"I don't really have a choice": The Complexities of Being Black in Canada for the Caribbean

Diaspora

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Introduction

The idea for this research arose out of a crisis that I had during my third year of university about what it means to be a Black person living in Canada. My mind was plagued by all sorts of introspective questions such as: What is my place in this country? What is my future in it? Do I belong here? The questions became even more complex as I considered my own status as an immigrant from the United States and my Caribbean heritage. Could I really call myself a "Black Canadian"? What does that term even mean? Thoughts such as these led me to this project which originally centered around the effects of racialization on social identity. However, as I conducted my fieldwork and began analyzing my data, I discovered that this topic did not fully capture all the different factors that shape Black experiences such as the impact of community, notions of belonging and the effect of systemic oppression. While still important, identity was only one aspect of the complex and multidimensional experiences of Black Caribbean immigrants and their descendants that I was hearing about in my interviews.

This thesis showcases my intellectual journey as I attempt to understand what it means to be Black in Canada; examine key aspects of Black diasporic experiences; and explore how the Black Caribbean diaspora understand Black identity and produce constructions of Blackness within the context of Canada which is a multicultural society that was built on structural racism. Although I use the term "Black experience", I recognize that this is not a monolith, and this thesis will attempt to highlight the diverse stories and perspectives that come from experiences of being Black in Canada.

The significance of this work comes from its specificity of focusing on those of Caribbean descent in Southern Alberta. Before starting this project, I found that the amount of

Canadian scholarship centered around race in relation to Caribbean communities was sparse. This research is a small attempt to fill that gap and to demonstrate the importance of studying and learning from these communities who help shape Canada but often get erased from the national story. This thesis also adds to the vast amount of scholarship in Black Canadian studies by producing work on Blackness within the local context of Southern Alberta. Research that focuses on a specific social, cultural, and historical context allows for a deeper understanding of the different ways in which Blackness is experienced. My research also takes an ethnographic approach in order to understand the complexities and even contradictions that are a result of individuals' lived realities.

This thesis will consist of five chapters which are as outlined. The first chapter will consist of a literature review and will explore the scholarly conversation surrounding Blackness in Canada, Canadian immigration, and identity formation for immigrants. Chapter 2 will discuss the theoretical frameworks that shape this thesis and the methodology that was used for data collection. Chapters 3 and 4 will discuss and analyze my key findings associated with each topic. Chapter 3 will explore aspects of the Black experience in Canada and how it helps produce a collective, shared experience for racialized individuals. However, this experience is not singular, and it is often quite complex, fragmented and contradictory. Chapter 4 will examine notions of belonging and discuss how different understandings and perspectives on Blackness produce diverse relationships to "Black identity". The thesis will then conclude with a summary of the chapters and include suggestions for future research where this topic can be explored further.

Chapter One: Literature Review

My thesis draws upon the growing literature centered around Blackness in Canada. This literature, anchored in Fanon's (1961) anti-colonialism and furthered by Paul Gilroy's (1993) history of the Black Atlantic System, provides an important foundation for the study of Blackness in Canada. Such a study must account for the system of relations organized around the enslavement of African peoples by European colonial powers and their arrival in 1619 on the shores of North America. Katherine McKittrick conceptualizes black Canada in terms of "black geographies" which are spaces inhabited by Black individuals that are linked to the history of slavery and often erased in the public imagination (Hudson and McKittrick, 2014). Black geographies can be located inside and on the outskirts of traditional spaces which allows them to "expose the limitations of transparent space through black social particularities and knowledges; they locate and speak back to the geographies of modernity, transatlantic slavery, and colonialism" (McKittrick, 2006, p. 7). Black geographies are a legacy of the history of the Black Atlantic system and showcase how space is rooted in a specific social and historical context.

Robyn Maynard's (2017) book *Policing Black Lives: State Violence in Canada from Slavery to the Present* also discusses this history and examines the state sanctioned violence that has enforced and maintained the subjugation of Black people since Canada's inception. As a response to the increased awareness of state violence in the form of police brutality towards Black communities, there has been much literature produced about the Black Lives Matter movement in Canada and its impact. The edited collection *Until We are Free: Reflections on Black Lives Matter in Canada* explores the origins of the Black Lives Matter movement in Canada and roots it in Canada's history of anti-Black racism. It also explores many different forms of Black activism and emphasizes the importance of solidarity with other marginalized

groups in order to achieve Black liberation (Diverlus et al., 2020). In his book *The Skin We're In: A Year of Black Resistance and Power*, Desmond Cole (2020) uses his own experiences as a journalist engaged in activism when the Black Lives Matter protests began to rise in Canada to explore the impacts of white supremacy, colonialism, and state violence on the lives of Black Canadians and their communities.

Rinaldo Walcott (2003) argues that Black people have never experienced freedom living under the conditions produced by systemic oppression because they have been prevented from having full autonomy over their own bodies. He also attempts to imagine what Black freedom would look like and how emancipation can be achieved. In the edited collection *Nuances of Blackness in the Canadian Academy: Teaching, Learning, and Researching While Black,* Awad Ibrahim et al. (2022) highlight the difficulties faced by Black individuals in academia which are created by the pervasiveness of anti-Black racism within the institution. They also challenge the idea of there being a single experience of Blackness and instead embrace the multiplicity of Canadian Blackness in order to highlight nuances that often tend to be erased when experiences are homogenized. Rinaldo Walcott's (2003) book *Black Like Who?: Writing -Black-Canada* also argues against essentializing Blackness and advocates for the creation of a grammar for Blackness that takes into account the plural nature of Canadian Blackness and is applicable for various different subject positions that often exist within Blackness.

My research also aims to build upon literature that studies Canadian immigration and the ways in which it has been a form of exclusion for racialized groups. Joseph Mensah (2002) details the history of Canadian immigration and highlights the anti-Black racism within those immigration policies. Before 1962, Canada's immigration policy was created with the aim to keep Canada a "white country" by excluding racialized groups and privileging white immigrants

primarily from England and northern Europe. Many Black immigrants especially from the Caribbean were recruited to come to Canada at this time but this was primarily as low-waged labour (for example, the recruitment of women from the Caribbean as domestic workers). Getting citizenship or permanent residency was made purposely difficult to prevent these immigrants from staying long term (a pattern which remains true today, under the Temporary Foreign Worker program). The blatantly discriminatory immigration policies were removed in 1967 to instead emphasize the labour market needs of the country via a points system. This resulted in an influx of immigrants to Canada from Caribbean and African nations. Sunera Thobani (2000) argues that immigration was (is) gendered as well as racialized due to the fact that the Canadian government did not want non-white women from non-Western countries having children, which resulted in these women experiencing harsher exclusion than men who were allowed into Canada to work (p. 36). Inequalities based on race, class and gender continue to have a significant impact on immigration policies and access to gaining citizenship (Strong-Boag, 1998). Michele A. Johnson and Funké Aladejebi's (2022) edited collection *Unsettling the Great White North: Black Canadian History,* works to unsettle Canada's image as a "tolerant" country by exploring Canadian history in a way that centers those of African descent. Their work attempts to disrupt the imagined idea of Canada as a "White" country, despite policies of exclusion that seek to uphold this ideal.

