Black *and Foreign* in the Ivory: Exploring the sociopolitical integration of Black international

students in Alberta, Canada

By

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Abstract

Over the last three decades, the number of students pursuing higher education outside of their country of citizenship (international students) has increased five-fold (The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2022). In that same period Canada has become a popular attraction of international students, such that it is houses to the third largest concentration of this group globally. International student tuition and discretionary spending serve as an important source of revenue for higher education institutions. Furthermore, federal, and provincial governments identify international students as a valued source of skilled immigrants. In a bid to ensure a steady influx of students, Canada has recently turned to countries in sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean – all regions where the population mostly identify as "Black" – as new source regions to target for intensified recruitment. Minimal research explores the integration experiences and daily lives of these students. Instead, studies employ monolithic categorizations, neglecting to analyze variations in racial/ethnic identification.

To that end, the main research questions in this study are: (1) How do Black international students in Canada negotiate a sense of belonging amidst various forms of social inequality? and (2) In what ways are Black international students' political proclivities shaping, or shaped by Canada's political climate? I drew on an assorted mix of theoretical and methodological perspectives to answer these questions. The discussions in this study are based on semi-structured interviews with 40 research participants, all international students from sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean studying at a higher education institution across Alberta, Canada. In theorizing the study's findings, I drew on an eclectic, interdisciplinary collection on scholarship such as international student mobility, Black politics, queer migration studies, and migration studies. What emerges from this approach is a detailed understanding of Black international students that

accounts for the sociocultural reasons shaping their decision to study in Canada, relationship to Black-themed racial justice organizing/foregrounding, and navigation of queer identity making while managing the precarity of temporary legal status. Consequently, the project's findings highlight the need to think of the respective populations "Black students" and "international students" as a heterogenous groups consisting of diverse viewpoints, experiences, and challenges.

There are three substantive chapters where the findings of this study are discussed. Chapter three discusses how Black international students' perceptions of Canadian multiculturalism operate as an ideological attraction that initially assuages concerns about racial hostility. Such preconceptions, however, are complicated by experiences and knowledge acquired post-migration, such as encounters with interpersonal racism and learning about Canada's colonial legacy. Chapter four explores the factors shaping Black international students' understanding of and relationship to Black-themed racial justice activism in Canada. This article uncovers three distinct groups of participants with varying degrees of political activity and highlights the role of diasporic and legal consciousness in shaping their engagement with movements. Chapter 5 delves into the multifocal experiences of precarity encountered by a queer Nigerian student, involving complex negotiations of sexual, racial identity, and temporary legal status. Collectively, these articles advance a heterogeneous understanding of international students, acknowledging the diversity of social locations and experiences within this group. The articles also serve to depict the sociopolitical integration of Black international students. In sum, this dissertation contributes to broader conversations about race, racism, racial justice, and intersecting identities as they pertain to international student experiences and underscores the need for more nuanced approaches and supportive environments in Canadian universities. Popular approaches to studying international

students are rarely attuned to intra-group variation based on race and ethnicity, and this study is among the first to foreground such analyses in Canadian research on international students.

Preface

This dissertation follows the journal-article format (sometimes called a "paper-based" thesis or dissertation by article) as specified by the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (FGSR) at the University of Alberta.

The dissertation is composed of three articles (chapters 3, 4, and 5) along with contextual sections including the introduction (chapter 1), literature review (Chapter 2) theoretical perspectives (chapter 3), methods (chapter 4), and conclusion (chapter 6). Each article centers a key component in the trajectory of Black international students as they navigate an assortment of issues within Canada's social landscape. The articles have not been published yet, but they have been written in publication/journal format as per FGSR guidelines.

This dissertation is an original work by Prof-Collins Ifeonu. The research project, of which this dissertation is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, Project Name: "Black (And Foreign) in the Ivory: Exploring the Political Proclivities of Black International Students in the era of #BLM (Pro00113693), on November 23, 2021.

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Chapter One: Introduction

"Another Canadian student expresses resentment towards affluent African students, whom she describes as "so ready to hustle for [the university]" and to use the "language of diversity … to their advantage." Describing to me how interlocking relations of race and class have shaped the material conditions and affected the mental and physical health of her family and community, this student distinguishes herself as "somebody who's actually experienced structural disadvantage" as opposed to peers for whom the extent "that racism factors into their life is the extent that it impairs their job search." She describes the behaviour of affluent African students in her department, who are willing to "hustle" and avoid confrontation, as alienating and undermining Black students like herself who seek to challenge the university's racialized and classist norms and expectations." (hampton, 2020, 74)

I took the excerpt above from rosalind hampton's (2020) book on Black students' experiences of racialization and campus mobilization at McGill university, Canada. It represents one of a few cases where research on Black students in higher education has alluded to the presence of Black international students. In this instance, hampton's participant considers what she perceives as aversive behaviors of Black international students from Africa on racial matters as detrimental to causes aimed at addressing racial inequity. The participant even goes as far as questioning the racial identity of her international counterparts. She draws a distinction between herself and those she believes are opportunistically leveraging racial identity for instrumental gain – in other words, identifying with Blackness to the extent that it can be used to "get ahead" in their careers, and not because of a genuine concern for the advancement of Black students. Though not a central aspect of the book's objective, the passage is an apt illustration of tensions stemming from divergences in standpoint between domestic and international Black students as both groups negotiate their identities, sense of belonging, and pathways to success through higher education. Importantly, the passage draws attention to a

relatively underexplored topic amongst researching Black student and international student experiences in higher education: the intersection of Canadian higher education's massified international student recruitment and student politics.

These discussions around identity and connection have become more prominent in recent times, especially as student politics in Canada within the last five years has centered on reckoning with the country's colonial legacy and addressing racial inequity. For example, after the distressing discovery of unmarked gravesites of Indigenous children at former residential school locations, student-led protests at Ryerson University, named after Egerton Ryerson, one of the main proponents of the residential school system, prompted a change in the university's name to Toronto Metropolitan University (Rancic, 2022).

Within the same period, universities have tendered official apologies to Black communities as an acknowledgment of culpability for past injustices. At Queen's university, for example, a study conducted by PhD student Edward Thomas revealed a policy that prohibited Black students from enrolling in the medical program. The policy was instituted in 1918 and remained in effect until 1965. In response to 'Thomas' findings, the university officially repealed the policy and issued a formal apology. Concordia University (formerly Sir George Williams University) also apologized for its mishandling of the 1969 student protests – recognized as a catalyst for Black civil rights in Canada (Mohabir and Cummings, 2022, Austin, 2013). The uprising stemmed from complaints made by six Black students – all international students from the Caribbean – that they had been subjected to racially discriminatory grading practices from a white professor. In more recent times, Black student organizing in Canada has taken inspiration from the transnational influence of the #Black Lives Matter movement (#BLM). Amid the uproar surrounding George Floyd's murder at the hands of a police officer in Minneapolis, Black students across Canada seized the opportunity to highlight issues of anti-Black racism at their respective institutions (Crawford, 2022; Kalifa *et al.*, 2022; Toronto Star, 2020).

These efforts have largely centered on dispelling the notion of Canada as more racially harmonious than the United States – a place where, firstly, racism does not exist, or if it does, its impact is less damaging (see Hudson, 2019).

Yet, the continued impact of student politics coincides with Canadian higher education's administrative turn towards foreign student recruitment as a strategy for economic sustenance. As public funding to higher education has been reduced, money garnered from international student tuition has taken prominence as a core funding stream (Jones, 2014) Precisely in the last two decades, Canada has become a choice destination for students seeking higher education in a foreign country. Currently, it holds the world's third highest concentration of students (Erudera, 2023). A 2020 Statistics Canada (2020) report estimates that international students account for 40% of all tuition fees and contributed nearly $4 billion in annual revenue for Canadian institutions. Furthermore, the appeal of international students for universities does not only stem from their economic contributions as foreign students, but also from their perceived potential as future Canadian citizens. Referred to in policy documents and political rhetoric as "ideal immigrants" for permanent residency, international students are thought of as model candidates for permanent residency due to their young age profile, possession of Canadian qualifications, spending power, and proficiency in an official language (Scott *et al.*, 2015).

Canada's need to remain an attractive proposition for international students within a hypercompetitive international market has prompted a focus on sourcing new regions for recruitment. Advisory briefs from expert bodies which track student migration flows identify sub-Saharan Africa as the next major source region of international students. A report by Colleges and Institutes Canada (2019, 3), for example, refers to sub-Saharan Africa as *without question the region where the next major college-aged cohorts will emerge, especially around the middle of this century."* Consequently, in the last five years, Canada has witnessed a 67 percent increase in recruitment of students from the region (Campus

France, 2022). A similar occurrence is underway in the Caribbean. While I could not find statistical evidence of an increase in student recruitment from the region, anecdotes from education agents working in the Caribbean attest Canada's growing presence:

"I would say for the last five to six years, Canada has been the number one choice among students from the eastern Caribbean particularly." – Sheena Alleyne, representative of the Student Centre, Barbados (in Barbados Today, 2022, para. 4)

Thus, a demographic shift is occurring in the composition of the Black student population in Canada. While scholars in Canada have been slow to address this development, Black Canadian students have taken notice of it. In an Alberta-based newspaper, Yodit Tesfamicael, an organizer, and spokesperson for Students4Change, a grassroots-based advocacy group, said the following while lamenting the low presence of Black Canadian students in graduate study at her university:

"The Challenges you see at the higher education levels often are the result of challenges at the K-12 level. I'm a University of Alberta student in a master's program and one of the trends we're seeing among the Black population is that we have a lot of Black international students. We don't have a lot of domestic Black students… what's going on here?" (in Kinney, 2020, para. 9)

Tesfamicael's observations closely parallels concerns expressed by the Black Students' Union (BSU) at Cornell University, who, in 2017, released a statement urging the university to address the underrepresentation of Black students. Notably, the BSU defined "underrepresented Black students" as "Black Americans who have more than two generations of heritage in the country (BSU, 2017). BSU also highlighted the increased presence of Black international students in their call for action:

"The Black student population at Cornell disproportionately represents international or first-generation African or Caribbean students. While these students have a right to flourish at Cornell, there is a lack of investment in Black students whose families were affected directly by the African Holocaust in America. Cornell must work to actively support students whose families have been impacted for generations by white supremacy and American fascism." (BSU, 2017)

Thus, immigration from majority-Black countries is reshaping the demographic makeup of Black students. Amid the portrayals of Black international students as hindrances to Black-themed racial justice movements, or beneficiaries of university recruitment agendas at the expense of domestic Black students, the present moment calls for an exploration of the lived experiences of Black international students themselves. Firstly, who are these students? What motivates them to seek opportunities to study in Canada? How do they navigate racialization alongside other forms of precarity? And, lastly, how do they relate to racial justice activism occurring within or outside of their respective institutions? Are they, as the participant in hampton's (2020) study asserts, a privileged group disconnected from the realities of everyday life for the average Black Canadian student and "playing up" their racial identity to gain access to affirmative action initiatives? Or is there a more complex angle to this narrative that has not been taken into account? In this project, I take up these lines of inquiry. I draw from 40 semi-structured interviews I conducted with self-identifying Black students from sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean. My project pursues an extensive understanding of the social incorporation of Black international students, one which accounts for how their proclivities are both shaped by and shaping Canada's sociopolitical climate. To this end, there are two research questions guiding this project:

1. How do Black international students in Canada negotiate a sense of belonging amidst various forms of social inequality?

2. In what ways are Black international students' political proclivities shaping, or shaped by Canada's political climate?

I am driven to undertake this project by interrelated personal and scholarly motivations. Between the years 2020 and 2022, I served as President of the University of Alberta's Black Graduate Students' Association (BGSA). I consider this period to be one of the most rewarding but stressful periods of my life. Working with BGSA provided me the opportunity to build valued relationships, undertake critical research projects, and hone my skills as community leader. However, my tenure coincided with the death of George Floyd and its attendant ripple effect on campuses across North America. Media coverage of student involvement often depicted Black students as a unified group (Rim, 2020; Dennon; 2020; Bort & Aleah, 2020; Weisman, 2020). However, at my university, I found myself embroiled in tense discussions between Black international and Black Canadian students on how best to navigate the political moment. Black international students, who comprised a significant proportion of our membership, were hesitant to get involved in any form of political organizing. On the other hand, Black Canadian students perceived such hesitance as indicative of a lack of appreciation for the ongoing advocacy work. On their account, the economic privileges Black international students possessed prevented a full reckoning with the realities of racism. Black international students interpreted such sentiments as insensitive to the conditions of international students, living in Canada on temporary visas, having their legal right to reside in Canada tied to their academic progress, and working towards permanent settlement in the country. There was consensus over the pervasive nature of anti-Black racism – mostly borne from personal experiences – but not the method by which it should be highlighted, or who was better-placed to spearhead mobilizing efforts. As someone who identifies as Black, as well as a foreign student, and a leader of a race-themed student group, I became curious about how Black international students were not only being perceived

by their domestic counterparts, but also how they made sense of the political moment and positioned themselves in relation to the flurry of advocacy taking place.

