information away, and together with KIAS they will consider which ideas feasibly, viably, and desirably fit within the scope and mandate of the two groups to help establish and strengthen partnership.

The contributions gathered through this workshop along with the personas and the vision statement generated in the October 2023 workshop can now serve as a foundation for future exploratory conversations with BRNI members in the social sciences and humanities.

Ideas can be revisited, remixed, and re-explored within different timeframes, contexts, and using different lenses to encourage sense-making.

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Weinlick, B. (2022, December). Iceberg systems mapping tool to identify leverage points for change

APPENDIX A

Jani - (created from **Jamaica** and **Nigeria**) is a newly hired career researcher and member of the faculty. Jeni is Smart, misconceived and unconventional scholar.

Think:

- Under-qualified
- The academic was not built for me/my people

Hear:

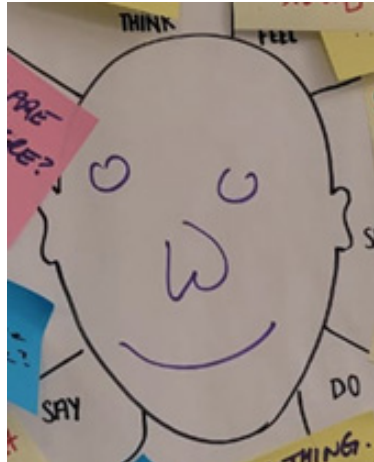
- Why are you here?
- You don't belong here
- You are not smart
- You are so articulate
- Your research is not traditional
- Where are you from
- Concerns not central to academia
- There are other groups to consider

Say:

- Nothing!
- I will thrive
- There must be a way
- I have God
- I want to see more like me

Hopes:

- Transformation
- Success
- Community
- Growth
- Upward mobility
- Acceptance



Feel:

- Exhaustion
- Annoyed
- Alone

See:

- Structural/Systemic barriers
- Whiteness
- Patriarchy
- Colonialism
- Racism
- Sexism
- Opportunities and challenges
- Other progressing in their careers
- Favouritism
- Engagement
- Empty hallways

Do:

- Nothing
- Emotional labour
- Search for community
- Connect with people
- Overwork

Fears:

- Barriers
- Isolation
- Change of government
- Being found to be short of expectations
- Exit of critical actors
- Rejection
- Conservative

Patrick - There are a multitude of hats worn by Patrick. Patrick is a member of the Francophone community, in educational systems, and predominantly black. He is of African origin, a black student who starts on campus where there is a little visibility and non-recognition. Patrick is a diaspora, yearning for inclusion and mentorship, seeking community and leadership from all surrounding members both students and professors.

Think:

- Keeps a low profile
- Doesn't want to get in trouble

Hear:

- Hears about other students getting RA scholarships
- Hears about funding opportunities but does not get any
- Not competent, hears this from supports, teachers, students
- Hears this is not the way to do things

Say:

- Says sorry, questions himself afraid he is not making the right move
- Says he's not qualified and that he's not good enough

Hopes:

- Recognition of his hard work,
- for an inclusive future,
- They will be able to realize his abilities



Feel:

- Unheard,
- Invisible,
- Isolated,
- Overwhelmed,
- Ignored

See:

- See others but doesn't see himself because there has been no guidance
- Injustices committed against
- Sees student working together excluding him
- Injustices committed against them
- Students socially gathering, able to gain community

Do:

- Works hard,
- Tries to adapt + fit in

Fears:

- Not being heard enough,
- Won't be given an opportunity to excel,
- Burn out

Hope - Hope is an early career academic seeking to better integrate into the campus community.

Think:

- Great idea
- The challenges ahead
- Potential push back (from others)
- Hoping for success
- Awareness (of institution)
- Possibilities

Hear:

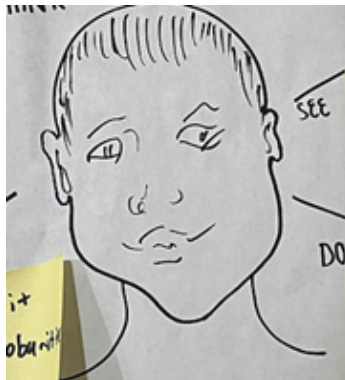
- Opportunities and possibility
- Equity seeking and equity deserving
- Mixed signals
- Curiosity

Say:

- Is it collaborative?
- Will this work?
- This is it (optimistic)

Hopes:

- Recognition (of individual and collective achievement)
- Respect
- Continuation of support
- Impact (of BRNI)
- Success (individual and group)



Feel:

- Relief (finally!!)
- Engaged
- Excitement (right now)

See:

- Community
- Potential
- Personal development

Do:

- Spread the word
- Mentorship/menteeship
- Joining or creating initiatives
- Giving back

Fears:

- Stereotype and stigma
- Frustration
- Lack of support
- Isolation/being alone

Sam - Sam is an early researcher, probably Postdoc researcher whose mother is Canadian and Father from Africa. Sam is trying to find his foot around research and integrating into the community in this new research domain. He is in a multidisciplinary research area, probably social sciences and is not certain what opportunities exist for him as a black researcher in the university. He's also seeing a few people with his skin color and is looking for how to connect with them.