Finally, this study aims to add to the growing literature surrounding the complexities of identity formation for immigrant populations. Joseph Mensah and C. J. Williams's (2014) study on the ways in which Black African immigrants identify in Canada reveal that not only is the process of self-identification for immigrants one that is complex and dialectic, but it depends on material factors in addition to socio-cultural ones. Racial and ethnic discrimination was also

shown to play a role in how immigrants identify. Individuals who faced more discrimination tended to identify primarily with an ethnic identity rather than a hybrid hyphenated identity or with a single Canadian identity (Mensah and Williams, 2015). For immigrants, identity formation is deeply influenced by double consciousness and some scholars argue for the necessity of hybrid identities. Fanon (1961) argued "The intimate enemy of colonialism is the internalization of a colonial way of thinking about yourself, your culture, and your heritage…. It is the internalization of yourself as The Other." W.E.B. Du Bois in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) describes this "peculiar sensation":

> "It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at oneself through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder." (Du Bois, 1903, p. 8)

Glen Lobban (2013) describes a "hierarchy of otherness" in which certain immigrants are considered more desirable than others which influences how self-identities are formed. He states that this hierarchy is what contributes to double consciousness and states "All immigrants are faced with the spectre of 'double consciousness' yet the array of particular selves which each immigrant has in her closet vary" (Lobban, 2013, p. 558). He calls for an acknowledgement of hybridity because the self is complex and multifaceted and often does not fit into neat categories. Stuart Hall (1990) echoes this idea with his discussion of "diasporic identities" that are constantly being transformed and encountering differences which results in them being reproduced over time. He argues that the experience of those in the diaspora is "...defined, not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of 'identity' which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by hybridity" (Hall, 1990, p. 235). In this sense, identity and identity formation are fluid, incomplete and

diverse. A study by Dwight Plaza on one-and-half generation and second-generation Indo-Caribbean and Afro-Caribbean Canadians also explores identity formation and argues that it involves the combination of the individual's environment, identity and culture which is often fluid and ever changing (Plaza, 2006).

Violet Showers Johnson (2016) investigates the impact of race and racism in the United States on identity formation by exploring the stories of three Black immigrant men from Africa and the Caribbean. She explains that many African and Afro-Caribbean immigrants believe that they have multiple identity options that they can pursue which results in them distancing themselves from African Americans. This is done in order to survive and escape the stigma and disadvantages associated with Blackness. Johnson argues that it is difficult to put Blackness or race at the center of the Black immigrant experience because these immigrants themselves represent a "diasporic transnational existence" (p. 54) which allows them the flexibility to decenter race. Instead, it is primarily the direct links to their homelands that shape their identities in America. In a study done about Black African students, it was found that these students have to "negotiate their Black identities in the United States to make sense of their shifting subject position as Black from their country of origin to the United States' (Asante et al., 2016, p. 368). They also argue that although "Africanness" is typically thought to be separate from racial discourses, it is also a process of racialization which makes transnational perspectives necessary for deconstructing structures of race (Asante et al., 2016).

These texts provide the foundation on which this research is built on and this thesis will attempt to add to this scholarship. The literature also informs the theoretical orientation that was used to study experiences of Blackness by Black Caribbean immigrants and second generation Black Caribbean Canadians. They showcase the effectiveness of understanding Blackness as a

social construct, using intersectionality as a tool for analysis and taking a critical approach to

research by analyzing the impact of racism and white supremacy.

Chapter Two: Theoretical Orientations and Methodology

2.1   Theoretical Orientations

At the core of this research is the question of "What is Blackness?" For this thesis, I will conceptualize Blackness in various ways. The first is Blackness as a social construct that is made within fluid sets of power relations. Social scientists have shown that the concept of race itself is socially constructed with no true biological meaning and can be seen as a process as opposed to something that is fixed (DiAngelo, 2016). Race is also dependent on the specific social cultural and historical context that produces these social categories in the first place (Pierce, 2014). The second is to understand Blackness as temporal with an ability to expand across borders. In this framework, Blackness is as Christina Sharpe describes "...in and out of place and time putting pressure on meaning and that against which meaning is made" (Sharpe, 2016, p. 76). This relies on Stuart Hall's concept of race as a "floating signifier" that is relational, constantly subjected to change depending on the context and not "transhistorically fixed" (Hall, 2021, p. 362). Paul Gilroy's use of "The Black Atlantic" is an example of this as it provides a form of connection on a global scale between those in the African diaspora that extends beyond nationality and ethnicity (Gilroy, 1993). This conceptualization is also at the center of Hall's idea of the Black experience as a "diaspora experience" which involves the "process of unsettling, recombination, hybridisation and 'cut-and-mix'" (Hall, 2021, p. 253). Diaspora refers to an identity that is defined by hybridity, heterogeneity and difference rather than an essentialized identity that is defined by an imagined connection to a specific land (Hall, 2021, p. 268-269). Following from this, I also conceptualize Blackness as a pluriverse. Pluriverse refers to the existence of multiple worlds that are interrelated but separate and distinct, consisting of their own ontologies, logics and frameworks (Querejazu, 2016). This concept provides an alternative to the notion of one

world that consists of different perspectives on a single reality which is often limiting (Escobar, 2015). Using this framework is a way to demonstrate that Blackness itself is its own world that is relational, interacts with other worlds and produces unique and distinct ways of being and knowing.

I also frame this research within the context of intersectionality as a way to understand the nuances of the Black Caribbean immigrant experience. The concept of intersectionality "highlights the need to account for multiple grounds of identity when considering how the social world is constructed" (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1245). It is a frame that analyzes the ways in which systems of power and oppression (e.g., white supremacy, gender, heteronormativity) interlock and interact to shape people's lives, life chances, vulnerability and security. It is also a knowledge project that is made up of many other interrelated knowledge projects and changes over time depending on social structure and inequalities that emerge from it. Within these knowledge projects, intersectionality can act as a field of study, an analytical tool for the production of knowledge that focuses on inequities on a political and structural level or a critical praxis (Collins, 2015; Cho et al., 2013). However, intersectionality is not separate from the power relations that it is embedded in. The concept of "colorblind intersectionality" addresses this, which Devon W. Carbado describes as "instances in which whiteness helps to produce and is part of a cognizable social category but is invisible or unarticulated as an intersectional subject position" (Carbado, 2013, p. 817). This form of intersectionality treats whiteness as the default making it an unmarked category and social positions other than race and gender are assumed to be white. It is important to be critical of the ways in which intersectionality is being utilized in research in order to prevent this. Intersectionality can also be used as an analytical tool to study transnational phenomena. Mahler et al. (2015) call for the use of "scaling intersectionality" and

argue that intersectional analyses on a transnational level can allow for deeper understandings of how different intersections can shift across local, national and international borders. Overall, using intersectionality provides a way of gaining a deeper, more holistic understanding of the range and complexities of experiences of Black people living in Canada.

This thesis takes a critical approach to the research topic by analyzing relations of power such as white supremacy and anti-Black racism. Christina Sharpe uses the metaphor of the weather to conceptualize white supremacy and illustrate the pervasiveness of anti-Blackness. In her analogy, the weather refers to "the totality of the environments in which we struggle" (Sharpe, 2016, p. 111). The weather produces a total climate which is anti-Black and is an atmosphere which is ever present. It also has the ability to enact changes upon the Black body. However, the weather also provides an opportunity for change through the production of new ecologies from those who are living within it (Sharpe, 2016). In this sense, white supremacy is the condition in which people's experiences take place. While it certainly shapes what the possibilities are for certain racialized groups, it is not entirely deterministic and there is room for resistance within it.

Importantly, this thesis seeks to move away from damage-centered research which Eve Tuck (2009) describes as "research that operates, even benevolently, from a theory of change that establishes harm or injury in order to achieve reparation" (p. 413). In this model, research is centered around the pain of communities in order to create social change. This approach to research is problematic because it often results in a representation of a community in ways that only focus on their oppression and hardships. As an alternative, Tuck calls for a move towards desire-based research that is "concerned with understanding complexity, contradiction, and the self-determination of lived lives" (Tuck, 2009, p. 416). This framework embraces the

complicated and often contradictory lived realities of the communities that are being studied while still addressing the structural conditions under which it is occurring. Many of my interviewees expressed concern with Black communities being portrayed as suffering and emphasized the importance of changing the narrative around Blackness. Using this framework will allow me to explore the issues of power and systemic oppression without painting my interviewees and their communities as helpless victims thereby respecting the agency of the individuals involved.