In searching for scholarly answers to this dilemma I was witnessing in real-time, I found inspiration in the field of Black politics, particularly works that focused on the complexities of intra-racial diversity within the Black population. Though dominated by empirical research conducted in the United States, the field boasts landmark contributions from distinguished scholars such as Reuel Rogers (2006), Philip Kasinitz (1992), Mary Waters (1999) and Nancy Foner (2004). The field also contains recent, incisive empirical and theoretical contributions from the likes of Candis Watts-Smith (2014) and Christina Greer (2013). These scholars have sought to understand the diversity of political behavior within Black America, with a keen focus on the dynamics of political solidarity, or tension between African Americans (who are direct descendants of enslaved Black Americans) and Black immigrants. In these works, the researchers tend to analyze the backgrounds of Black immigrants to unpack the social circumstances informing their political perspectives. Rogers (2006; 13), for example, critiques popular models of political incorporation for their lack of attention to "important background differences" between African Americans and Black immigrants. I was curious about how expanded international student recruitment from sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean was shaping the dynamics of student politics, but engaging with Black politics scholarship provided a roadmap as to how to study the demographic I was interested in. Unfortunately, but for a few exceptions (George Mwangi *et* al., 2019), scholarship on international students could not serve a similar inspirational purpose. International student research is a flourishing scholarly field boasting extensive detail about the experiences of students pursuing higher education in a foreign country, yet there is a paucity of research examining its political dimensions, especially as they pertain to the experiences of international students (Rose-Redwood and Rose-Redwood, 2017). But for a few exceptions (George Mwangi *et al.*, 2019), I could barely find any literature to guide me through the social upheaval I found

myself in. Thus, undertaking this project became a matter of providing clarity for students, staff, faculty and others interested in understanding how international students absorb the political climates they are enmeshed in.

As I constructed my methodological approach and conducted my first couple of interviews, it became evident that a full understanding of Black international students' political proclivities involved unpacking their biographies. In line with contemporary methods to studying political participation, as well as the approaches taken by scholars of Black politics, I understood the phenomenon not as an inherent feature of a person's being, but a socially acquired trait borne from myriad socialization experiences throughout the life course (Hensby, 2019). Thus, a central argument I put forth in this project is that a detailed understanding of the factors influencing Black international students' political inclinations requires sensitivity towards their social, political, economic, and cultural backgrounds. Rather than conceiving of them as inherently opposed or aligned with a particular cause, a more fruitful approach would be to understand the individual and social factors that influence their relationship – or lack thereof one way or the other. To achieve this goal, I selected research methods with the aim of capturing the participants' biographies and sensemaking patterns. I uncovered unanticipated but crucial insights about how these students construct their migration journey to Canada and their lived experiences in the country after arrival. While some of these findings may seem adjacent to the central goal of this study, I consider them as complementary in their effort to depict a holistic understanding of racialized international student life in Canada. While this study centers political participation as a key focus, it also functions as a detailed understanding of the social and political incorporation of Black international students. To answer the research questions noted above, I asked a range of smaller questions which drive the three core chapters of this project:

- In article 1, my guiding question is: do student perceptions of Canadian multiculturalism shape the mobility decisions of international students, and if so, how? Here, I am concerned with

how the political ideology of Canadian multiculturalism – described by some scholars as a "glue" that strengthens relations between immigrants and citizens (Ng and Metz, 2015) operates as an ideological attraction for Black international students seeking a racially harmonious environment to pursue their studies. Mobility defines international student life. Before unpacking their political behavior, it is important to understand and interrogate the logic that underpin their choice of Canada as a study destination. As I show, my participants mostly thought of Canada as more racially tolerant than competitor nations such as the United States and Germany, yet such notions were somewhat disrupted by on-the-ground experiences of interpersonal racism and learning about Canada's colonial history.

- Article 2 builds upon the foundation laid in the first article. Having understood Black international students' motivations for coming to Canada, I explore how they engage in Black-themed racial justice movements. The research question guiding this inquiry is: How do Black international students negotiate their understandings of, and relationship to Black-themed racial justice movements occurring within and outside of their respective institutions? In answering this question, I uncover a diverse range of ideological positions held by Black international students in their assessments of Black-themed racial justice movements. I also highlight how political participation is not only determined by ideological leaning, but also by perceptions of structural barriers stemming from temporary legal status and the fear of deportation.

- Like article 2, article 3 takes a similar approach of unpacking the backgrounds of my participants. This article brings to the forefront the specific experiences of racialized queer international students. Focusing on the compelling story of Emmanuella, Nigerian international student navigating the intersection of queerness, precarity, and transnationalism, I shed light on the unique challenges faced by this significantly understudied group. I draw

on the experience of Emmanuella to detail the intersection of queer identity making, racialization, transnationalism, and international student precarity. Emmanuella is a Nigerian international student who is struggling to maintain good academic performance while dealing with the stress of being "outed" to her heteronormative parents, who are her sole financial sponsors. My research question in this article is as follows: How do queerness, precarity and transnationalism interact in shaping the life course of queer international students? This article might appear distant from the research question guiding this dissertation. However, because I pursue an intimate understanding of Black international students' social locations, I find it crucial to unpack the specific configurations of precarity experienced by them, especially those that are foremost concerns to them at a particular time. While I did not anticipate this topic being a core aspect of my research, the novelty and importance of Emmanuella's story – especially considering the scant levels of research on queer international students – prompted me to highlight her case in a standalone article. Thus, I detail Emmanuella's sensemaking around her ordeal; how she constructs Canada as a haven where she can freely express herself as a queer woman; how she perceives movements like #Black Lives Matter (#BLM) which are founded by queer women and foreground an appreciation for diverse orientations within the Black populace; and how she plans to shed her financial reliance on her parents.

Through these series of articles, I aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of the social locations and multifaceted identities of Black international students in Canada. By examining their perceptions of multiculturalism, engagement in Black-themed racial justice movements, and the intersectionality of queerness, racialization, and migrant precarity, I pursue a holistic understanding of international students (Krishna, 2019), touching on three core aspects of their life course trajectories.

I approach this topic at a time where international students have become a significant topic of interest in Canada. This is evidenced by the emergence of discourse – mostly in popular media –

aiming to understand the consequences of their mass recruitment and the conditions under which they live in Canada. In the past two years alone, several media outlets have published special issue articles, podcasts and documentaries interrogating various circumstances surrounding their lived experiences.

The following are a few examples of these releases:

- *"Canada's costly housing market leaves international students open to exploitation"* – **The Conversation; April 30, 2023.**

- *"Priest, neighbours issue plea for help for struggling international students in Cape Breton"* – **CTV News; April 1, 2023.**

- *"International students face exploitation in Canada and abroad"* – **The Conversation; March 29, 2023.**

- *"How the pandemic disrupted the lives of international students"* – **Maclean's; November 15, 2022.**

- *"Canada identifies international students as 'ideal immigrants' but supports are lacking"* – **The Conversation; November 9, 2022.**

- *"International students enticed to Canada on dubious promises of jobs and immigration"* – **CBC News; October 13, 2022.**

- *"The shadowy Business of International Education"* – **Walrus; September/October 2021.**

- *"Canada's International Cash Cows"* – **CANADALAND; August 31, 2021.**

- *"Cash Cows: Foreign student recruitment crisis at Canadian universities"* – **W5 Investigation; May 7, 2023.**

These articles are a far cry from earlier portrayals of international students as a parasitic presence on Canadian campuses, taking spots away from deserving Canadian students (see Findlay and Kohler, 2010). Instead, they are adept at highlighting the structural factors shaping mass international student

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recruitment, like predatory recruitment strategies by Canadian institutions. They are also sympathetic to the struggles of international students, noting challenges such as financial insecurity, mental health, experiences of racism and xenophobia, and various forms of exploitation from landlords and employers. There is also renewed focus on understanding the experiences of Black students in higher education, primarily driven by the signing and implementation of the Scarborough Charter on Anti-Black racism (2021) at institutions across Canada. I position this project as a notable addition to these vibrant endeavors, focusing on a specific sub-group who occupies both social locations, and whose presence will continue to grow in light of current recruitment trends. Through my findings, I hope to foster a more inclusive dialogue and inform policies that support the well-being, and success of these students within the Canadian higher education landscape.

I have organized this paper-based dissertation as follows. In my introduction, I outline the significance of the project and provide definitions for terms that I use throughout the dissertation. Also in this section, I provide a short review of the literature to situate this topic within historic and contemporary scholarly context. I then detail my methodological and theoretical approach to the project, before delving into the articles which I have summarized above.

The significance of the project

Thus far, I have alluded to the significance of this research project by demographic shifts in the Black student population, tensions between domestic and international Black students, and the growing prominence of international students in Canadian public discourse. Yet there are at least three other important points I wish to outline to highlight this project's importance to scholarly and public policy audiences.

First, this project critiques the scholarly trend of homogenizing international students' experiences. Instead, I built on works that center the perspectives of specific sub-groups (Ma, 2019; Marom, 2022; George Mwangi *et* al., 2019; George Mwangi, 2016). This effort is in line the Scarborough charter's commitment to fostering *inclusive excellence* by suitably disaggregating data "to reflect domestic and international student populations" (Scarborough Charter on Anti-Black racism, 2021, 12).

In their analyses of internationalization research in the United States, Yao and George Mwangi (2020) highlight the tendency of research on international students – especially quantitative studies – to focus on within-group differences. Where such considerations were made, the studies only disaggregate the data by national identity. The problem with such an approach is that dominant national groups within a sample might be mistaken to represent the views of all international students from a region. A demonstration of this occurrence can be found in Li *et al*'s., (2014) review of research on East Asian international students, where the authors found that studies which made overarching claims about this demographic were often only derived from Chinese international students. Yao and George Mwangi also contend that homogenizing international students' experiences detracts attention from other social locations and identities such as class background, sexuality, ethnic/racial identity, ability. Thus, persisting with a monolithic portrayal of international students assumes that "one-size-fits-all" interventions may address their educational needs (Shahjahan and Kezar, 2013; Yoon and Portman, 2004).

International students are often subject to monolithic portrayals in political commentary, media discourse, and scholarly writing. However, a closer examination of these groups reveals complex but interesting divergences in their motivations and outcomes. For example, it is commonly assumed that international students are attracted to Canada by the availability of immigration pathways after completing their studies. However, studies examining transition to permanent residency among

international students of various national origins presents a more complex picture of this phenomenon. For example, Lou and Hu's (2015) research discovers that international students from Northern/Western Europe, the United States, Japan and South Korea had lower transition rates than those from Southern/Eastern Europe, Africa, and other parts of Asia. On the other hand, transition rates among students from Africa, India, and China were three times higher than rates from the aforementioned regions. To explain this disparity, Lou and Hu (2015) highlight the differences in socioeconomic development, job opportunities, and political climate between both regions. Specifically, they observe that transition rates tended to be higher for students from countries with lower Gross Domestic Output (GDP). While not offering a similar level statistical breakdown, a study by Nieterman *et al.*, (2018) finds that intentions to apply for permanent residency were highest among African students compared to their counterparts in the United States These studies suggest that while obtaining the legal right to permanent residency in Canada is incentive is generally valued by international students, the keenness to pursue this goal varies among different groups.

Findings of this sort speak to the importance of avoiding homogenous depictions of international students and instead, uncovering the diversity of motivations and experiences held by sub-groups within this demographic. Several scholars have called for such an approach to be adopted in research on international students (Ma, 2019; George Mwangi and Yao, 2019), and recent scholarship – particularly those conducted on Black and Asian international students – alludes to intra-group variations much more frequently, either by focusing on students from a specific nationality, or with a specific racial identity (Yu, 2022; 2021; George Mwangi, 2016; Yao and George Mwangi; 2019 Ma, 2019). I continue this burgeoning tradition in this project and the data I present account for several of these sociocultural factors. I show how race, gender, class, sexuality, nationality, and citizenship status often operate in both complementary and contradictory fashion in shaping the mobility decisions, political proclivities, and important life transitions.

Second, Canada has experienced significant population growth in recent years, and a key factor contributing to this rise is the increased admission of non-permanent residents (Thanabalasingam and El Baba, 2019). Despite setting a record for permanent residency approvals last year, Canada still had more than twice as many temporary resident approvals (Paperny, 2022). The growth of the non-permanent resident population is largely driven by international students, whose prominence has increased according to the federal government's 2014 International Education Strategy. The strategy aimed to reach a total of 450,000 international students in Canada by 2022, and as of December 2022, the international student population stood at 807,750, almost double the target set in 2014. Additionally, Canada issued a record number of study permits in 2022 alone, totaling 551,405. Considering the substantial increase in recruitment and the fact that over 60% of international students intend to pursue permanent residency after graduation (Canadian Bureau for International Education, 2022), it can be argued that studying the lived experiences of international students is not only crucial for their well-being but also for understanding the future dynamics of Canada's population. Moreover, if the current recruitment focus on students from sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean continues, these regions will have a profound impact on the composition of the Canadian population. Presently, Nigeria, the world's most populous nation of Black people, ranks as Canada's third-largest source of study permit applications.