Think:

- How do I fit into BRNI
- BRNI is just another thing I need to do
- More collaboration across universities

Hear:

- Hear a verbal communication
- Hears mentorship request from students
- Hears about EDI
- Hears questions of what can I do
- Hears about evolving changes

Say:

- Express reservations
- Ask questions

Hopes:

- Hopes it works
- Belonging EDI
- More than a fad



Feel:

- Unsure if this would work
- Some solidarity at BRNI events like this
- An obligation to their black community

See:

- Increase of Black Faculty and Black Graduate Students
- Uncertainties of doing research
- Commitments onto Black advancements
- Sees the pressure to mentor undergraduates and graduate students

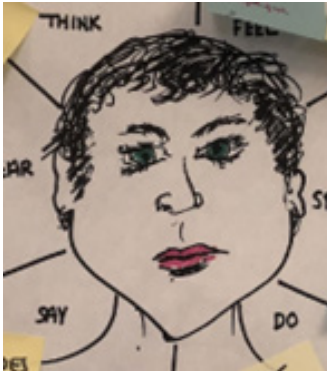
Do:

- Bring someone with them
- Come test the waters
- Sign-up for newsletters

Fears:

- Not enough funding
- Lip service
- Non sustainable support

Amaka – Amaka’s dad is from Nigeria and mom is Black-Canadian. Her mom came to Canada as a refugee from Somalia. Amaka is multilingual. Due to her academic prowess, she was given a scholarship to study in the USA. Amaka is in her early career at the University of Alberta.

<p>Think:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity for the future, will it work? Hope this succeed, hope it is not dysfunctional, I have heard this before. 		<p>Feel:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unsure but hope, overwhelmed because of few Black mentors and colleagues, suspicious, optimistic, curious, excited, hopeful, cynical, jaded, hesitant
<p>Hear:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black values, collaboration, Black joy/hope, complexity, she is only hired because of EDI quota, Is this Tokenistic? Finally the white privilege is challenged. 		<p>See:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited opportunity, community, solidarity, community and Black life, opportunity to collaborate in the Black community.
<p>Say:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will this work? What interests are represented here? Where does she start from? Nothing 		<p>Do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect on how to contribute, she is not sure what she is going to do
<p>Hopes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More black led research collaboration, connections, create network, that is really the start of a good thing, solidarity and no in-fighting, to get funds for research, empowerment of the entire community, success of the initiative growth and opportunity 		<p>Fears:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of support for more recruitment and retention, is this a joke? obstacles, Money and FAD will end, white capture, lack of sustainability; tokenism and propaganda; regression and lack of institutional support; lack of solidarity; infighting

APPENDIX B

Below is a themed and itemized listing of the responses provided by BRNI workshop participants for the events, patterns, systemic structures, and mental models portion of the session using the iceberg model.

EVENTS	
Theme	List of specific observed and experienced events
Workload Management and Time Constraints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overlap of work • Being spread thin • Not enough time • Feeling overwhelmed by the multitude of tasks and responsibilities • Juggling multiple roles and commitments simultaneously
Resource and Support Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publishing resource materials • Writing a quality grant proposal • Inadequate information shared with Black researchers about opportunities • Feeling unsupported and lacking guidance in navigating funding opportunities
Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Checkbox EDI • Lack of diversity in hiring, leading to fewer research teams • Shared feelings of being instrumentalized in EDI-based activities without genuine support • Feeling excluded or not welcomed within academic environments • Concerns about being tokenized and not valued for expertise • Instances of receiving negative feedback without commitment to improvement • Questioning the merit-based hiring process and feeling undervalued • Some of what we consider as policy to address EDI are rhetoric
PATTERNS	
Theme	List of specific observed and experienced patterns
Lack of Access to Space and Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Devaluing of social science and humanities research • Uneven access to research support • Isolation and lack of communal space • Things keep changing at the university • Constant delays (e.g., HR hiring) • Lack of transparency in academia • No or low color diversity in leadership/government • Lack of representation • Lack of travel funds to promote BRNI elsewhere • Better research starts are not coming yearly due to lack of access to support grants • Lack of interest in what you do • Research funding and culture stagnant