2.2   Methods

My fieldwork consisted mainly of ethnographic interviews and participant observation. Ethnographic interviews are a form of data collection that treats language as a "window to the ways individuals communicate cultural meanings; the words people use provide the structure and categorization" (Bauman & Adair, 1992, p.13). It is also an attempt to acquire emic (insider) perspectives in order to better understand the complex and intersectional lives of immigrants (Kaushik & Walsh, 2018). Participant observation can be described as the involvement of the researchers in the activities of a community to participate and observe in order to achieve a better understanding of certain behaviors and aspects of culture (Kawulich, 2005).

After gaining ethics approval from the University of Lethbridge Human Subjects Committee on October 28, 2021, I recruited research participants through word of mouth using the snowball method and by using recruitment posters placed in various locations around the U of L campus. Originally my aim was to primarily interview students which is why my recruitment strategy was centered around the university; however, through my social networks, I was able to recruit individuals outside of the university as well. I also planned to only interview

immigrants who were born in the Caribbean and immigrated to Canada in the past twenty years, but I was unable to find many participants who fit this criteria so I expanded to interviewing second generation Caribbean Canadians as well. I conducted twelve ethnographic interviews with undergraduate students and adults living in Southern Alberta who were either born in the Caribbean or were Canadian born with Caribbean heritage. The ages of the interviewees ranged from 18 to 68 years old. The interviews were semi-structured consisting of thirteen questions and lasted approximately thirty to sixty minutes. The questions centered around understandings of Black identity, experiences in Canada and any discrimination they may have faced. Taking a semi-structured approach to interviewing allowed for the conversation to stay on topic while still providing the interviewees the space to share their own stories and experiences that they felt were important. It also allowed me as the interviewer to follow up on interesting points raised throughout the conversation. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, most of the interviews were conducted online with only one being conducted in person. The in-person interview was held in a secure, private room at the University of Lethbridge in adherence with the university's COVID-19 safety protocols. The online interviews were conducted over Zoom and confidentiality was protected by ensuring the Zoom generated meeting ID was unique to each interviewee, enabling the waiting room feature, and only allowing the researcher entry into the meeting. Both video and audio were recorded and stored on a password protected device, however only the audio was utilized for transcription purposes.

To provide a bit of context to the stories and perspectives shared over the course of this thesis, I will provide a bit of background on each interviewee:

- Harriet is a 68-year-old woman who was born in Trinidad. She immigrated to Canada in 1995 with her husband and two sons in order to escape the violence that was escalating in

Trinidad at the time. At the time, Nova Scotia was heavily recruiting psychiatrists, so her family ended up settling in the village of Yarmouth. She then moved to Lethbridge, Alberta in 2003 and eventually gained a teaching position at the University of Lethbridge in the History department.

- Carol is a 48-year-old woman who was born in Jamaica and immigrated to Canada in September 1992. Her mother had come to Canada a few years earlier and had filed for Carol and her other four siblings to come to the country as well. Carol is a mother of three children and currently works at a continuing care facility in Calgary.

- Ivor is a 50-year-old man who was born and raised in Jamaica and immigrated to Canada in October 1991. His mother was originally a factory worker who lost her job and had to become a part time seamstress to provide for her family. However due to financial hardships, Ivor asked his grandparents who were already living in Canada to help his mother to immigrate to Canada. He came to Calgary at the age of 19 and has lived in the city ever since. He is currently a husband, a father of two sons and a senior technician at a major car dealership.

- Maleeka is a 20-year-old woman from Portmore, Jamaica who is an international student at the University of Lethbridge. She came to Canada at the age of 18 to attend university and is currently a sociology major.

- Christina is a 22-year-old woman who was born and raised in Calgary, Alberta and whose mother is from Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and father is from Barbados. Her mother was a teacher in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and met her father when she arrived in Canada. Christina is currently an undergraduate student at the University of Lethbridge.

- Jahnique, a 21-year-old woman, Javenna, an 18-year-old woman and Javor, a 20-year-old man are three siblings who were all born and raised in Calgary, Alberta. Their parents were born in Jamaica and immigrated to Canada in the 1990's.

- Destiny is a 21-year-old woman who was born and raised in Calgary, Alberta and whose mother is from Jamaica and father is from Nigeria. She is currently an undergraduate student at the University of Lethbridge and has a career in modeling.

- Shellene is a 46-year-old woman who was born and raised in Montreal, Quebec and whose parents immigrated from Barbados in the 1960's. Her mother came to Canada in 1965 and moved to Toronto and worked for 4 years under the Domestic Scheme. And her father then came to Montreal in 1969 to be with family members that had already settled there. Her mother moved to Montreal, and the two got married in 1969 as well as had two daughters together. Shellene currently lives in Ontario with her husband and children. She spent many years working in corporate Canada but now does community work with Black youth.

- Giovanna is a 22-year-old woman who was born in Toronto, Ontario and raised in Alberta. Her mother is from Jamaica and her father is from Guyana. She is currently an undergraduate student at the University of Toronto.

- Wendy is a 54-year-old woman who was born and raised in Jamaica.

I also engaged in participant observation by attending six online Black History Month events centered around Black Canadian experiences and addressing Canadian Anti-Black racism. During the events, I mainly took on an observational role and engaged in notetaking throughout them. My notes consisted of recording recurring themes I noticed appearing in conversation and specific quotes that resonated with me. These events were hosted by various universities across

Canada including the University of Toronto, University of Lethbridge, and the University of Calgary. Participating in these events allowed me to gain further insight into my topic and the discourse surrounding Blackness occurring in the public.

The main limitation of my methodology was its small sample size. Due to its size and scope, my research does not have enough data to make any large claims about what Blackness or the "Black experience" is in Canada; however, I would argue that this is not the goal. This research is incredibly unique in the sense that all the lives and experiences of the people that I have interviewed are unique. Although there are commonalities which I believe give insight into those topics, the findings of this research are incredibly subjective and cannot represent the experience of all Black people living in Canada. Another limitation is the impact of COVID-19 on my ability to engage in participant observation. I was severely limited for most of my fieldwork period due to the fact that many events were not occurring because of the pandemic. While I did attend digital events, I was not able to interact and engage with others the same way that I would at an in-person event.

Feminist and anthropological research both emphasize the importance of acknowledging the positionality of a research, due to the fact that it heavily influences how a researcher approaches fieldwork and the writing process (England, 1994). My positionality as a researcher also played a major role in how I approached this topic and conducted my research. Since I am a Black person of Caribbean descent, I felt that I had a closeness to the topic which allowed me to begin this project with a certain level of insight and shaped how I approached interviewing. Throughout the interviews, I often offered my own stories and perspectives on the topic as a way not only to keep the flow of conversation but intersubjectively produce knowledge through discourse. However, the power relations that exist between a researcher and their informants

caused me to be concerned about the power that my voice has over my interviewees as well as the power to represent them. This issue forced me to also be reflexive about the ways that I was shaping the research and possibly misrepresenting the beliefs and interpretations of my informants. Reflexivity can be defined as "self-critical sympathetic introspection and the self-conscious *analytical* scrutiny of the self as researcher" (England, 1994, p. 244). Over the course of this research, I was most reflexive about how my own views on Blackness and my own experiences as a Black person in Canada impact how I interpreted my data and ultimately shaped my findings.