Third, migration, both forced and voluntary, has played a crucial role in the presence of Black people in Canada throughout history and in contemporary times. Therefore, studying its configuration, particularly groups who make up a notable aspect of it at a particular point in time, can be a valuable method of understanding the formation, and evolution of the Black community in Canada. The earliest evidence of Black presence can be traced to the arrival of Mathieu da Costa in the 1600s. da Costa was a multilingual interpreter, who often served as an intermediary for European traders in their dealings with the Mik'maq people (Government of Canada, 2023). In the 1700s,

precisely between 1749 and 1982, over 100 Black slaves were transported to Canada by American and English settlers. In the 1800s, approximately 30,000 Blacks migrated to Canada via the Underground Railroad network – a collection of secret paths used by Africans fleeing slavery in the United States. Today, the growth of the Black population is largely attributed to voluntary migration from countries in Africa and the Caribbean. This is a particularly notable trend in the context of the Prairies region, which possesses Canada's fastest growing Black population and is the empirical site for this project (Statistics Canada, 2019).

Terminology

Black students

"Black students" has been used in research to refer to students of African and Caribbean descent who identify themselves using the term (Kelly, 1995 Dei *et al.*, 1995; James, 2012). It is also used to reference African-Canadians. Though the concerns of both groups overlap and differ in certain instances, it is necessary to define the term as I employ it in this study. I use the term "Black" to describe students from sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean who self-identify as "Black."

International/Foreign students

Students from sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean are part of a wider pool of international students studying at various higher institutions in Alberta. For the purpose of this study, I define "International students" as non-Canadian students who are currently attaining a higher education qualification in Canada on valid study permits, do not have permanent residency in the country and thus, are not legally authorized to remain in Canada beyond the validity of their study permit (Paul, 2012). To avoid

the repetitive use of the term and the attendant fatigue this can create, at certain points in this project, I substitute the "international" in "international students" for "foreign" (i.e., "foreign students.")

Internationalization

Scholars recognize international student mobility and recruitment as an important measures of higher education's internationalization imperative within the last 30 years (de Wit, 2020) Yet, the term "Internationalization" lacks a universally agreed-upon definition, though scholars have a tendency of deploying the term as if its meaning is implicitly understood (George Mwangi and Yao, 2021). Brandenburg and Wit (2010) suggest that internationalization within higher education has been normalized to the point where there is an implicit assumption that it is well understood. The definition provided by Jane Knight (2003) is generally cited by internationalization scholars. Knight defines internationalization as "the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions, or delivery of post-secondary education" (2). In an earlier article, however, Knight (1997), notes that internationalization means different things to different peoples, thus creating challenges in maintaining analytical consistency amongst works using the term. George Mwangi and Yao (2020) are critical of the proliferated use of the word without, at minimum, defining the conceptual parameters underpinning its usage. Nonetheless, I employ the term in this dissertation to acknowledge the larger administrative impetus of Canadian higher education's current function. Internationalization is the larger project from which mass international student recruitment emanates and is a central component.

Sub-Saharan Africa

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The term "sub-Saharan Africa" refers to countries in Africa which are not part of the North African region and the republic of South Africa. Scholars assert that the term was used as a replacement for racially-tinged phrases such as "Black Africa" and "Tropical Africa" (Haldevang, 2016).

The Caribbean

The majority of studies on Caribbean students in North American scholarship has centred immigrant students, that is, generations of Caribbean migrants. Some of these migrants are either born in Canada or immigrated during their childhood. I employ the term "Caribbean" in this study as a designation for students who are nationals of one of the ten Caribbean territories: (Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts/Nevis/Anguilla, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Trinidad and Tobago, as well as students from Guyana, Haiti and Bermuda.)

Literature review

Since Canada's establishment as a nation-state, immigration has played a crucial role in its nation-building project. Over time, the configuration of policies and characteristics of (im)migrants have changed, but the use of immigration to promote socioeconomic development and gain political influence has remained consistent. Managing international student mobility is a notable aspect of this agenda. However, understanding the trajectory of international student policy would be inadequate without highlighting the influence of Black international student politics, particularly due to the impact of the Sir George Williams affair. I begin this section with a brief overview of Canada's policy approach to international students before and after the affair, so as to contextualize the role of Black international students in shaping international student affairs. I draw heavily on two articles written by Dale McCartney (2021; 2016) which detail the history of international student policy in Canada. By

providing this historical context, I aim to further emphasize the importance of this project and ponder about the lack of subsequent research examining the experiences of this demographic which I center in this project.

Between the periods of 1945-75, Canadian parliamentarians expressed a keen interest in attracting international students to the country. In the first 25 years after the Second World War, discussions around policy mainly concerned Canada's emergence as an international economic power, and its role in the Cold War. Discourse regarding international students not only focused on education, but was also framed within these broader aspirations. From debates held in the House of Commons, McCartney (2016) finds that Canadian politicians largely viewed international students as aid beneficiaries, or worthy recipients of Canadian financial resources set aside for development. This framing was linked to Canada's notion of itself as a subordinate partner in a North Atlantic relationship involving the United States and Britain. With this position, Canada imagined itself as a "moral superpower" that could serve as a mediator to countries in the global south, though it lacked the international reputation of its two contemporaries. Nonetheless, in the decade following the Second World War, Canada invested heavily in foreign aid as part of its foreign policy agenda, with international education being a crucial component. International students arrived in Canada with fully funded scholarships acquired through programs like the Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) Program and the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Program (CSFP) (Trilokekar and El Masri, 2021). Canada targeted former British colonies as aid recipients in Asia, Africa and the Caribbean, in particular.

Two main objectives drove the establishment of this aid: (1) to promote socio economic development in countries seen as needing; and (2) to enhance Canada's international reputation. Politicians argued that through acquiring a Canadian education, international students would develop the skills and training needed to assist their countries in developing the profile of foreign students

valued by Canada. In turn, educating foreign students from countries in the global south would boost Canada's international reputation, an asset of high value during the Cold War period. Furthermore, international education would serve as a medium to further neo-colonial objectives. Politicians presumed that a Canadian education would instill in foreign students an appreciation for liberal capitalism over communist doctrine. The following passage from McCartney's (2016: 8) article, buttresses this point:

"Robert Thompson, the leader of the Social Credit party, told Parliament that "colonialism had its purpose. It brought law and order, it trained primitive peoples, it brought education and the chance of a higher way of life to the areas that it administered." But while the need for these "benefits" remained, they could "no longer be imposed by force. They must be given in good will." Thus he pushed for greater funding to bring more international students from Africa to Canada to continue the historic mission of colonialism, but now with an eye towards developing world peace and preventing the spread of communism."

A point worth emphasizing is that although international students were a sought-after group during this period, they were not thought of as permanent settlers as they are today. Instead, they were considered "temporary sojourners", who would acquire an education to implement in their home countries upon return.

By the end of the 1960s, the perception of international students as aid beneficiaries began to shift significantly. As early as 1967, parliamentarians began to question whether Canada's investment in international education was serving the country's Cold War interests. Some individuals questioned the amount of funds being spent on international students, suggesting that the outlays were being administered at the expense of Canadian students. Prominent amongst those harboring such

concerned was MP Raymond Langlois, who argued that international students were not as economically impoverished as first thought:

"These [the international students] are students who have been changing [buying new] cars every year. They are about the brightest students from these underdeveloped countries. Some of them do not have to work so hard and some attend a minimum of courses. Their financial problems are minimal compared with some Canadian students who have to slave their way through university" (in McCartney, 2016, 10).

Langlois's claims are notable for the reason that they challenged two core assumptions amongst politicians about international students: (1) that they were in need of Canadian aid; and (2) they would return to their home countries upon completion of their studies. To support the second point, Langlois referenced a United Nations (UN) study which alleged that over 85,000 Indian international medical students all over the world had not returned to their home country after completing their studies. Langlois argued that such occurrences were not only detrimental to Canadian students, but also to the home countries of these students, who supposedly were in dire need of the skills and education acquired in Canada.

However, the discontent shown towards the support of international students was greatly exacerbated by the Sir George Williams affair in 1969. In addition to being framed as an economic burden, the affair instilled a perception among politicians that international students were a political threat to Canada's stability. I briefly mentioned the affair in the introduction section of this project, but here I provide a more detailed account.

In the spring of 1968, six Black students of Caribbean origin challenged the grades assigned to them by a biology professor, Perry Anderson, alleging that they were consistently subjected to racially discriminatory grading practices. The students and their countries of origin are as follows: Kennedy Frederick (Martinique, Grenada); Allan Brown, Wendell K. Goodin, and Douglas Mossop

(Jamaica); Terrence Ballantyne (Trinidad and Tobago); and Rodney John (St. Vincent) (Austin, 2013). The students initially pursued the case through university administration. The Dean of Students, having met with the students, noted that Professor Anderson denied any wrongdoing. Having been frustrated by the leisurely pace at which the case was being handled, the students determined that university officials were not taking the matter seriously. Thus, on January 29, 1969, the students and their sympathizers (up to 200 of them, mostly white Canadians) escalated the issue by occupying the university's computer room for a period of two weeks. At first, the protest was largely peaceful, with little or no police involvement and continued negotiations between the students and university administration (Austin, 2013). On February 11, 1969, it seemed that a resolution had been reached with university administrators. However, a large crowd had gathered outside the hall housing the computer room and chanted racist slogans at the students (McCartney, 2016; Austin, 2013). Under the impression that an agreement had been reached students started to trickle out of the computer room when riot police broke through the barricade and advanced towards the computer room. According to Rocky Jones, who was closely connected to the leadership of the protesters, there was an agreement amongst individuals in the computer room that Blacks should leave the room first, on the notion that in the event of any mishap, they would receive harsher punishments in comparison to their white counterparts (Austin, 2013). However, many decided not to leave and were arrested. As riot police approached the room, the remaining students occupying it realized no agreement had been reached. Commotion ensued as the police broke the glass and lock on the entrance door and eventually succeeded in entering the room. Amidst the mayhem, a fire broke out, causing over two million dollars' worth of damage to equipment. At that point, the hostile crowd outside the building began to chant "Let the Niggers Burn" (Austin, 2013). Ultimately, ninety-nine people were arrested in connection to the Sir George Williams occupation, with 42 of them being Black.

Politicians on both sides of the political spectrum were united in their concerns about the continued support of international students who, in their eyes, destabilized the country by causing civil unrest. Interestingly, conversations about the appropriate actions to take following the event never directly referenced Blackness or race. Instead, politicians articulated their concerns through abstract allusions to communist influence brought about by immigrant influence. Austin (2013) asserts that avoiding explicit talk about race was a deliberate tactic, and doing so would have made the occupation a Canadian race problem, and not an immigration issue which could be rectified by deportation. Nonetheless, one conservative MP, Wally, Nesbitt, while present at a Parliament meeting, asked "whether the government is giving consideration to the curtailment of grants to foreign students attending Canadian universities under government auspices who engage in activities involving breaches of the peace, bloodshed, and other acts of disorder?" (in McCartney, 2016, 13). Another parliamentarian, Progressive Conservative prime minister John Diefenbanker asked whether the government intended to deport "foreign communist revolutionaries who advocated overthrowing government by force" (in Austin, 2013; 184). Parliamentarians also argued that international students would pose a negative influence on Canadian students, and ultimately a hindrance to the nation-building project. Others called for strict measures to be taken against international students, including deportations, funding reductions, and imposing penalties against the home countries of students. Sanctions did materialize from these recommendations, for example, 14 Trinidadian students were deported and Canada received indemnities from the Trinidadian government (Adjetey, 2019). This is despite the fact that Canadian students made up the majority of students involved in the protest. Ultimately, the Sir George Williams affair served as a catalyst behind "a change in the discussion of international students", as McCartney (2106, 1) argues:

"From 1945 to 1969, the general opinion among parliamentarians had been that foreign students were going to benefit from Canada, that Canadians would shape their views and behavior, and in doing so would advance Canada's interests in the Cold War. But the Sir George Williams affair demonstrated, in the eyes of many MPs, that international students were a threat to Canada and that they represented a fundamental challenge to the structure and well-being of Canadian society. The activists at Sir George Williams had rebelled against the racism of Canadian society, and parliamentarians' response was to re-evaluate international students as a group. Coming as it did in a time of general concern about the dangers represented by new arrivals to Canada, the shadow of the Sir George Williams affair would loom in the minds of MPs well into the next decade, and would help precipitate a shift towards mistrust and exclusion in policy talk about international students."