Challenges in Academic Recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overwhelmed by information • Lack of meaningful action behind, e.g., EDI • Disconnect between personal research interests and academic expectations • Not always encouraged to study what I want to do • Some topics not considered to be 'academic' • Some works do not fit the colonial models of the university • Researchers have to conform to what the university wants • Pressure to divert research agenda away from Black researchers • White researchers taking over Black researchers • Black-led research not cited • TRI-Council Barriers (Lack of appreciation for Black-led research) • EDI under threat • Imposter syndrome • Lack of recognition • Being tone-policed when raising issues
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SYSTEMIC STRUCTURES

Theme	List of potential systemic structures driving observed patterns
University Institutions and Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer review (As a colonial institution) • Funding agencies • Evaluation committees lack black representation • Deans Review • FEC (Faculty Evaluation) • Lack of pay equity • Lack of Funding for Black-led research • Lack of support for social science and humanities research from political or government entities • The university is firm on its policy and is not changing
Process Challenges, Inefficiencies, & Cutbacks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparency in payments/salaries • Lack of representation of racialized individuals in leadership positions • Lack of maintenance of spaces • Lack of support from support staff • Budgetary issues • Bureaucratic inefficiency • Diminishing opportunities and potential for mentorship • Informal support structures
Intersectionality and Discrimination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discrimination between life experience and university preference/demand

MENTAL MODELS

Theme	List of potential mental models perpetuating the notes systemic structures
Structural Inequities and Oppressive Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survivance • Anti-black systemic racism • Friends and Enablers of White Supremacy • Patriarchy • Tokenism • White Privilege • Capitalism • Racial Capitalism • Opposite of Pluralism • Egos • Racial Battle fatigue • Institutional racism • Colorism
Academic Norms and Pressures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good research is in top-tier journals • Publish or perish • Busyness- EDI not valued • Colonial impacts at the university and its kind of research • Capitalist culture prioritized over EDI • Corporate priorities/Neoliberal agenda at the university
Societal Ideologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individualism • Mosaic Myth • Institutional racism • Canadians are certain they are not as racist as Americans

APPENDIX C

HOW MIGHT WE (HMW) - QUESTIONS BY TOPIC	
Theme	HMW Questions
No Available Black Research Space (Work is Done in Silos)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How might we use space as an indicator of institutional priority? • How might we leverage this movement to force the admin to cede space? • How might we encourage Black researchers to engage in this space actively? • How might we secure a physical space at the University of Alberta? • How might we establish a virtual online BRNI community? • How might we create opportunities for gathering, sharing, and collaborating within the space? • How might we ensure researchers are aware of resources and opportunities within the space? • How might we position BRNI space as a valuable resource for the entire University of Alberta community? • How might we integrate students into utilizing the space effectively?
Limited Chances to Get Research Mentorship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How might we create a mentorship ecosystem? • How might we establish mentorship as a mutually beneficial relationship? • How might we utilize the wisdom and experience of fellow Black Researchers to support BRNI members? • How might we incorporate mentorship into Faculty Evaluation Committee (FEC) evaluations? • How might we integrate mentorship to enhance our work rather than viewing it as an additional task? • How might we increase the number of Black researchers applying for funding? • How might we mentor Black researchers to navigate grant applications successfully? • How might we provide support for Black scholars in their careers? • How might we foster stronger collaboration and fellowship among Black Researchers at the University of Alberta?
Young Scholars Who Feel Alienated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How might we create more welcoming environments for young scholars to feel more included? • How might we ensure that young black scholars feel welcome, supported, and valued? • How might we educate others about the experiences of young Black scholars? • How might we create supportive spaces and relationships for young Black scholars?

<p>Unequal Reward System</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How might we create a more unbiased reward system in support of more equality? • How might we understand and communicate to address systemic inequities in reward systems? • How might we make reward systems more equitable for Black scholars? • How might we increase the visibility of reward systems? • How might we ensure that criteria for reward systems are inclusive and considerate of diverse experiences and contributions?
<p>Ideal Researcher is White</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How might we position BRNI to challenge stereotypes about who can be a researcher? • How might we dismantle the notion that research is exclusive to white individuals? • How might we redefine the concept of a researcher at the University of Alberta? • How might we address and overcome the perception that the ideal researcher is white? • How might we utilize academic tools to understand and address anti-Black racism at the University of Alberta? • How might we broaden our collective perspective to challenge the myth of the “white male” scholarly genius?