The epistemological approach I took to this research was a combination of anthropological and feminist methodology. My anthropological approach was centered around situating my analysis on the topic in the lived experiences of Black people in the Caribbean diaspora. Rather than focusing primarily on theory, I wanted to ground my analysis in praxis and allow my findings to be supported with life experience from others in addition to theory. I also wanted to take a holistic approach to studying this topic by focusing on the importance of context in understanding the nuances of these experiences (Nolan, 2013). I adopted a feminist methodology in order to take a critical approach to research which is primarily concerned with issues of power. This not only includes power in terms of structure but power in knowledge production which forces researchers to be reflexive and situate their knowledge (Ackerly, 2008). These approaches are key in understanding what being Black in Canada is and how belonging and identity operate for those in the Caribbean diaspora.

Chapter Three: Being "Black" in Canada

Initially, I was interested in exploring if there was a distinct, collective Black experience in Canada. I discovered that while this experience does exist, it does not present itself in the monolithic fashion that I was expecting. While there are common aspects that are shared between experiences, heterogeneity and diversity also seem to be important to Black experiences in Canada. This chapter explores these common aspects such as the hypervisibility of Blackness, the impact of racism, the negotiation between ethnicity and race and the lack of a collective Black Canadian identity.

3.1   Hypervisibility of Blackness

When asked if they identified as "Black", many of the interviewees were confused by the question, with some even laughing when the question was posed. Blackness was understood as an inescapable fact of life. Javor highlights this when he says, "It's not like I have a choice… I don't identify as 'Black', I am Black". I would argue that while this is referring to the physical aspect of skin color, it is also referring to Blackness as a social category which affects how Black individuals are treated in society. Javor's claim that he did not have the choice to decide if he wanted to be Black implies that this label was assigned to him. This refers to the process of racialization where constructions of race are used as a categorizing tool and "...creates very real societal structures that give preferential treatment to the in-group while marginalizing the racialized other" (Krysa et al., 2019, p. 99). Canadian society is built around structural racism therefore racialization is necessary to uphold these structures and Black individuals come to expect it. This expectation comes from the fact that since Blackness is the racialized "other", it

results in a hypervisibility that they cannot escape. Harriet expands upon this idea when she

states:

> "Because that is the unfortunate thing about being Black is that when you're in a situation
> like these, you cannot hide…I used to go out with this Jewish guy, and he had blonde hair
> and blue eyes, but he was a Jew. And I used to tell him, 'If you don't open your mouth
> and tell anybody that you're a Jew, nobody would know. So you wouldn't understand
> what it is I am talking about. You do not stand out. You just look like every other white
> person."

Comparing Blackness to her past boyfriend's Jewish ancestry demonstrates how hypervisibility

takes away agency from Black individuals. The idea of having a choice to reveal a potentially

harmful subject position and pass for what is considered to be the norm, in this case its

whiteness, is a privilege. This is because the inability to hide or blend in with the crowd also

creates an environment of hyper surveillance in which Black people are aware that they are

constantly being monitored. Such hyper surveillance leads racialized individuals to being

subjected to increased violence and discrimination (Perry, 2015; Ragsdale, 2000). During our

interview, Harriet shared a story about her son being racially profiled as a child that demonstrates

this. She states that:

> "What happened once with my older son is that there was some kind of water, they were
> young at the time 8 or 9 or something. And he was with a bunch of boys, and they were
> having a water hose fight and a neighbor complained or something. And of course, when
> the neighbor made the complaint, the only person she could identify was the little Black
> boy…You know because he's the only one standing out. All the others are little white
> boys. (laughs) So I had a little talk with him at the time, you know the talk that we have
> with our Black children about if you go into a store, don't just be hanging around and
> make sure you have money and make sure you don't pick up things and look
> like…Because you are the one who will always be noticed because you are just
> conspicuous."

This story highlights the dangers of hypervisibility in a society where anti-Blackness is

prevalent. When the criminality of Black individuals is seen as inherent, being seen means being

targeted, no matter how innocent you try to present yourself. As a form of self-protection,

individuals will often adjust their behavior to try and combat this. Parents also tend to give "the talk" which acts as a form of racial socialization between Black parents and their children in order for parents to best protect their children from harm (Anderson et. al, 2021). Harriet has "the talk" with her son for the same reason and advises him to take actions to minimize his suspiciousness as a way to cope and keep himself safe while living in conditions of anti-Black racism. This demonstrates how hypervisibility can result in self-regulation and can often limit the ability for a Black person to express themselves and their full humanity because they are always being watched. Christina Sharpe's (2016) concept of the weather provides a way of understanding this hypervisibility as an atmosphere through which Harriet and her son are attempting to navigate. In the weather of anti-Blackness, hypervisibility stirs up the storm and thus creates a dangerous environment where Black individuals can be destroyed. This also demonstrates the role of power in the form of the panopticon which presents itself not as a physical person who is doing the observation but rather "in a certain concerted distribution of bodies, surfaces, lights, gazes; in an arrangement whose internal mechanisms produce the relation in which individuals are caught up" (Foucault, 2008, p. 6). By self-policing, Black individuals are reproducing the subjugation that white supremacy is based upon through their own actions. Yet hypervisibility can also provide an opportunity for self-expression. Since hyper surveillance of a Black person is a constant state of life, individuals are forced to come to terms with it and often choose to embrace it. As Christina explains:

> "And then now I see it as you have to recognize that when you hide it, it's gonna come through. So now I stop myself from talking white too. I kind of let my accent show instead of being normal all the time because that's not me if I talk like that."

Though seemingly contradictory, this statement demonstrates that embracing the social reality of hypervisibility can provide an opportunity for a kind of freedom of expression. If a person is not

able to hide their Blackness, then they might as well be who they are because the rest of the

world already sees them for who they are. An inability to blend into the crowd removes the

pressure of having to fit the standards of the norm.

Since hypervisibility is a product of anti-Black racism, it is important to study racism's

impact on the lives of who it directly affects. While it is not the sole factor that defines Blackness

in Canada, it shapes the possibilities of what is achievable and can cause individuals to imagine

different realities.

3.2   *Impacts of Racism*

Another theme that emerged from my interviews was the impact that racism had on

shaping people's experiences in Canada. When asked if they had experienced racial

discrimination, many stated that they did not. Carol demonstrates this when she says:

> "I don't see racism in Canada like lots of people do. Like you know, people treat them
> bad or say go back to your country or stuff like that, but I never really experienced that
> while I am here. So, I can't speak on that. Yeah, people have been good to me here. I
> really don't have a problem or that kind of problem"

I would argue that this viewpoint can be attributed to how much access to opportunities an

individual has. Many of the interviewees shared that they felt that they have never been denied

any opportunities or discriminated against because of their race in Canada. During a discussion

about racism, Harriet explains:

> "Well, it doesn't matter to me, at this age in my life and this stage of my life that I really
> don't care…You know what I mean? If it had turned out to be an impediment to my
> children, then that's when I was going to really sort of have to question the whole
> decision about coming up here. But what it came down to was balancing their safety and
> literally could lose their lives because Trinidad had become so violent as opposed to
> having to maneuver in a white society."