The Sir George Williams affair occurred within a broader political context marked by active anti-colonial resistance and the widespread influence of Black Power ideology (Austin, 2013). It garnered international attention, attracting the likes of influential scholars and activists, such as Black Panther leader Stokely Carmichael and scholar C.L.R. James to Montreal for speaking engagements. It also spurred the creation of a local and international consciousness around institutional racism in Canada at a time where such issues received scant attention (hampton, 2020). The affair prompted demonstrations at other institutions in the country, and instigated the creation of education initiatives designed to promote equitable access to higher education for Black communities across the country (hampton, 2020). However, the protests also posed a challenge to the image of Canada as a benevolent superpower, which formed the basis of international student policy. Thus, parliamentarians' stern reactions stemmed from the disruption of their notions of international students as aid beneficiaries and Canada as a generous host. Instead, from the 1970s onwards, discourse regarding international students would become dominated by themes of danger. This era would also witness the ushering in of more stringent international student policies. For example, in 1976, the federal government

introduced the *Immigration Act, 1976,* which closed pathways to immigration for international students and formally designated them as visitors, meaning that their stay in Canada was temporary and they could not work, change institutions, or program of study after arriving, and were unable to apply for immigration while in Canada. Other changes included the introduction of differential fees. While the Sir George Williams affair was not solely responsible for these policy changes, the backlash engendered by its occurrence, McCartney argues, made it easier for the changes to occur with little pushback from the Canadian public.

By analyzing the Sir George Williams affair in the context of Canada's approach to international student recruitment, I have underscored the influential role of Black international student activism in shaping contemporary international student policy. The affair has generally been omitted from narratives outlining political developments during the 1960s. When discussed, however, the fact that the main protagonists in this incident were international students is an under-emphasized aspect of the analysis. Understandably, scholars are drawn into the excavations of the national and international impact of the affair on Black mobilizing across North America and the Caribbean. McCartney's research, however, situates the affair within the wider frame of international student policy. Perhaps if it were more known that the central figures involved in the affair were international students, contemporary assessments of this group as somewhat politically "aloof" on matters concerning race and racism might be more tempered. Additionally, more widespread recognition of this fact might elicit more attention to the political dimensions of the international student experience, particularly how racialized foreign students navigate racial structures of disadvantage and negotiate a sense of belonging in the host country. Presently, this is a significant gap within the diffuse field of international student studies (Rose-Redwood and Rose-Redwood, 2017).

In general, studies of Black students, particularly those which center themes of race, racialization, and racism, struggle for visibility in the Canadian context, especially when compared to

those written in the United States context. One reason for this occurrence – and one that is well documented by scholars in Canada (Robson, 2021; James, 2010; 1995) – is the difficulty of acknowledging race and racism as pressing social issues within Canada's social landscape. Aylward (1999) aptly compares race discourse in Canada to the United States, encapsulating the assertions of several others on this matter:

"In the United States, most observers would [at least] acknowledge that racism exists, the controversy is over the role that the law plays in its maintenance and perpetuation. In Canada, it is hard even to reach this issue because of the pervasive denial of the very existence of racism in Canadian society." (p. 49)

Supporting Aylward's point, Mathieu's (2010) archival research reveals that throughout the 20th century, Canadian newspapers persistently depicted racism as a problem of relevance only to the United States. Such framings ignored Canada's own legacy of cultural genocide against Indigenous peoples, and discrimination against Blacks and other racialized communities. Little was said about state- supported attempts to eliminate Indigenous people and culture through land dispossession, mandatory enrollment in Catholic residential schools, the forced removal of Indigenous children from their parents (famously dubbed 'the sixties scoop'). Here I wish to provide a brief note: In this segment, I cannot do justice to the full gamut of atrocities employed by the Canadian government to eradicate Indigenous peoples, histories and culture. Canada's bleak history and continuing legacy of settler colonialism warrants detailed analytical investigation as a standalone topic. Yet the summary I provide here is important when unearthing the histories that have been hidden in the process of exalting Canada's image as a multicultural haven. In fact, this is a key aspect of my findings: In the first of my three articles, I explore how Black international students come to reckon with Canada's colonial legacy, and how these revelations somewhat complicate their notions of Canada as a lauded

study destination. I also show how some students understand their implication in the settler project and their responsibility as settlers on stolen land.

Canada also harbors a checkered history of discrimination against Black people. For instance, slavery is often referenced as a phenomenon distinctly relevant to the United States, yet Canada also engaged in slavery of Indigenous and Black people (Frost, 2023). Few Canadians are aware that British and French colonizers practised slavery for over two hundred years and new waves of English immigrants to Maritime Canada brought with them hundreds of enslaved people (Frost, 2023). Additionally, many provinces, Canada practiced formal and informal modes of segregation (Maynard, 2018). Black immigration to Canada – a core topic of concern in this project – also constituted a site for the enactment of racist logics. At certain periods during the 1800s and early 90s, various provincial Canadian officials pursued strategies to deter Black settlement on the grounds that Black people were climatically unsuitable (Maynard, 2020; Wittmeier, 2020). Through the work of Mohamed, (2020) and Bartley (2021) we also know that the Ku Klux Klan had an active presence in Alberta, and across Canada.

Yet textbooks made little mention of these villainies (Winks, 1997). Thus, there exists a paradoxical situation in Canada whereby a lengthy history of anti-Black racism unhealthily co-exists with discourse denying its existence. Discourse on Blackness occupies a fraught space, best described by scholar Rinaldo Walcott (2003, 27) as "an absented presence always under erasure." The tendency to elide discussions of racism aligns with a broader project of racial colorblindness (Bonilla-Silva, 2006), an ideology that ignores the impact of race and racism on social outcomes. This ideology is rooted in Canada's adoption of multiculturalism as a policy in 1971, granting linguistic rights and advocating non-discrimination based on race, gender, and other identities. Unlike the 'melting pot' ideology in America, multiculturalism encourages immigrants to maintain and leverage their identities in pursuit of national interest. Multiculturalism also performs political purposes, earning Canada

plaudits within the international community as a beacon of tolerance and inter-ethnic harmony. and instilling a notion of tolerance among Canadian citizens (Sharma, 2008). Multiculturalism also serves economic purposes. With an ageing workforce and low birth rate, multiculturalism has been promoted as an ideological attraction for skilled immigrants – the "glue" which binds immigrants and citizens together (Ng and Metz 2014). Canadian universities include extensive details on the positive impact of multiculturalism in recruitment and promotion material (Buckner *et* al., 2021).

However, immigration, race, and feminist scholars in Canada challenge multiculturalism's appeal, exposing its masking of historic and ongoing racial inequities (Galabuzzi, 2006; James, 2010; Thobani, 2007; Bannerji, 2000) and efforts to attain Indigenous sovereignty (Coulthard, 2014). The prominence of multiculturalism as a Canadian identifier, however, has served as a stumbling block to transnational Black mobilizing. Sandy Hudson, #BLM Toronto, recounts an experience at a #BLM global convention where she faced resistance from representatives of other countries when she pointed out that anti-Black racism wis a pressing issue:

When those of us from Canada challenged this notion, we were met with resistance and confusion from some attendees. Canada did not have the same history with slavery, some attendees insisted: The Black people of Canada were privileged because we all had the means to emigrate from other places in the world. Canada was peaceful and simply accepting difference, and it would be welcoming to Black people seeking refuge." (Hudson, 2019; 101)

Studies of Black student experiences

Despite Canada's reticence towards discussions of racism, research shows that racism has been, and continues to be a pertinent issue both for Black students in Canada. At different points during the 90s Black students were also excluded from medical programs at McGill University, Dalhousie University

and University of Toronto (Henry & Tator, 2009). At the University of Toronto, following an enquiry from Lean Elizabeth Griffin, an African American woman, about her application, Assistant Dean and Secretary of the Faculty of Medicine Edward Stanley Ryerson provided the following response:

When she [Lean Elizabeth Griffin] wrote for an application we did not realize she was colored. Colored students are a problem when they get to the hospital and we would be glad if you could avoid accepting her application (in Henry, 2019; para. 15).

More recently, a group of Western University Alumni have called for the university leadership to denounce a psychology professor whose eugenics teachings and research purported links between race and intelligence (Rodriguez, 2020). More contemporary scholarship has explored the impact of stereotypes on African Canadian immigrants (James, 2012; Schoreter and James, 2014; Dei, 1997) and criticized the absence of critical race content in school curricula (Dei, 1999; James, 2010). The work of Carl James, in particular, has served as a notable reference point. Though James is by no means the only scholar writing on Black students' experiences, his extensive coverage of the subject area constitutes a suitable guide and measure of the field. Both James' sole-authored and collaborative scholarship boasts a diverse array of accounts detailing the experiences of Black students navigating the Canadian education system at various levels. His writings have centered topics such as racialization and immigrant integration (James, 20221; Schroeter and James, 2015; James, 2010), Black masculinity (James, 2019), the impact of stereotypes (James, 2012), and many others. In these works, James uses a variety of research methods to unpack how Black students encounter, mitigate and overcome myriad structural barriers. The experiences of Black international students are a notable absence from James' canon. However, in a co-authored article he reflects on the challenges and opportunities posed by higher education's internationalization imperative. There, James and colleagues remark on the

demographic complexion of the contemporary international student population and, similar to scholars of the critical internationalization studies school (discussed later), he emphasizes the need to avoid one-size-fits-all approaches which deny the racial and cultural diversity within international student populations:

"Many of the students taking advantage of international programs tend to be linguistic and religious minorities, and people of color (or racial minority/racialized students) coming from developing countries and/or former colonies. As well, some are children and grandchildren of immigrant parents residing in societies such as Canada, the United States, Australia, Britain and other European countries. So today's 'international students' are not the traditional white middle class students […] It seems to us that the racial, ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity of today's international students, combined with a similarly diverse 'domestic' (or home) student population in many metropolitan universities, should propel today's institutions into providing academic programs that enable marginalized (or racialized) students – both international and domestic (or home) – to fully participate and realize their educational goals. But such outcomes are not possible in the absence of institutional changes that address the inequity, colonialism and racism that operate as barriers to marginalized students' full participation and successful outcomes." (James *et al.*, 2013, 151)

Studies of international student experiences

There are also scholarly accounts of international students' struggles with racial and cultural discrimination. In Houshmand *et al's* (2014) study of East and South Asian international students, their participants highlight racial microaggressions as a pertinent university experience. Examples of these microaggressions include exclusion from peer groups, ridiculing of accents, being ignored by classmates and the stereotypical assumptions of intelligence and a lack of social skills. Some participants also highlighted more structural problems in the form of a dearth of scholarships for

international studies. Some of Houshmand's participants attributed the lack of funding opportunities to stereotypical assumptions of all international students as possessing wealthy backgrounds and attending university only on the basis of their economic benefits to the university. Guo and Guo (2017) also uncover similar complaints of exclusion and stereotyping. In addition to language and accent discrimination, some highlighted racism as a barrier to interracial dating and relationships. From an institutional perspective, Buckner *et al.*, (2021) show how higher education institutions in Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States celebrate diversity but rarely discuss race, racism or racialization when referring to international students in internationalization strategy documents, even though most of them are non-white. Buckner *et al* provide validation for James (2010) critique of the Canadian education system as "mired in a color-blind and monocultural discourse in terms of vision, content and style that the promise of democracy, inclusivity and equity continue to elude minority students" (p. 192).

Critical Internationalization Studies (CIS)

Over the past decade, the field of "*Critical Internationalization Studies*" (CIS) has emerged, challenging predominant views of internationalization as an inevitable consequence of globalization (Johnstone and Lee, 2017, 2014; Stein, 2019). Instead, scholars in the CIS school contend that without deliberate efforts to address power imbalances and resource distribution, the interconnectedness brought about by internationalization will worsen existing inequalities in the global education system (Stein, 2019).

While CIS is a relatively young field, it boasts significant theoretical contributions, particularly in the context of Canadian higher education. These works mostly focus on macroanalysis, examining the policies and practices of federal and provincial governments as well as institutions involved in the mass enrollment of international students (Sa and Sabzalieva, 2018; Stein and McCartney, 2021;

Johnstone and Lee, 2017). These works complicate the notion that massified international student enrollment is merely a rational cost-benefit choice driven by the ambitions of students. While it is true that pursuing international education – particularly from a western nation – represents a form of cultural capital which students seek to increase their profile in a hypercompetitive global market, CIS contends that there is more to this phenomenon. In fact, it unearths the commodifying and profit-driven motives behind internationalization efforts in higher education, as well as how international students serve as soft power pawns for competing nations seeking competitive advantage in the global knowledge economy. What's more, CIS also questions the very notion of a western degree as a source of cultural capital (Beck, 2007).

Stein and Andreotti (2016; 2017) contend that international student recruitment is guided by a dominant global imaginary which centers Eurocentrism and western education as desirable assets desperately needed by international students. Within this framework, the west is perceived to be the standard for humanity, and logically, Western education is positioned as an attractive product. In turn, the perception of international students – most of whom come from countries broadly termed "the global south" – as needing this education frames the discriminatory reception of them by faculty and peers. Thus, rather than understanding racism as something which international students encounter upon arrival, the authors question the foundational logics that underpin the rationales for international student recruitment and reception. The authors trace the framing of international students through three themes: 1) Cash cows, supplementing, university, provincial and federal budgets through their funding and intellectual capital; 2) Competition taking away jobs and other opportunities from citizen students and workers; 3) Beneficiaries of a charitable higher education system (Stein and Andreotti, 2016).