Harriet's perspective reveals the importance of opportunity in her experience. Canada has historically been considered a land of opportunity and a primary reason that many people immigrated is for the economic opportunities (Mensah, 2002). I would argue that these individuals can recognize that racism is a problem on a larger scale; however, when it comes to their personal lives since they feel like they have not lost any opportunities due to race, it can cause them to dismiss small forms of racism especially those who come from countries where violence or civil unrest is rampant. Although I do not want to dismiss their perspective, I found that most interviewees that felt this way went on to share many experiences that involved more subtle forms of racism such as microaggressions. As Shellene explains,

> "That's the problem with Canadian racism generally. It's so insidious so it's hard to point a finger at til someone does something that is ridiculously racist and then we can say okay. You wore Blackface to school. And even then, people want to make excuses 'Oh well they didn't know that it was bad to do that. And you're too sensitive.' What do people need to do in order to be called out? Like do you have to kill a Black person and drag their body through the street? And even then, we know when that happens 'Well that person deserved it'. For a lot of people, there is no racism because nothing that anybody does will ever be considered bad enough to be racist and they will always find a way to excuse it."

Her statement highlights a challenge that comes with discussing Canadian racism. If it cannot be seen, it cannot be dealt with. Since the way that racism often presents itself in Canada is subtle, it can be difficult to have conversations about how individuals feel about it. Many interviewees claimed that their experiences were not that bad, but they acknowledged the hardships that others felt due to race. I would argue that the subtlety of Canadian racism prevents Black people from being able to share their experiences of racism without the fear that they are being dramatic or overly sensitive. I think it also showcases the insidiousness of white supremacy. Destiny echoed this idea when we discussed racism and stated:

> "...because Canada is known for being 'good' and being 'nice', we don't see it or hear of it. And I think it sounds almost dramatized if you do say that you've experienced it because it's just not a thing here. It's almost like non-existent."

However, historically Canada has not been "nice" to those who are not within its vision for the nation and has committed many atrocities against them. Canada is a country of stolen land who were and are currently still engaging in the genocide of Indigenous communities. Thousands of children were stolen from their homes and placed in Residential schools causing a mass loss of culture and inflicting generational trauma upon many of the families involved (Wilk et al., 2017). Canada engaged in the enslavement of African peoples for over 200 years and put in place many barriers towards success like segregation once they were freed (Maynard, 2017). Canada set up internment camps for Japanese people and imprisoned thousands of innocent people during the Second World War (Day, 2010). Canada's nice reputation is based on the erasure of its crimes. As Desmond Cole states "Institutions in today's white supremacist settler colonial context always come in peace and goodwill. They always tell us that they mean well, and thus they refuse to own their endless violence against Black people" (Cole, 2020, p. 14). I would argue that Canada's nice reputation can be used as a deflection to maintain the status quo of white supremacy and settler colonialism and this logic often gets internalized by others who are the victims of its subjugation. When asked, many of the interviewees downplayed their racist experiences and in response stated that they have had great experiences here. I would argue this is in part due to a form of double consciousness that tries to grapple with the tension of having positive experiences and opportunities in Canada and negative experiences of racism. Scholar W.E.B Dubois who coined the term describes it as the inability to peacefully reconcile these two consciousnesses in a body. More specifically, it refers to the internal conflict that African Americans experience by being simultaneously "Negro" and "American" (Bruce Jr, 1992). The term "American" in this context is an unmarked category for whiteness. This idea was also

discussed by Fanon who argued that those who experience double consciousness are conflicted

mentally. It causes individuals to have a separation within themselves that can never be made

compatible (Moore, 2005). A prime example of this is when Javenna says, "I don't think I've

experienced anything either. I mean someone called me a monkey in the hallway but that's about

it". Her claim that she has not experienced anything and then sharing a racist encounter

afterwards highlights the conflict and contradictions that many Black people deal with in order to

make sense of their own experience.

There were also frequent comparisons to the United States as a way to emphasize the

subtlety of Canadian racism. Ivor expresses this when he states:

> "The difference I find with Canada and the States is that in the States, people are more
> blatant or open about it. They'll look at you and they'll call you racist terminology
> whereas here in Canada, I find that it's more subtle."

However, Giovanna challenges the idea of the United States and Canada being drastically

different when she says "It's just a border. That is literally the only difference". I would agree

that borders are less relevant when focusing on the pervasiveness of global anti-Blackness and

white supremacy which shape both Canadian and US systems; however, I would argue that

borders are significant because they not only signify that both countries have different histories,

but borders are sites of state violence. An example of this can be seen in reactions to policing and

police brutality. On this issue, Canadians often compare Canada's policing to the United States

in order to downplay its harm. However, both systems of state sanctioned violence are quite

similar, and both are embedded in structures of white supremacy and are used to uphold white

dominance (Mullings et. al, 2016). On the other hand, borders represent the different social and

historical contexts of each nation despite being connected by the Black Atlantic System and they

shape how Blackness is experienced in each country. While both countries had slavery,

American slavery lasted much longer, and their African population was much larger than Canada's was. Canadian slavery ended earlier and due to its low population, many Black people in the country are immigrants from Africa and the Caribbean (however there were Black Canadians who have been in the country for generations) (Mensah, 2002). While these histories are similar, they play an essential role in how Blackness is experienced because the social context today is different. Harsha Walia's concept of "border imperialism" is also significant because it refers to how borders "represent a regime of practices, institutions, discourses, and systems" (Walia, 2013, p. 38). Borders also become sites of violence with racialized and gendered violence being enacted onto migrants in order to further the goals of imperialism, settler colonialism and capitalism. This shows the borders are not neutral divisions between countries but have political and historical implications and are often sites for contestation.

Overall, racism and its effects play a role in the lives of racialized people and how they identify, however ethnicity is just as important in the Canadian context. The negotiations between the two creates an opportunity for identity formation and the rethinking of old identities.

3.3   Negotiating Ethnicity and Race

Black people in Canada are faced with a complex relationship between race and ethnicity. Due to Canada's immigration policies and principles of multiculturalism, ethnicity plays a large role in the lives of Black Canadians. However, in a society where structures of race are foundational, this creates a space where both ethnicity and race are important and impact individual's lives. When the question of whether ethnicity or race was more important in Canada was asked, the majority of interviewees had the perspective that while ethnicity was important, race still played a major role in their experiences.

The importance of ethnicity primarily stems from Canada's principle of multiculturalism.

As Giovanna describes:

> "I think with Canada, unlike the US where they have like that melting pot, here it's like a mosaic right? People are in their little groups and areas. Being Black here, for some reason it's more about your ethnicity because it's kind of like alienation when it comes to what part of what group you come from, in Canada. Like they care about like 'Are you 'Nigerian? Are you Ghanian? Are you Jamaican?' Like that stuff matters because then it's not necessarily you being able to interact with those Black things, right? There's the Afro Carnival and there's also Caribana. Two different separate things, yes populated by Black people, but for Canada those separations mean something. But in the US, that's just a Black party thing. That's not to say that the Black people don't interact in both spaces, they do. But in terms of being Black here, it's more about this pride of where you come from because you know that Canada is made up of so many immigrants, so many people that have come from different spots. And they've managed to build a community here where they are."

Ethnicity also comes into play due to the scattered and separated nature of Black communities

across Canada. Shellene explains that:

> "There are Black Canadians who have been in this country for generations but it's such a small community and it seems to be scattered. Like you have some folks in the East, and you have some people in the West and everywhere else. I think that this is where ethnicity comes into play because you have people who are Black but their families recently, like within the past 50 years or 60 years or so, immigrated from various countries. Whether that's countries in the Island nations or they've immigrated from African nations so there's still a lot of cultural differences. We have a similarity in that we are all in Black skin, but our cultures are very different, and we have a lot of intracultural discrimination that's still going on between various groups of people."

Race shapes the lives of Black individuals who are constantly racialized and are treated

accordingly. As Ivor says, "When they look at you and there is what you call racism, they don't

know if you're Jamaican or if you're African. All they see is the Black skin." During our

interview, Destiny expressed a similar sentiment when sharing a story about her experience in

high school where her and her friends faced racial harassment. She states:

> "And we thought maybe because we go to an ethnic school, we thought nothing like this would ever happen, but it still does. Even so, we were all different ethnicities, like my

friends are from every single place, but nobody cared when they were saying it. It had nothing to do with our ethnicities, we were just Black. And they knew that those words would hurt us, so they kept saying it."

Race is also more easily identifiable than ethnicity and its use as a form of categorization allows for ethnicity to often be ignored in broader society. Javenna brings up this point when she says:

"I just think of it like if you see like an Asian person, no matter what they're Asian. It's not like a Japanese and a Chinese person are different to us. They probably see us the same way too. Someone from Senegal and someone from Cuba, they're just both Black people. I feel like to say that we go off ethnicity isn't necessarily true. Like it doesn't really apply because even when you have to write on a test or a form, they're not like 'Oh are you from Jamaica? Are you from this place?' It's like 'Are you Black? Are you Caucasian? Are you Hispanic?'...Maybe that's just the dream of what we'd like to become but that's not where we are."

Another argument made was that while ethnicity was important, the idea that ethnicity is more important than race is a way for non-Black Canadians to deny the realities of racism. Shellene explains this view by stating:

"I think that that's something that White people like to tell themselves to make themselves feel better. Plainly, I think that's what it is. I think we can see that that is not the case…I find that when white people say things like that, it's willful ignorance. They don't want to take a critical eye to themselves and to the systems of whiteness that are prevalent in this country. And it only makes sense. Nobody likes to be told that they are wrong and what they have been doing for years and years and what their forefathers who they are quite proud of have been doing for years and years have been destroying communities, destroying Black people and Indigenous people. They don't want to hear that. So, they're going to talk about 'No it's ethnicity!'"

I contend that both ethnicity and race are important to Black experiences in Canada and can coexist in a way that embraces the hybrid and plural nature of identity. With their statements, both Giovanna and Shellene are describing Stuart Hall's concept of "diasporic identities". Hall calls for a move away from the political essentialism that comes from using "black" as a signifier towards a more creolized, heterogeneous way of forming identity that is constantly being remade (Hall, 2021). The differences in arguments above show that using race or ethnicity as the sole

connection or label between those in the African diaspora is problematic because it creates divisions and does not fit with the current social context that places importance on both. By embracing race and ethnicity through diasporic identities, it can create a more useful social label that accounts for multiple everchanging parts of identity, but it can also lead to greater diasporic unity. The formation of and relationship to Black identity by an individual is important in understanding how they experience Blackness. It also helps to create a sense of belonging in a country where space is not always made for you.

Chapter Four: "Cow in a Pig Pen": Identity and Belonging for the Caribbean Diaspora

After conducting my interviews, I noticed that there were nuances in the Black Caribbean diaspora experience that needed to be examined in order to develop a richer understanding of the perspectives shared in the interviews. The main themes that I noticed recurring were belonging and identity which this chapter will explore.

4.1 "I'm Just a Shadow": Conceptualizations of Blackness and Formations of Black Identity

At the start of every interview, I asked each interviewee how they would define "Blackness" and what that term meant to them personally. This resulted in vastly different responses across the board. I would argue that these differing meanings and understandings of Blackness are a product of personal experience, the history of the Caribbean and the context of white supremacy and anti-black racism in Canada. It is also dependent on age with there being generational differences between first and second generation Caribbeans.

One position that was present was an understanding of Blackness primarily in terms of skin color. Harriet stated that "It is a skin color and not a state of mind as far as I am concerned". She went on to argue that class was a more important factor in life than color. I would argue this conceptualization of Blackness is rooted in the history of Canadian immigration as well as her own personal experiences and she feels this way because class has allowed her the freedom and the opportunities despite her complexion. In her interview, she discusses a white woman who has married a man from Trinidad and says:

> "In this particular case, her husband was a bus driver, so you have that class thing coming in there as well. I mean he might be making money, or they might live in a comfortable house but the kind of respect that my husband got as a doctor is completely different to how people perceive her marrying a Black guy who is a bus driver."

This statement demonstrates the importance of class and why she would prioritize it over race. Even though Harriet's husband and the bus driver are both Black men because her husband is a doctor, he is able to gain more economic as well as social capital with his profession and have access to more opportunities. Pierre Bourdieu's (1986) concepts of social, economic, cultural, and symbolic capital which refer to the various kinds of capital needed to navigate the social world. Social capital refers to an individual's social network and as a result, the higher your class, the greater your social capital. However, scholars on the Caribbean emphasize that race is just as important as class because most of the Caribbean is organized around cultural pluralism which prioritizes social rather than economic class (Brathwaite, 1980). Stuart Hall (2021) agrees and argues that in the Caribbean, race, colour and class overlap due to cultural pluralism. Harriet's conceptualization of Blackness as skin colour can lead to a dis-identification with Blackness. According to Javenna, a non-identification with being Black is very common with younger adults. She explains:

> "...the Black people here aren't it. For me, I feel like it would be important to be around other people who have a mutual connection and understanding of each other and our life experiences and a big part of that is being "Black". So, when I'm here and I talk to other kids…they're just like 'I'm a person. I don't really identify with being Black.' I kind of disagree with that. Like I would want to be around other Black people who think the way that I think, and you can't find that in Canada."

However, this view of Black identity could result in the breakdown of Black communities and cause more divisions. Collective notions of Blackness often help bring together Black individuals in community through shared experiences of Blackness. Jahnique touches on this point when she says:

"I feel like some of them see themselves just as people, like to them Blackness isn't important. To them, I'm an individual first. Whereas with me, to me it's important. You get what I'm saying? So, I feel like it's hard to connect with other Black people here because they see themselves as just people whereas with me, I add the Blackness with that."

Without the connection that can come from Black identity, it can be more difficult to form community with other Black people especially when there are other aspects that can cause divisions such as ethnicity. Shared aspects of being "Black" can be a foundation upon which large Black communities are built despite the many differences within those communities.

Another conceptualization of Blackness was Blackness as community. This perspective was seen mostly in second generation interviewees who viewed Black as a form of connection between others of African descent. Shellene touches on this when she describes Blackness:

"It's how I move and navigate through the world. It's having to build walls to protect myself in certain spaces and then being able to knock down those walls, when I'm in community with other people who are like me…my Blackness is being able to be on the road for Caribana and celebrate culture with my community. It's seeing other Black people on the street and giving each other a nod, just in respect to one another. Going into a Black establishment and feeling warm when you walk in there because people are just happy to see you, that you're supporting their business. There's just a sense of community."

Shellene's words are a clear example of Benedict Anderson's (1983) concept of "imagined communities" because although she may not know these Black people on a personal level, she is imagining herself being in community with them. This is significant because it can allow Black individuals to not feel alone in their hardships, but it also has the potential to create solidarity. This conceptualization of Blackness that can result in having a strong connection to Black identity. Often this was associated with notions of African history and was a source of pride for the individual. Blackness in this sense is seen as a connector for various groups in the African diaspora. Ivor was an example of this when he stated:

"But for me, being Black is something that I'm proud of because I've read enough to know that culture, as we know it worldwide, comes from melanated people. So I'm always happy about that. If you look at ancient civilizations, whether it be Kemet or if it was Nubia or the Dogon empire, Kush, these are civilizations that did 12,000 to 6,000 B.C. so a lot of these gave us a lot of things."