CIS scholars have also made prominent calls to promote a disaggregated understanding of international students, accounting for the intragroup diversity of racial, gender, class, national, ethnic

and other relevant identities present within this demographic. A robust representation of such calls –
and one which inspires my project – can be found in scholarship on Black immigrant/international
students in higher education. Much of these works are written in the United States context and are
mostly authored by Chrystal George Mwangi. In sole-authored and collaborative works, Gorge
Mwangi has persistently stressed the importance of rejecting monolithic conceptions of both Black
students that ignore the presence of international students. In an article entitled "Black International
Students' Lives matter" George Mwangi states the following:

*"It is also critical that Black international students and their experiences be acknowledged and prioritized, for example,
by collecting institutional data that can be disaggregated by race and nativity, so that Black international students are
made visible to their institutions. This may require HEIs [Higher Education Institutions] to collect demographic student
data beyond what is needed for federal or state reporting (for example, by asking both for the race and nativity status of
students, rather than classifying international students solely by foreign status/nationality—or recognizing that Black
international students are less likely to claim a Black race on surveys when the option is Black/African American,
because Black international students are not American). Data that can be disaggregated would allow institutions to
track the needs and progress of Black international students. Doing so would provide the nuanced information needed to
develop or reinforce resources that address the intersection of these students' race and nativity."* (George Mwangi,
2020, 7-8)

Although George Mwangi directs her exhortation towards higher education institutions in this
article, in other work she calls for scholars to be attentive to intra-group differences with the Black
student community:

"I suggest future researchers use a heterogeneous lens when studying the experiences of Black students in higher education and engage in research related to Black student intragroup dynamics. Researchers should continue to complicate the historically perpetuated concept of in-group sameness within this demographic" (George Mwangi, 2016, 1032).

"It is important for researchers to acknowledge the intraracial diversity among populations of color. Findings illustrate that both foreign-born and native-born Black students come to college pre-socialized with assumptions and stereotypes about one another's work ethic and academic abilities. Foreign-born Black students also discussed the ways in which nativity shapes their experiences as racial minorities in the United States, which ultimately shapes their experiences in academic programs. Given the significant influence of this racial minority status, acknowledging and better understanding diversity among students, based on nativity status will contribute to the existing discourse on diverse learning environments." (George Mwangi, 2016, 790)

In virtually all of these works, George Mwangi strikes a delicate balance between unpacking the backgrounds of her participants and understanding how they engage with various aspects of the United States' social system. After reading the articles, one gains a thorough understanding of who these students are and the matrix of motivations, precarities, and opportunities shaping their decision-making. Included in her portfolio of works are studies of how Black immigrant students learn about and navigate the United States' racial climate (Griffin et al., 2016; George Mwangi et al., 2019, George Mwangi et al., 2016), notions of sense of belonging at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) (George Mwangi, 2016), relations with African American students (Fries-Britt et al., 2014), and differences in the configuration of motivations between African Americans and Black immigrants (George Mwangi and English, 2017). I position my work as a continuation of this line of research, with an empirical focus on the Canadian context. As noted by Hernandez (2021), CIS could benefit from more "on-the-ground" accounts of international students, detailing how they navigate the very systems that are at the heart of CIS analysis. Thus, I examine how Black international students navigate

varied ideological and material structures when making decisions regarding their mobility, engaging in claims-making practices, and negotiating sexual identity as temporary migrants. Overall, my research examines how Black international students understand, integrate, and in some cases, contend with Canada as a social and political system.

Theoretical perspectives

This project draws on an eclectic collection of theoretical perspectives, each of which has helped me unpack a specific aspect of my participants' lived experiences as they navigate various experiences within Canada. I opted for a multiple-theory approach as I believe that each perspective is a unique but incomplete lens through which to analyze my participants' insights. This project prioritizes a deep exploration premised on an inductive research approach, meaning that the theoretical perspectives employed in this project are driven by the empirical data collected (Woo *et al.*, 2017). Thus, in adhering to this "bottom-up" approach, I found it crucial not to solely predetermine the theories needed to answers my questions, but to let the data guide the choice of theory. That being said, I did not approach my field totally absent of a theoretical leaning, as insights garnered from critical race theory (Delgado and Stefancic, 2008), network approaches (Hensby, 2019), and legal consciousness (Chua and Engel, 2019) influenced the construction of my topic guide, particularly the orientation of questions posed to participants. Some of these perspectives have retained their value in my data analysis and I have incorporated new additions. Below I provide details of each one and its applicability to my project.

My approach of unpacking the biographies of my participants is inspired by the concept of subjective rationality (also known as "context-bound rationality" and "bounded rationality). With respect to its deployment in social science research, subjective rationality refers to the capacity of

individuals to make decisions using the best information available to them at reasonable cost (Glaesser and Cooper, 2013). As Boudon (1989) notes, the use of subjective rationality in the social sciences, the actions of an individual do not need to engender favorable outcomes to a subjectively rationality. Rather, decision-making only needs to be supported by rationales the individual deems as reasonable at a particular juncture. Thus, social science research employing subjective rationality is primarily more concerned with process than outcome – the "why" and "how" of decisions. Furthermore, in contrast to neoclassical economics asserting that actors pursue their best interest with complete information and unrestricted cognitive capability, subjective rationality considers decision-making as embedded within considerations of several social factors, such as the institutional context, political climate, and cultural/religious beliefs.

Subjective rationality also emphasizes the agency of actors, showing their capacity to shape their outcomes within the constraints of social factors – such as those aforementioned. Alba and Nee (2003) aptly describe this conception of agency within subjective rationality as:

"stemming from choices made by actors according to perceptions of costs and benefits embedded in the institutional environment. It [Agency] assumes limited cognitive ability on the part of actors and interprets rationality partly as a product of institutional processes." (p. 37, 38)

This conception of agency coheres with recent calls to foreground agency more expansively in international student research alongside the more traditional approach of highlighting the challenges facing this group (Inouye *et al.*, 2022). Recently, Deuchar (2023; 2022), has called for a shift in analytical orientation of international student research from "experiences" to "practices". On his account, the former approach continues the preponderant trend on portraying international students a deficient group without influence over their outcomes. On the other hand, "practices" offers a lens through

which to illuminate their agentic capabilities. To be clear, centering agency in this manner does not presume the non-existence of structural constraints, but rather, the notion that social cannot is not entirely determined by it. Underpinning all three articles I have written is the centering of structure and agency in the lives of Black international students, exploring how they make sense of themselves and their ability to shape their outcomes when whether deciding on study destination, participating in Black-themed racial justice movements, or negotiating an assortment of identity-based marginalization.

A central feature of this dissertation is the impactful nature of race and racialization on the lives of Black international students. This point is most evident in chapters 4 and 5, where my participants detail how their notions of the racial climate of prospective host countries are a major factor in their decision to study abroad, and where they detail their relationship to Black-themed racial justice movements in Canada. I thus draw on Critical Race Theory (CRT) as a central analytical frame for these insights. CRT seeks to explore and transform the relationship between race, racism, and power (Delgado & Stefancic, 2007). Developed by a collection of activists, lawyers and scholars who were dissatisfied with Critical Legal Studies' lack of attention to race and racism as determinants of social outcomes (Crenshaw, 1988), CRT examines race and racism as endemic features of society, countering claims of liberal colorblindness, equality, and historical revisionism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2007). Since Ladson-Billings and Tate (1998) first introduced CRT to Education studies, the concept has been recognized as one of the most widely used in education research (Tichavakunda, 2019). CRT has also evolved from being a standalone theory to representing not only a particular orientation towards social science research, as well a "master-theory" housing a host of other theoretical approaches. For example, Christian's (2019) Global Critical Race and Racism (GCRR) has situated CRT within a world-systems approach with the aim of analyzing how racial domination occurs not

just within, but across nation-states. One way this operates, Christian argues, is through the sanitization of a checkered histories and the presentation of a clean, faultless society where racialization and racism do not exist. I draw on Smith's GCRR framework in chapter 4. There, I argue that Canadian multiculturalism constitutes a significant ideological attraction and political factor shaping international student mobility. Here, I argue that Black international students seriously factor race relations in their considerations of suitable study destinations, and their subscription to the idea of Canada as a beacon of racial tolerance motivates them to seek study in the country over competitor nations. Ultimately, their belief in Canadian multiculturalism does not match up to the realities of personal experiences of racism as well what they learn about Canada's treatment of its Indigenous peoples. Both CRT and Smith's iteration allow me to situate the centrality of race and racism to the decision-making processes of Black international students. I position my findings as a response to scholarly calls to expand CRT's analytical frame beyond the United States context, and towards issues of transnational mobility (Yao and George Mwangi, 2019). I also draw on intersectionality, another tenet of CRT, in chapter 5. Here I grapple with the struggles of Emmanuella, a queer international student from Nigeria, detailing how she navigates myriad experience of precarity, privilege and marginality stemming primarily from her sexual identity. Intersectionality challenges the homogenization of identity and oppression (Crenshaw, 1991; Nash, 2008) and seeks to understand how interlocking systems of oppression interact as "reciprocally constructing phenomena" shaping experiences of social inequality (Collins, 2015, p. 2). An apt description of intersectionality as it has been commonly applied in social science research is captured by Matsuda (1987) phrase "asking the other question." Using this as an analytical prompt, Matsuda asserts that analyzing injustice, researchers may also develop a sensitivity towards the presence of additional vectors, so as to to unearth the full gamut of factors shaping experiences of injustice. I acknowledge the strength of this approach in developing intimate understandings of complex and compounded experiences of

marginality. However, my deployment of intersectionality in analyzing Emmanuella's ordeal draws me towards intersectional approaches which center the complex and often contradictory co-existence of privilege and oppression play out in the lives of marginalized individuals. Emmanuella's is from a wealthy background, and her well-off parents are solely funding her education. Yet, upon discovery of her same-sex sexual orientation her parents are threatening to cease paying her tuition and withdraw her from her program. To mitigate this issue, Emmanuella plans to acquiesce to her parents' concerns by avoiding conversations about her sexuality until she is able to complete her studies under her parents' financial sponsorship. She then plans to find a job and become financially independent, at which point she will sever all communication with her parents. Emmanuella's story is reminiscent of Nash's (2008, 12) assertion that intersectionality could benefit from research that underscores "privilege and oppression as complex, multi-valent, and simultaneous" in shaping lived experiences. Emmanuella's story constitutes an empirical site through which to explore this assertion.

As noted earlier, I was inspired by scholarship in the field of Black politics, particularly works written in the United States context that grapple with political relations between African-Americans who are descendants on formerly enslaved Black Americans and Black immigrants. Scholarship from this field significantly centers themes of racialization, ethnic identity, and diaspora. One of my chapters seeks to understand the factors that shape Black international students' identification with racial politics in Canada (chapter 5). I found the conceptual works of Candis Watts Smith (2014) and Alao (2023) particularly helpful in thematizing the perspectives of my participants regarding this topic. Smith (2014) describes diasporic consciousness as "(the) mental tightrope that people of African descent […] walk as they try to balance their superordinate racial identity (and the political interests associated with it) with their subgroup or ethnic identity and its closely associated political interests" (7). Diasporic consciousness seeks to elucidate the factors that shape intra-racial collaboration between

domestic and immigrant Blacks, outlining points of tension and solidarity between both groups. Alao's (2023) recently published article builds on Smith's work by delineating the concepts of diasporic cohesion and diasporic fragmentation. Diasporic cohesion describes instances where both groups are united in political solidarity and diasporic fragmentation, describes moments where both differ along ethnic or other lines.

Lastly, chapter 5 sheds light on fears expressed by participants about their temporary residency potentially being jeopardized by participation in Black-themed racial justice movements. This insight is not well reflected in either CRT on Black politics research. As such, I employed legal consciousness to help analyze these concerns. Emanating from the field of social legal theory, Legal consciousness refers to "how people experience, understand and act in relation to law" (Chua and Engel, 2019, 336). Legal consciousness does not depend on one's knowledge of law, but the capacity (or lack thereof) to act either in accordance with or in disregard of its presence. Chua and Engel (2019; p. 336) best explain this through the analogy of the Cheshire Cat - "law appears and disappears in the picture of everyday life drawn by legal consciousness researchers". As one of three central themes in chapter 4, I show how the fear of deportation constitutes a manifestation of legal consciousness which constrains the keenness of my participants to participate in Black-themed racial justice movements.

Chapter Two: Methods

In this section, I discuss my methodological approach to this project. I outline how I conceptualized my data, the research context, and recruitment method. I will also detail how I analyzed my data, the limitations of the study and my positionality in relation to the data.