Despite not being born in Africa, many other Black people of different ethnic groups around the world felt attached to Africa and believed that all black people were connected through Africa and being a part of an African diaspora (Hall, 1990). These people were not connected to the actual location of Africa but rather what Africa represented, which was black liberation from oppression, a rich history past slavery and a place for spiritual guidance. These narrative, myths and imaginings of Africa created a resurgence of African pride in many Black individuals. As Hall states, "The original 'Africa' is no longer there. It too has been transformed" (Hall, 1990, p. 231). Not only are these identities shaped by notions of imaginations, but these imaginings can be global and create global identities. However, these identities are not fixed essences and can be shaped over time. As Arjun Appadurai puts it, "Imagined lives can be negotiated" (Appadurai, 1991, p. 206). He also discusses how different forms of imagination can cause conflict within ethnic groups and states that "... the homeland is partly invented, existing only in the imagination of the deterritorialized groups, and it can sometimes become so fantastic and one-sided that it provides the fuel for new ethnic conflicts" (Appadurai, 1991, p.193).

The last perspective on Blackness was a deemphasis of Blackness in favor of ethnicity. When talking about Blackness, Wendy shared her frustration with being lumped into a "Black" label specifically in the context of bureaucracy. She stated:

"Same thing when I just came here and I had to fill out the form, I was like "I ain't no Black American". In Jamaica, there ain't nothing to click off if you're Brown, Black, Chinese but here you check if you're Black American or Hispanic. What the hell?"

Anthropologist Josiah McC. Heyman (2004) discusses the impact of bureaucratic power and how it shapes lived experiences. Bureaucracies are powerful because they not only shape political processes, but they decide what is considered legitimate or standard. This can be seen in Wendy's example of the form. I would argue that her frustrations stem from how government forms produce particular constructions of race that differ greatly from how race is understood in Jamaica. Her unwillingness to label herself as Black on these forms demonstrates that these racial categories are not universal but are produced within a specific social and cultural context. Racial classifications have always been about power and can lead to access to certain resources especially in the context of bureaucracy (Backhouse, 1999). Not having your identity not recognized due to the constraints of these classifications, can create a sense of invisibility and a lack of belonging which can lead to apathy about identity all together. When asked if she identified as Black, Carol used the metaphor of the shadow to explain her feelings. She describes it as follows:

> "I'm just walking around like a shadow. I'm not a Canadian, I'm not a Jamaican, I'm not an American. I'm just a shadow."

The metaphor of the shadow symbolizes the in-between nature that many immigrants feel when they are not an outsider or an insider, but they occupy a space between both cultures. It could also represent an identity crisis since identity formation is in part dependent on the dominant culture as well, if Carol does not feel accepted or a part of it then she will never form an identity around it.

4.2   Belonging

Belonging to those of Caribbean descent living in Canada is a complex phenomenon that is influenced by many different aspects of their lives. Belonging in this context refers primarily to spatial belonging which focuses on individuals' relation to place and space and is concerned with the role of emotion and social relations in the process of place-making. It also refers to the intersectionality of belonging where intersecting systems allow for multidimensional, complex forms of belonging (Là'hdesmà'ki et al., 2016). The process of transnational migration can also produce multiple belongings which is often riddled with dissonances and is strongly dependent on emotions of the immigrants themselves (Röttger-Rössler, 2018). The three main influences on belonging that I gleaned from the interviews were the temporary nature of the diaspora experience, racism and othering towards immigrants and the separation between diasporic communities

The sense of belonging among Black Caribbean immigrants specifically is significantly impacted by the impermanence that many feel to be a key aspect of their lives in Canada. Across the interviews, there was an almost unanimous agreement that most individuals felt that they did not belong in Canada. When asked if she felt like she belonged after being in Canada for many years, Carol explains her complex feelings by saying:

> "I don't belong here. I just live here and work here. I didn't come here to stay for long so maybe that's why I don't feel like there's a foundation here. I just came to work for a little bit and go back where I came from…I just don't feel like I'm rooted and grounded here, even though you have nice people, and everything is going well."

For Carol, a lack of belonging stems from the temporariness of her immigrant experience. Historically many immigrants have come to Canada for economic opportunities and are working to either send money back home for dependent family members or bring their families up for a

better life (Mensah, 2002). However, for those immigrants who end up staying in the country permanently, this creates a disconnect and prevents them from feeling a part of the nation. Giovanna echoes this idea by stating, "And I think that belonging feeling is going to take a while because we don't feel like we have permanent things. We feel like things are temporary, that this can be taken away from you." Despite this, many immigrants still manage to build lives in this country and make a place for themselves here; however, many still live with the constant threat that it will be taken away from them by the state especially if they do not have citizenship. This causes them to exist in a state of "permanent impermanence" (Levitt & de la Dehesa, 2017, p. 152) where they can always be sent home and further prevents individuals from achieving a sense of belonging and further complicates the relationship between immigrants and Canadian nationhood This is also due in part to the criminalization of the immigrant that occurs in the form of detention centers and deportation. Immigrants are treated as though they are not wanted or disposable, and are exposed to increased amounts of violence and surveillance by the state which perpetuates anti-Blackness (Maynard, 2017).

The racism that Black Caribbean immigrants often experience also strongly impacts their sense of belonging. While most of the interviewees stated that they did not feel like they faced any racial discrimination in Canada, most still stated that they did not belong. Ivor attempts to explain his feelings of alienation by "...things are changing, they've gotten better but we're still not accepted as equals in my eyes". The effects of this alienation can be seen through the metaphor of the Cow in a Pig Pen as Ivor tries to explain his feelings further:

> "If a cow is born in a pig pen, what is it? It's still a cow, right? So, if an Italian is born in Canada, he considers himself an Italian Canadian…But he's still an Italian, right? So why is it that when we come here, we always claim that 'Oh yeah, we're Canadian.' But the rest of them, they look at us and they're like 'Afro-Canadian' or 'Caribbean Canadian'. The fact of the matter is that I'm a Black man first."

This metaphor highlights how isolated immigrants can feel and how this isolation shapes how they identify. Ivor does not see himself as Canadian because he is not treated as a Canadian. The identifier "Canadian" in this context becomes an unmarked category for whiteness which in turn allows him to form a stronger connection to his racial identity.

Non-belonging can also stem from feelings of exclusion from other diasporic communities. While Blackness can be a source of connection between different sectors of the African diaspora, there also seems to be separation between diasporic communities which can be attributed to immigrants maintaining strong ethnic ties to their cultures while living in Canada. As a result, this causes a breakdown in collective solidarity between Black immigrant communities and often leads to intercommunity conflict. Javenna elaborates on this idea when she says:

> "But I feel like amongst the younger generation, that's where the division is really bad. Like that's where we don't have a community, especially amongst kids my age. Starting from like all of us and like younger. We're really divided there because people are really trying to push equality and stuff like that, which is good obviously, but I don't know. I feel amongst the younger generations, we're really divided especially in Canada because we just don't know where we belong."

Belonging is a key part of the Black experience for the Caribbean Diaspora. Although belonging is an issue for a lot of individuals, Blackness provides an opportunity to find belonging within a social group that have many of the same experiences. It also allows individuals to find spaces where they belong without waiting for the institution to create it for them. Future research can be done on if feelings of belonging have improved or gotten worse for the Caribbean community with time.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Blackness can be conceptualized many ways however for this thesis I conceptualized Blackness as a social construct, temporal, a "diasporic experience" and a pluriverse. To be clear, although this paper is emphasizing the multiplicity of experiences of Blackness in Canada, I do argue that experience does exist. However, this experience is not singular and homogeneous but multidimensional and composed of assemblages. There are three commonalities between Black experiences in Canada: the hypervisibility that Blackness affords, the influence of anti-Black racism that shapes how life is experienced and the need to negotiate between ethnicity and race. Studying individuals in the Black Caribbean diaspora added an additional layer of nuance to the experiences of those who were immigrants or Canadians of Caribbean descent. The two common themes that I noticed in the Black Caribbean diaspora experience was identity and belonging. Identity refers to the various different relationships that individuals had to Black identity and how these stems from the various conceptualization of Blackness across interviewees. Even with Black Caribbean diasporic experiences, there are variations that make each experience and perspective unique but still connected through common aspects of experience that stem from their positionalities in this society. Belonging refers to the different types of belonging that immigrant and Canadian born individuals have towards Canada.

There are multiple ways that this research can be furthered in the future research. The first is to study Blackness in Canada through Black Canadians who have Black Canadian ancestry to show how those who have a long history here experience Blackness in Canada. The second is to primarily study second-generation Caribbean Canadians in Southern Alberta. While this research combines perspectives of Black Caribbean immigrants and other Black people of Caribbean descent, doing research that solely focuses on first generation Caribbean Canadians

can provide more insight into the experience of growing up with parents who are not "from Canada" but they are. This research could also be expanded to take on a more multimodal approach by doing digital ethnography and finding digital spaces where Black Caribbean communities are meeting and engaging in discourse. This will give insight into how the internet is being used to establish new connections, engage in discourse about race and negotiate identity. Blackness in Canada is an important issue, and it should be studied and addressed in a way that respects the diversity, variety, and social and cultural context of the Black communities across Canada.

Appendix A: Poster

University of
Lethbridge

PARTICIPANTS NEEDED FOR
RESEARCH IN *ANTHROPOLOGY STUDY*
ABOUT CANADIAN BLACKNESS

We are looking for volunteers ages 18 to 40 years old who were born in the
Caribbean, immigrated within the past 20 years and living in Lethbridge to
take part in a study of the effects of racialization on the social identity of
Caribbean immigrants.

You would be asked to engage in an interview about your experience with
racialization in Canada and understandings of Canadian Black identity.

Your participation would involve 1 session that will be about 30 to 90 minutes
long.

Your time and participation would be greatly appreciated.

For more information about this study, or to volunteer for this study,
please contact:
Julisha Roache
Anthropology Department
julisha.roache@uleth.ca

**This study has been reviewed for ethical acceptability and approved
by the University of Lethbridge Human Participant Research
Committee.**

Email Academic Researcher at Email: julisha.roache@uleth.ca

Appendix B: Consent Form

(Sample)

LETTER OF CONSENT

University of
Lethbridge

"I'm not Black, I'm Jamaican": The Impact of Racialization on the Social Identity of Caribbean Immigrants in Canada

April 24, 2022

Dear Participant:

You are being invited to participate in a research study on the effects of racialization on the social identity of Caribbean immigrants. The purpose of this study is to explore how these immigrants become racialized as "Black" in the context of Canadian society and how this plays out in their lived realities. The information collected from this study will be presented in an honour's thesis and presentation to the thesis supervisory committee of the researcher.

This research will require about 30 to 90 minutes of your time for a one-on-one interview that can be done either in person strictly following COVID-19 protocol to mitigate transmission or online through Zoom or Microsoft Teams. You and the researcher will be required to maintain social distancing wherever possible, wear personal protective equipment such as masks and sanitize your hands as well as common touchpoints before and after the interview. Both parties will not engage in the interview if they have any COVID-19 symptoms, and it will be rescheduled for a later date. For interviews done virtually, the link (e.g., Zoom generated meeting ID) will be unique to you, the waiting room feature will be enabled, and only the researcher (as the host) can allow entry into the meeting in order to keep the interview secure. The purpose of the interview is to explore, in more detail, the complex ways in which Caribbean immigrants understand and take on Black identity. An audio and video recording will be taken of the interview; however, this is only for the purpose of transcription. Audio/video recordings of both the in-person and online interviews will be password protected and stored on a secure USB device in a locked cabinet in the researcher's home. The recordings will be deleted after transcription is complete. You can also choose to have your camera off during the interview. All transcriptions will be done by the researcher.

There will also be an opportunity for you to review your transcript and request that changes be made. A copy of the interview transcript will be sent for you to review and confirm that you are comfortable with the interview content. You will have one month to review your transcript and indicate to me whether you wish to (i) withdraw from the research project (at which point I will delete your interview recordings and transcript from the USB and computer); (ii) indicate sections you no longer want to be made public or would like revised; or (iii) indicate that you agree to the transcript being used as is. After this, if no feedback is given, the transcript will be used in its original form.

There are no material benefits of you participating in this study; however, you will be contributing to a better understanding of how Canadian structures of race shape the social identity of Caribbean immigrants.

There are no anticipated risks or discomforts related to this research except for the possible discomfort of you recalling your experiences with racism in Canada. You will be reminded that you can stop the interview and drop out of the study at any time. A list of local counselling services will also be provided in order to offer additional support. Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. To stay informed about your consent, please feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation. You may choose to not answer any question, and you may withdraw from the interview at any time for any reason. If you want to withdraw completely from the study, the information contributed up to the point of withdrawal will be immediately deleted from the researcher's devices and be excluded from the thesis. The cut-off point for withdrawal will be at the beginning of data analysis. The anticipated date for the start of data analysis is February 1, 2022.

Several steps will be taken to protect your anonymity and confidentiality. You will be given the choice to use your full name, your first name only, or a pseudonym, and will be referred to as such in the transcript and any publications or presentations. For online interviews, you can also use your real name or manually change it to a pseudonym (via the feature provided on Zoom and Teams). The researcher will be the only one who knows your real name. All of the data collected in this study including your real name and pseudonym, consent forms and the audio/video recordings will be kept on a password-protected computer and USB, where only the researcher will have access to them. Collected information from interviews will be retained for the study period and deleted upon of the completion of the study. The possible consequences of releasing information to the public are the possibility of certain members of the public being able to identify you even when major attempts to remain anonymous are taken and the possibility of having the contents of your interview being referenced for future research.

The results from this study will be presented in an academic thesis and presentations. At no time, however, will your name be used, or any identifying information revealed unless you have given consent. A copy of the thesis draft will be made available to all participants prior to any publication.

For any additional information, please call me at 403-975-2485 or email me at julisha.roache@uleth.ca. Questions regarding your rights as a participant in this research may be addressed to the Office of Research Ethics, University of Lethbridge (Phone: 403-329-2747 or Email: research.services@uleth.ca).

This research project has been reviewed for ethical acceptability and approved by the University of Lethbridge Human Participant Research Committee. Thank you for your consideration.

I agree to having my interview audio and video recorded for the purposes of transcription:

Yes ☐   No ☐

I have read (or have been read) the above information regarding this research study on the effects of racialization on the social identity of Caribbean immigrants, and consent to participate in this study.

_____ (Printed Name of Participant)

_____ (Signature)

_____ (Date)

_____ (Printed Name of Researcher)

_____ (Signature)

_____ (Date)

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Appendix C: Interview Questions

1) What is your age?

2) Where are you from? Were you born in Canada? If not, when did you immigrate to Canada?

3) What is your ethnicity?

4) What is your gender identity?

5) How do you define race?

6) What does it mean to be "Black"?

7) Do you identify as "Black"? If so, have you always identified this way?

8) How has living in Canada as a Black person been for you? How has your experience of Blackness been affected by your gender/sexuality/class/etc.?

9) Has living in Canada affected your self-identity in any way?

10) Is there a difference between how race is understood in the Caribbean compared to Canada?

11) Are there any difference between treatment, such as access to opportunities and being discriminated against, living in Canada compared to living in the Caribbean?

12) Have you ever faced racial discrimination? What did/does it look like?

13) Do you feel like you belong in Canadian society?

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