Research Design

Conceptualizing the data

As a methodological critique, this project departs from established approaches to studying Black and international student populations that portray both groups as monolithically. Instead, disaggregation is a core guiding principle of this research. I acknowledge, however, that although disaggregating at the level of racial identity can yield nuanced data, it might also ignore the variations of national/ethnic origin within the Black international student population. In recent times, researchers of Black immigrant populations have called for data on this group to be disaggregated by country of origin (Mwangi, 2014; Mwangi *et al.*, 2019). A notable example can be found in the work of Todd Hamilton (2019). In his award-winning book *Immigration and the Remaking of Black America*, Hamilton labels the term "Black immigrant" "meaningless" (229) as his data show that few socioeconomic patterns hold for all groups in the category. In education research, Hawthrone *et al's.*, (2022) remark that the enduring perception of Blackness as a monolithic category stems in-part from racialized notions linking Black identity with poverty and deficiency. I fully agree with the positions taken by Hamilton and others as they emphasize the importance of disaggregation for understanding the contemporary nature of Black life. Yet, the national contexts in which calls for disaggregation occur – particularly the tradition of approach to race-related research – is important to consider when considerations are made about the extent to which disaggregation should be considered, if at all. Hamilton, as well as

Hawthorne and colleagues, are writing in the context of the United States, where race data is a core demographic component of data sets. In contrast, race-based data is seldom collected in Canada and has never been collected in federal censuses (Menezes *et al.*, 2022). In education research and statistics, Robson (2021) highlights the lack of race as a demographic measure, attributing its dearth to Canada's "long history of whitewashing racial differences and masking racial disparities in the language of multiculturalism" (p. 189).

In place of race, Canadian datasets have tended towards including a larger "visible minority" category for all persons who are non-Indigenous, non-Caucasian and non-white in color (Menezes *et al.*, 20220). In other cases, racial identification has been inferred from other information such as the respondent's language spoken at home and enrollment in English as a Second Language programs (Robson, 2021). I present this analysis to show how my methodological approach fulfills two seemingly unrelated goals. I prioritize disaggregation by studying a particular Black subpopulation – Back international students – while foregrounding Blackness as a social category worthy of critical sociological inquiry in the Canadian context. In doing so, I challenge the preponderant disavowal of Black presence in Canada while adopting a heterogenous lens to unpack the complex social locations constituting its presence in higher education (George-Mwangi, 2014).

Counter-storytelling

I draw my methodological approach from the critical race tradition of counter-storytelling. Counter-storytelling centres the perspectives of racialized groups whose narratives are often not told, misrepresented, or ignored altogether. Not only does this tradition assert that such narratives are legitimate, but they are lens through which to reveal entrenched power structures upholding diverse manifestations of social inequality (Solorzano and Yosso, 2001). Whether telling one's

own story, or narrating those of others, counter-storytelling seeks to invert "hierarchies of credibility" (Ray, 2022, p. 86) which sideline the perspectives of marginalized groups in favor of the majoritarian. Additionally, counter-stories can assist in building community amongst marginalized populations by giving a human face to theoretical approaches, challenge prevailing wisdom about groups by providing a context to advance new understandings and provide new windows of possibility for marginalized populations by showing that they are not alone in their position (Solorzano and Yosso, 2002).

This project gives voice to international students in manner that challenges predominant notions that often portray them unfavorably (some of which I have discussed in earlier sections). Scholars such as Ma (2019) and Deuchar (2022) argue a discourse of deficit pervades the bulk of research and media coverage on international students. Traditionally, coverage has followed a trend follows a trend "mistrust and threat" (Ma, 2019; 8). The deficit discourse is evident in scholarship referencing international students in relation to issues of academic integrity violations, cultural (in)competency, and struggles with post-migration adjustment. In other manifestations of deficit discourse, international students are portrayed as an elite, flamboyant group that are socially detached from social issues concerning the average Canadian student, yet crowding out domestic students by virtue of their increasing presence (Ma, 2019). This notion has been consistently featured in the depiction of international students in Canada. For example, a documentary released in 1979 created a moral panic amongst the Canadian citizens that Canadian universities were being overtaken by Chinese international students who were both wealthier and more academically talented (Wong, 2019; Hawthorn, 2009). Contemporary portrayals of international students have adopted a more sympathetic tone, instead, critiquing at the precarious conditions of international student recruitment (see Halliday, 2022; Baksh, 2022; Hune-Brown and Li, 2022). Yet deficit discourses have not entirely

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disappeared, even within scholarship which could be viewed as adopting a socially progressive outlook. The example I offered from hamtpon's (2020) book evidences this claim.

Research Context

My study is situated in the province of Alberta, Canada, which possesses Canada's fastest growing Black population (Statistics Canada, 2019). In the last two decades, Alberta has experienced a fivefold increase, owing primarily to immigration from African countries (Statistics Canada, 2019). Migration routes for various Black migrant and immigration groups differ; for example, for example, Nigerians generally admitted as international students or economic immigrants, while the Somali and Eritrean populations are primarily admitted as refugees (Statistics Canada, 2019). The provincial government's policy orientation towards internationalization and international students also makes Alberta an interesting context in which situate the study. In policy briefs such as the ten-year postsecondary strategy and international education strategy, strengthening internationalization by attracting and retaining a diverse pool of international students is highlighted as a key plan (Government of Alberta, 2021; 2020). The province already boasts a robust representation of this demographic; in 2019, international students accounted for almost a quarter of all graduate and doctoral students (ibid).

Conducting the interviews: Recruitment, access and protocol

Between October 2021 and April 2022, I conducted 40 semi-structured interviews with self-identifying Black undergraduate and graduate students across 4 universities in Alberta, Canada. I conducted the interviews both in-person and online (via Zoom), in accordance with the participants' preferred mode of communication. Most of my participants preferred to be interviewed online, mainly due to concerns around Covid-19 safety and general convenience. My sample consisted of 22 female and 18 male

students, coming from a variety of countries: Nigeria, Jamaica, Bahamas, Ivory Coast, Ethiopia, Botswana, Angola, Tanzania and Kenya, Cameroun and many more (see Appendix A for full list of participants). The interviews typically ranged from sixty-to-ninety minutes.

I recruited participants using a combination of personal networks and speculative emails. Thus, convenience sampling helped me garner my first group of participants, and snowball sampling helped attract a second batch (Parker *et al.*, 2019; Sedgwick, 2013). In the case of the former, I recruited participants through personal networks, relying on associations I had built through my extracurricular engagements with student groups, faith-based organizations, and friendship groups. My role as president of the Black Graduate Students' Association (BGSA) was particularly important in gaining access to participants within my university. I had met some participants at academic and social functions, and two interviewees were former colleagues who had also served as BGSA executives. To recruit participants from other institutions, I sent speculative emails soliciting participation to Black, African, and Caribbean student associations I could identify from internet searches. I also emailed details of my project to specific institutes at universities that regularly interface with international students, such as International Student Services. In all cases, I clearly stated that I received ethics approval to conduct the study and provided the approval code (Pro00113693).

Before each conversation, I stated that I was a doctoral student conducting research for my dissertation. I also explained that the findings of the study would only be used for teaching and research purposes. Given my role with the BGSA (which concluded in April 2022), I thought it necessary to explicitly state that my research was independent and not conducted on behalf of any group or association. I briefly explained the purpose of the study, including how I became interested in the topic. I explained that the purpose of my project was to understand "pre-and post-migration experiences of Black international students", particularly how they understand and relate to social and political issues in Canada. Although my recruitment material noted that I was interested in

understanding their relationship to racial politics, before each interview, I explained that this was part of a wider effort to understand the social integration of Black international students in Canada. Such an approach coheres with a network understanding of political participation as a socially acquired practice influenced not only by an explicit concern in a particular topic, but also other factors in the social environment (Hensby, 2019).

My topic guide comprised two segments: the first covered my participants' home country experiences, and the other covered their experiences in Canada. Scholars have stressed the importance of considering home country socialization of international students, to understand the effect of the racial, ethnic and socio-political contexts international the students emanate from on experiences abroad (Mwangi, 2014; Mwangi & Fries-Britt, 2015; Mwangi & English, 2017; Yao *et al.*, 2019). While I initially conceived of the two segments as independent of each other, some participants' responses straddled both segments, and a semi-structured interviewing style allowed for a fluid transition between them. For example, in describing racialization experiences in Canada, some participants would note how race was not a prominent concern in their home country but had become one in Canada. Another example was how participants' made sense of Indigenous issues in Canada. One participant, a Tanzanian, noted how he had learned of his own country's struggles for self-determination and could only imagine how differently his life trajectory would have been had he grown up in pre-independent Tanzania, an experience he felt Indigenous peoples were regularly subjected to.

I used a generalized topic guide to ensure consistency across all interviews. I adopted an open-ended questioning-style, which provided me an opportunity to explore my participants' interests in a wide variety of topics and probe for unanticipated angles. Consistent with a Bourdieusian understanding of politicisation as a process involving the accumulation of knowledge, experience, and capital, I found it necessary to unpack my participants' biographies before asking about their political participation in Canada. I often began the interviews by asking participants to describe their migration

journey to Canada, and Alberta, specifically. I asked what factors they considered in choosing Canada as a study destination, and their experiences acclimatizing to the country. I then transitioned to more focused inquiries about experiences of racialization and political responses. It was occasionally challenging to effectively ask participants about their political engagement as the term encompasses a plethora of behaviors and practices (Bloemraad, 2011). For example, it was common for participants to ask for clarification when I asked if they would describe themselves as politically active. Responses to this question ranged from paying attention to electoral politics to participating in a public demonstration.

I navigated this challenge by adopting a hybrid style of allowing participants to define political engagement in their words and gently guiding the conversation towards gestures of support for racial political movements and organizing. Again, using a semi-structured interviewing style facilitated opportunities to manoeuvre the conversation in this manner. After my participants initial response, I probed further for more tailored information, for example, by asking if they would join a protest, sign a petition, join a group, or share news stories about race-related issues on social media. In some cases, I specifically asked questions about the #Black Lives Matter (#BLM) and whether they identified with any of issues foregrounded by the movement, such as police brutality, and systemic racism in employment, healthcare, and other institutional contexts. I transcribed all interviews verbatim.

Thematic Data Analysis

I analyzed my data by manually developing a coding scheme. I selected two interviews randomly from my sample and identified themes emerging from the data. I then created a list consisting of these themes and compared them, searching for high, medium, and low levels of overlap. This process required me to continuously revisit and parse through the data, adjusting the labels I had assigned to

the themes where necessary. I read each interview transcript at least twice in full, and many more times in parts and sections. As I engaged in this process, I occasionally sought advice from my supervisor, Dr. Sandra Bucerius, given her extensive experience as a qualitative researcher. I consulted with Dr. Bucerius in cases where I needed was unsure of the titles I had assigned to my themes, to ensure that they represented the source data as accurately as possible. Afterwards, I tested the coding scheme by analyzing further interviews to assess the usability of the scheme. My coding scheme identified 7 major themes, and 25 major sub-themes (see Appendix)

Ethical considerations

I submitted a research ethics application to the University of Alberta Research Ethics Office (REO) in November 2021 to support this research (Pro00113693). The request was approved in the same month. I did not contact any participants until I received approval. While recruiting participants, I took several steps to ensure ethical research conduct. I provided every participant with a brief description and purpose of my study. I asked participants if I can record the interviews, and all provided consent. Some participants who were interviewed over Zoom asked whether the video component of the project would be recorded. Fortunately, Zoom has a "Audio Only" recording option and I clarified that I was only interested in retaining an audio recording. My participants were comfortable having the interview session recorded, and I provided extra assurances in a minority of cases where some were hesitant. I also explained that their identities would remain anonymous, and I would assign them pseudonyms to protect confidentiality. I also maintained an encrypted file matching demographic data to the pseudonyms.

Limitations of the study

A limitation of my methodology is that my participants could simply be misrepresenting their positions on their political participation and presenting themselves as more-or-less interested than they are. This is a methodological challenge without a clear solution. However, scholars have warned about such dangers subscribing to what Jerolmack and Khan (2014) caution against researchers about the risk of subscribing to the "attitudinal fallacy" – inferring behavior or reality from what participants share in interviews. To avoid this issue, Jerolmack and Khan recommend the adoption of ethnography (or participant observation), given its ability to capture social action "as it is lived" (p. 194), thereby bridging the gap between meaning and action to a greater extent than survey questionnaires or interviews.

In avoiding the attitudinal fallacy, however, there is also a risk that researchers become preoccupied with positivist notions of truth (Sandberg, 2010). Put differently, researchers may become more interested in "proving" the actuality of participant experiences than appreciating the social, cultural, and historical contexts encompassing them. In my view, my participants were candid about their experiences and political views. I worried that this would not be the case, especially considering my own positionality. Given that, at the time of interviewing, I served as president of a Black student group, I worried that participants who were aware of my role and activities may be uncomfortable expressing less positive views of Black student politics. However, these concerns did not materialise. My participants felt comfortable enough to express contrasting views on such matters. Some noted that groups such as individuals who get involved in political mobilizing do so for personal gain, and movements such as #Black Lives Matter (#BLM) were irrelevant to the Canadian context. These are not views I support, but I fostered the conditions under which participants could freely express them. Again, drawing on Sandberg (2010), it was important to let participants "be carried away with their

own narratives" (p. 462). Overall, I found establishing rapport with participants a relatively straightforward affair. As a qualitative researcher with extensive experience conducting interviews, I have accumulated a wealth of experience discussing sensitive topics and managing the emotional context of interviews, and I leveraged this skill set to manage the interviews comfortably.

Positionality

Every research endeavor is carried out from a specific standpoint, and self-reflection plays a crucial role in qualitative research, allowing researchers to analyze how their intersecting identities influenced the data collection process (Wilson, 2008). Personally, I am a cisgendered African man of Black ethnicity, pursuing a doctorate degree as an international student. Throughout the data collection phase, my various identities had a positive impact on building rapport with participants. Particularly, participants felt comfortable discussing emotionally charged subjects like race and racism. In interactions with male participants, my sexual identity sometimes created a sense of ease, and they would occasionally refer to me as "brother" or "bro." While such dynamics were not present when interviewing female participants, they still openly shared their experiences without hesitation.

Among my identities, I discovered that being Black and an international student created significant common ground with participants. They felt at ease expressing their feelings and sharing experiences related to these aspects. In some instances, participants assumed I understood their perspectives without needing much explanation, particularly when discussing challenges, they faced as Nigerian immigrants during the complex visa application process. However, when necessary, I would prompt participants to provide more detailed insights to ensure I generated data coherent enough to be used in academic writing.

Interestingly, participants' knowledge of my extracurricular engagements provided enabling and constraining effects on the research process, depending on the political leaning of the participant. At the time of conducting interviews, I held the role of president in a race-themed student association. As an advocate for Black students, I actively participated in committees, featured in news articles, and spoke at social events. I was concerned that these extracurricular activities might discourage participants uninterested in Black student politics from freely expressing their views on such endeavors. This concern proved valid on a few occasions; in a few interviews, I noticed that participants would begin their responses with phrases like "you might disagree with me..." or "don't take this the wrong way." Phrases like these illuminated my participants' own projections on my political stance, and my emotional reaction to theirs if they held a different position. Having noticed this dynamic, I adopted numerous I took steps to clearly articulate the details and purpose of my study, emphasizing its exploratory nature and my openness to diverse ideological perspectives. I also highlighted in my emails to potential participants that the research was independent of the association I represented, underscoring my role as the principal investigator.

There were also instances where participants' awareness of my involvement in student politics facilitated insightful conversations. In scholarly and autobiographical accounts of student political engagement, a common theme is the perceived disconnect between politically active students and support networks that do not value their efforts or understand the challenges they face, such as balancing academic commitments. With participants who shared similar experiences of political engagement, I was able to establish a sense of relatability and delve into discussions about these shared histories.

In conclusion, the methods selected for this project have enabled me to unearth new insights about the motivations, desires, constraints, and challenges of Black international students navigating Canada as a social system. As this project pursues a comprehensive understanding of the sociopolitical

integration of Black international students, my approach strikes a delicate balance of detailing the structural elements and power relations shaping the lives of Black international students, as well as their agentic enactments to these phenomena. My first article showcases the influence of multiculturalism on Black international students' decision to study to Canada, as well as how the students' on-the-ground experiences challenge the sense of charitableness established by this notion. My second article positions Black international students as a group consisting of diverse ideological positions and pragmatic concerns when negotiating their relationship to Black-themed racial justice movements. Finally, my third article underscores the intersection of sexuality, transnationalism, and precarity as they shape the life of a queer international students. All three articles provide novel empirical insights which will aid scholars and practioners seeking an intimate understanding of Black students and international students in the contemporary "internationalized" university.

Chapter Three: Article 1 – Enticed by multiculturalism, shocked by racism: Exploring the impact of Multicultural ideology on Black international students' decisions to study in Canada.

Abstract

In a relatively short period of time, Canada has emerged as a popular destination for international students. How are the students' perceptions of Canada's sociopolitical climate shaping this development, and what do these perceptions reveal about the potency of Canadian multiculturalism as a driver of international student recruitment? Drawing from 40 semi-structured interviews with international students from sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean, I analyze how multiculturalism operates as an ideological attraction for racialized international students harboring concerns about racial hostility in their prospective host countries. My findings also show how such perceptions are complicated by personal experiences of interpersonal racism and learning about Canada's colonial legacy. Overall, this article seeks to re-orient scholarship on international student motivations towards a consideration of the socio-cultural factors shaping migration decisions. It also builds on Buckner *et al's.,* (2021) study by showing how, despite a reticence by higher education institutions to concretely discuss race and racism as lived realities for international students, both are active concerns and key shapers of international student mobility.

Introduction

According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, international students are the fastest growing migrant among all groups of migrants, including refugees, family migrants, and labor migrants (Riano and Piguet, 2016). Canada is an active contributor to this trend. As of December

2022, the international student population stood at an estimated 807,750, making Canada the world's third leading destination for international students (Erudera, 2023). Faced with major cuts in public funding, Canadian higher institutions have become increasingly reliant on international students as core a revenue stream, such that in provinces like Ontario, international student tuition surpasses provincial funding as a funding source (Statistics Canada, 2021). Furthermore, in political rhetoric and policy documents, international students are continually referred to as "ideal immigrants" for permanent settlement. Given their young age profile, possession of Canadian qualifications and work experience, and proficiency in an official language, international students are presumed to transition more easily into the Canadian labor market than other classes of migrants (Sabzalieva *et al.*, 2022; Scott *et* al., 2016).

A surge of analysis from both scholarly and popular media analysis has followed this recruitment boom (for a comprehensive review, see El-Masri and Khan, 2022) and a prominent aspect of the coverage has analyzed Canada's appeal to international students. Most existing literature largely focuses on material factors like the relative affordability of Canadian education, favourable work prospects during and after graduation, and pathways to immigration (Das Gupta and Su, 2023; Adeyanju and Olatunji, 2022; El-Masri and Khan, 2022; Stein, 2019; 2017). This article centers the influence sociocultural factors on international students' decision making, particularly focusing on how students make sense of Canada's sociopolitical climate. Specifically, I explore how the notion of racism in Canada as "not-so-bad" (Kihika, 2020, 714) compared to competitor nations such as the United States and Germany – a notion derived from the knowledge of Canadian multiculturalism – serves as an ideological attraction for racialized international students concerned about the racial climate of prospective host countries. I also investigate how these views are challenged both by the students' personal encounters with interpersonal racism post-arrival, and their learning of Canada's colonial legacy – marked by atrocities against Indigenous peoples. I draw my data from 40 semi-

structured interviews conducted with international students from sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean, all of whom identify racially as "Black."

This article provides a nuanced perspective on Canada's appeal to international students by showing how racial perceptions (or better yet, misconceptions) are central to their decision-making process. Although international students are often omitted from conversations about race and migration (Buckner *et al.*, 2020; Changamire *et al.*, 2021; Yao and Viggiano, 2019), my findings show that race is an important consideration for students assessing their prospects of safety and thriving while studying abroad. With my focus on students from sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean (in contrast to much existing work), I understand international students as a heterogenous group consisting of diverse national, racial, and ethnic identities (George Mwangi, 2020). Hence, I reject the notion that international students "are all the same or can all be served in the same way" (George Mwangi *et al.*, 2019, p. 19).

I proceed in this article by, first, detailing key research on international students' migratory motivations. I specifically focus on works that draw on the push-pull model as a theoretical frame, arguing that these works have paid insufficient attention to how a country's public image shapes the migratory intentions of voluntary migrants. I incorporate a global critical race and racism framework (Christian, 2019) that attends to such dynamics by specifying how nations negotiate and propagate global meanings in their identity make up. I then present interview data showing how students think about race relations in Canada, and whether their perceptions match on-the-ground post-migration experiences.

International student migration

Why do people migrate? For decades, this seemingly simple question has animated extensive theorizing and debates amongst social scientists (Arango 2000; de Haas 2010a; Massey et al. 1993; Massey 2019; Skeldon 2012). Moreover, migration for study has historical precedent traceable to medieval Europe and Asia (De Wit and Merkx, 2012; Hawthorne, 2012). Yet, over the last two decades, major economies have become embroiled in a "great brain race" for globally mobile students (Wildavsky, 2012) to the extent that international student mobility is now considered a core feature of transnational migration systems (Hawthorne, 2012). While emergence of international student funding as a revenue stream and crucial human capital resource is a global phenomenon, Canada's intensified focus on recruiting this demographic reflects a wider shift in immigration policy towards highly skilled, highly educated, and self-sufficient individuals who can make prompt and vast economic contributions (Dauvergne, 2016; Arat-Koc, 1999). Through their skills, finances (primarily in the form of inflated tuition fees), possession of Canadian qualifications and proficiency in at least one official language, international students have been tasked with offsetting current and predicted economic challenges derived from reduced state funding for higher education, a declining fertility rate and an ageing population (Kim and Kwak, 2019).

Traditionally, research has heavily drawn on functionalist migration theories to understand international students' migration motivations. Much of this research draws on the push-pull model as an explanatory framework outlining the structural factors shaping student migration. (Mazzaroul and Soutar, 2002). According to the push-pull model, migration for education occurs because of acute resource or infrastructural challenges in the home country and inducements of the same kind in the host country. Such factors include but are not limited to: the presence/lack of funding opportunities and program availability; level of sociopolitical instability, prestige of the foreign institution, immigration intentions, work opportunities during/after studies and connection to peer and family networks (Gbolie and Gong 2019; Wilkins *et al.*, 2012; Sevenhuijsen, 2016; Lam *et* al., 2011).

Research drawing on the push-pull model mostly focuses on material factors. Despite the influence of the push-pull model as an explanatory framework for international student migration, the influence of the host country's sociopolitical environment has largely escaped scholarly attention. (Zhang *et* al., 2021). This gap exists even though international students continually experience "a world in flux" (Glass, 2017, 2), characterized by sporadic changes in policies, laws and political rhetoric surrounding their position in the host country, a point Robertson (2011) aptly makes. Writing in the Australian context, Robertson (2011, p. 2205) describes how neoliberal approaches which have bound together international education and skilled migration (what she terms the "education-migration nexus") engender conflicting discourses around international students' identity and rights, such that at various junctures, international students have been regarded as: 1) desirable designer migrants, 2) exploited cash cows, or 3) opportunistic backdoor migrants" (p. 2206). Riano *et al.*, (2018) make roughly the same point.

In the Canadian context, Stein and Andreotti (2016) make similar remarks in highlighting how the "global imaginary" rooted in western supremacy provides racialized, inconsistent framings of international students as sources of financial and intellectual capital (cash); underserving members using higher education as vehicle for social mobility (competition); and beneficiaries afforded the opportunity for upskilling with western knowledge (charity). Underlying Robertson and Stein, and Andreotti's assertions is the fact that in popular host countries, international students are subject to an erratic sociopolitical landscape that continually reassesses their desirability and function to the wider nation-building project. Some of this uncertainty stems from wider geopolitical tensions, yet the management of international student flows is one area in which they manifest, for example, Saudi Arabia's decision to withdraw all students from Canadian institutions studying under Saudi state funding following Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's criticism of the country's human rights record (Chase, 2018). Thus, even in situations where they are not an explicit source of contention,

international student flows and experiences can still be heavily affected by political decisions and rhetoric. I argue, then, that paying attention to how students perceive the sociopolitical climate of prospective countries offers a pathway to understand the factors shaping international student mobility on in "changing, uncertain times" (Zhang, *et al.,* 2021).

Doing so also offers an avenue towards addressing a popular critique of the push-pull model as static in its outlook and unable to understand the dynamic, social processes associated with migration (de Haas, 2021). Finally, attending to the influence of sociopolitical climate advances an agentive understanding of international students (Deuchar, 2022), acknowledging their ability to make decisions in their best interests while bound by pre-existing cultural beliefs and institutional constraints (Amrith and Sahraouie, 2018; Alba and Nee).

A small body of writing has spotlighted the influence of the host country's perceived sociopolitical climate on international students' migration decisions and much of this research centres comparisons between the United States and Canada, with the latter often perceived as being more hospitable. A report by the Canadian Bureau for international students (2018) finds the perception of Canada as non-discriminatory and tolerant was the third most compelling reason why international students chose to study in the country. Zhang *et al* (2021) uncover similar findings. Following interviews with 20 participants from 5 continents, the authors found that immigration and political climate were major "country-level factors" influencing migratory decisions. Some participants perceived Canada's pro-immigration rhetoric and policies as indicative of a calmer political climate than the United States, which was seen as far more hostile. Chen's (2016) study of 15 Chinese international students makes roughly the same point. Earlier research also shows how political climate creates a dyadic relationship between both countries on student migrant flows, such that circumstances in one country may alter the proportion of students going to the other. Research conducted by She and Wotherspoon, (2013) and Mueller (2009) shows how following the 9/11 attacks, the number of

students seeking entry to the United States from Muslim-majority countries reduced, while those from other countries steadied. However, the number of students from Muslim-majority countries entering Canada increased while the number of students from non-Muslim countries dropped. Thus, the available research alludes to the influence of political climate on international students' study abroad decision making, however, further analysis is needed to understand the specific contours international students decision-making as it pertains to race and political climate? One might ask: what ideological and representational discourses of race relations are international students subscribing to, or influenced by, in perceiving Canada as a safer environment to study? More specifically, how is Canada's multiculturalism shaping its outward appeal to international students?

Social context: Canadian Multiculturalism

While I focus on the perceptions of Canadian multiculturalism among racialized international students, my analysis is inseparable from Canada's sociohistorical conditions and structure. As I show, my participants' assessments of political climate and race relations of potential study destinations can be traced to implicit endorsements of multiculturalism, which they perceive as a favorable feature that sets Canada apart from other popular international students' study locations. However, participants' encounters with interpersonal racism and growing awareness of Canada's colonial legacy upon migration complicate these preconceptions, even leaving some participants feeling conflicted about their choice. To understand the ideological underpinnings of their preconceptions, it is crucial to describe Canadian multiculturalism, highlighting popular arguments and criticisms.

Canada has gained notoriety as a beacon of racial and ethnic tolerance, as well as a welcoming destination for immigrants (Reitz, *et al.*, 2015). The source of this reputation can be traced to Canada's adoption of multiculturalism as a federal policy in 1971. The policy was introduced by then-Prime

Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau on the rationale that "national unity, if it is to mean anything in the deeply personal sense, must be founded on confidence in one's own individual identity". As a political philosophy and a cultural approach, multiculturalism promotes diversity as a core principle, stressing the retention of diverse ethnic, religious and social orientations in pursuit of national prosperity (Kymlicka, 1999). According to Fries and Gingrich (2010), a sociological understanding of multiculturalism has two features: (1) standing in opposition to the cultural unification and universalization in modern societies; and (2) recognizing asymmetries between minority and mainstream cultures. Historically, Canada's pro-immigration stance has largely hinged on its function of addressing economic and demographic shortages. Yet, scholars position multiculturalism ideology as the ideological pillar upon which such nation-building aspirations can be achieved. According to Ng and Metz (2014), multiculturalism can bolster national competitiveness by attracting skilled migrants from diverse racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds. The authors also highlight the potential for multiculturalism to operate as "political glue", enhancing social relations between citizens and immigrants, unifying diverse groups around a common goal or identity, and reducing intolerance on the basis of the above-mentioned characteristics. Furthermore, research also cites adherence to multiculturalism as a key factor behind comparatively higher rates of naturalization in Canada compared and the U (Bloemraad, 2006). Explaining this disparity, scholar Irene Blomeraad (2006, 153) cites qualitative and material differences in the government's approach to promoting multiculturalism in both countries. Bloemraad contends that although both countries declare an appreciation for diversity "the fact that the Canadian government officially recognizes, celebrates, and financially supports diversity – in however a limited manner – favorably influences immigrants' understanding of citizenship and their place in society" (153).

Discourses of multiculturalism construe racially motivated discrimination and intolerance as opposed to the goal fostering national harmony. However, notable critiques argue that

multiculturalism has the opposite effect. Scholars writing in the field of anti-racism argue that multicultural acts as a political smokescreen which obscures attention from historic and contemporary patterns of racial injustice. Critics contend that multiculturalism masks Canada's assorted legacy of settler colonialism as well as racial bias in policing, incarceration, and employment (Samuels-Wortley, 2021; Wortley and Owusu-Bempah, 2011; Aylward, 1999; Galabuzzi, 2006). Scholars describe multiculturalism as a "a form of window dressing", exalted for the purpose of sanitizing Canada's reputation on the world stage and concealing exclusionary attitudes and behaviors (Perry, 2015). Others argue that dominant articulations of multiculturalism fail to consider negative experiences of racialized groups in different geographic locales, thus limiting opportunities for anti-racist interventions (Thobani, 2007; Walcott, 1997).

While support for, and criticisms of multiculturalism abound, empirical research examining its effect on the lived realities of migrants is scant (Gingrich and Fries, 2015). Writings on the subject tend to be dominated by government releases (i.e., surveys and reports) (Focus Canada, 2015; Soroka and Robertson, 2010), and an assortment of cultural critiques (Abu-Laban *et* al., 2023; Kymlicka, 2014; Bisoondath 1994; Koopmans and Stathan, 1999;). Thus, barring a few exceptions (Tetrault *et al.*, 2019; Bloemraad, 2006), we possess little in the form of qualitative data unpacking how multiculturalism influences of the lived realities of migrants, notably their assessments of Canada as a potential host country. We also know little about how preconceptions of multiculturalism are challenged or reinforced by post-migration experiences. On a more general level, I echo Poteet and Gomez' (2015, 89) assertion that how multiculturalism in Canada "shapes specific local host contexts of reception for international students, including specific university contexts, warrants further study". Consequently, by examining the political climate, I aim to shed light on how multiculturalism influences international students' decision to study in Canada. My findings uncover nuanced data which highlights how the notion of Canada as tolerant – a characteristic traceable to multicultural policy – is an important

consideration for international students. As my sample consists of students who all identify as Black, I show how their concerns about race-motivated violence and mistreatment fuels an initial appeal for Canadian multiculturalism, making Canada an ideological attraction. My study also reveals how such notions are challenged by their experiences on interpersonal racism, as well as their acquired knowledge about Canada's colonial legacy. My data illuminates the sensemaking processes of racialized international students as they consider the implications of racial identity on international students' mobility trajectories.

My analysis draws on new currents in critical race theory (CRT) which have broadened its analytical scope to issues of transnationalism and globalization (Yao *et al.*, 2019). Originating in the 1980s, CRT was developed by a collection of activists, lawyers, and scholars who sought to emphasize the influence of race and racism, as well as their interconnected relationship with other vectors of social inequality such as gender, sexuality, and disability, on various social outcomes (Crenshaw, 1988). It is an offshoot of Critical Legal Studies (CLS), a social justice framework that sought to illuminate law as a social construction that reinforces class-based inequalities. Inspired by CLS's ontological ethos but frustrated by its meager consideration for race, the CRT movement emerged with the purpose of foregrounding analysis of race and racism as structural determinants of social life. As such CRT conceives of both elements as endemic features of society; "the usual way a society does business" (Delgado and Stefancic, 2017, p. 7). Though early works focused on analysis of US-law, CRT has evolved into a full-fledged academic paradigm encompassing several conceptual and methodological approaches. Since Ladson-Billings and Tate (1998) pioneered the use of CRT in Education studies, it has also become one of the most widely used frameworks to explain race-related affairs in this domain. For example, scholars have examined the influence of stereotypes (Schroeter and James, 2015; James, 2012) and language discrimination (Schroeter and James, 2015). On a structural level, CRT research has also critiqued the absence of sufficient acknowledgment about the centrality of race and racism to

the experiences of international students, though most are non-white (Buckner *et al.*, 2021; Yao and Viggiano, 2019).

Recent scholarship has situated CRT within a world systems approach and sought to understand how projects of racial domination and white supremacy operate on the global stage (Christian: 2019; Weiner, 2012). For example, Christian (2019, 127) notes how the maintenance of racist structures occurs through the adoption and curation of racial logics and reputations that provide an "organizing map to explain and interpret social relations". Using discourses and representations as "ideological mechanisms", Christian explains that countries founded on fundamentally white-supremacist agendas can engage in a form of reputation-laundering, presenting a sanitized image of racial utopia while masking historic and contemporary injustices. These logics are diffused horizontally, towards other nations and their inhabitants, and vertically, towards persons residing in the country. Thus, these framings become "dominant narratives" guiding social action, and working to the detriment of opposing by less dominant groups that challenge such positions. As such, counter-storytelling a core CRT tenet, centres the narratives of such groups, contending that they are legitimate, well-informed, and thus, should be taken seriously (Solorzano and Yosso, 2001). Drawing on personal narratives, personal stories and parables, counter-storytelling inverts "hierarchies of credibility" (Ray, 2022, p. 86), while not assuming that less dominant groups are always correct or homogenous in opinion.

Setting and Methods

My focus on students from sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean is based on Canada's increasing focus on both regions for recruitment. In recent times, the goal of remaining a major attraction for international students has been paired with a need to diversify source regions. Advisory briefs from

expert bodies versed in the dynamics of international education industry – Colleges and Institutes Canada and ICEF and to cite a few – have identified sub-Saharan Africa as the next major region to target. As such, recruitment from sub-Saharan Africa has increased by 67% over the last five years (Campus France, 2022). While statistics evidencing the increased focus on the Caribbean are lacking, anecdotal evidence from experts working in the region attests to Canada's increasing presence in the region:

"I would say for the last five to six years, Canada has been the number one choice among students from the eastern Caribbean particularly," […] Initially it used to be the UK and the US but in the last six years we have seen a change, a very rapid change in that. I think it speaks to the presence of the Canadian schools in the market all of the time, plus they have the support of their government. They have a lot of mechanisms in place to create the environment to allow them to penetrate markets, in brand and recruitment." – Sheena Alleyne, representative of the Student Centre, Barbados (in Barbados Today, 2022, para. 4)

Also, this study is situated in Alberta, which possesses Canada's fastest growing Black population (Statistics Canada, 2019). Alberta alone has experienced a fivefold increase in the last two decades, owing primarily to immigration from African countries (Statistics Canada, 2019). In 1996, the province's Black population stood at approximately 25,000. By 2016, that number has since increased to nearly 130,000 (Fundira, 2021).

Data for this article is derived from 40 interviews with self-identifying Black international students. It emerges from a larger qualitative study exploring the sociopolitical integration of Black international students in Canada. I conducted the interviews between October 2021 and April 2022. I used a semi-structured interview style, allowing both participants and I to steer the discussion towards unanticipated but crucial aspects of their experiences (Presser and Sandberg, 2015). I initially

did not think of Black international students' migratory decision-making processes as a core aspect of the study. However, the spontaneity of responses I received during the first few interviews – particularly concerning perceptions of racial politics in Canada and other countries in Europe and North America - prompted me to foreground the topic in subsequent conversations. Thus, in pursuing this line of inquiry, I asked questions such as "Tell me about your journey to Canada", "Where were you before you came to Canada?", and "What factors did you consider in choosing Canada as a place to study?"

Sampling

I used a combination of purposive sampling and snowball sampling to recruit participants. Purposive sampling involves the selection of individuals based on pre-defined criteria, such as knowledge and experience on a particular topic, or possession of a particular social position (Palinkas *et* al., 2015). Eligible participants for this study fulfilled four criteria: 1) self-identify racially as Black; 2) be an international student or have studied as one within the last five years; 3) be enrolled at a post-secondary institution in Alberta or have studied at one within the last five years; and 4) be 18 years and over. My participants ranged in age from 18 to 43 years old. 22 identified as women and 18 as men.

I recruited my participants through personal and professional networks. I was also able to recruit some participants by sending recruitment emails to Black, African, and Caribbean student associations and university institutes that regularly interact with Black international students, such as the international student services at respective institutions in Alberta. In all cases, I clearly described my project and eligibility requirements for prospective participants. I also noted that the study received ethics approval at the University of Alberta and provided the unique approval code (Pro00113693).

Snowball sampling helped recruit a second batch of interviewees. Using snowball sampling, research participants recommended potential participants who met the eligibility requirements of the study (Parker *et al.*, 2019). I often asked my initial participants if they could recommend another person who would be interested in participating in the study. In most cases, participants were able to recommend at least one person, whom I subsequently contacted with details of the study.

Analysis

I adopted a thematic analysis to identify, organize, analyze, and report patterns present within my dataset. Braun and Clarke (2006) cite many benefits of adopting thematic analysis: its highly flexible nature makes it adaptable to a variety of research studies; its ability to force the researcher to adopt a well-structured approach to handling data; its provision of a more accessible form of analysis for early career researchers; finally, its ability to handle the similarities and differences among research participants, thereby generating unanticipated insights. In addition, I utilized Attride-Stirling's (2001) concepts of global, organizing, and basic themes to categorize my data. I identified simple premises emerging from the data (basic themes), categorized them under mid-size clusters summarizing the main ideas emerging from these basic themes (organizing themes) and finally, I created superordinate groups that encompass the main clusters of ideas emerging from the data in total. Examples of basic themes included "race as a motivating factor", "views of Canada as racially tolerant" "funding opportunities", "parental influence" "opportunities for immigration after degree completion". For organizing themes, I developed themes such as "migration motivations". For global themes, I developed themes such as "reasons for choosing Canada as a study destination."

Findings

Reasons for coming to Canada.

As an ice-breaker question, I asked my participants to unpack their migration journey to Canada and describe the factors they considered in their assessment of viable study destinations. Some students stated that they had little influence over their choice of country as their parents had made the decision on their behalf. Similarly, another group noted that they already had a family member in the country who encouraged them to move. Supporting extant scholarship, participants also cited factors such as the relative affordability of Canadian tuition and opportunities for immigration after study. Yet, a surprising theme was participants' constant mentions of the social and political climate of countries they had considered studying in. Many expressed positive views of Canada's openness to immigration; however, these viewed were often coupled with negative assessments of other nations, especially the United States . In keeping with existing research (Zhang *et al.*, 2021), some participants explicitly noted that they avoided the United States . because it seemed more overtly discriminatory towards non-white people. While Canada was not entirely devoid of racism, many perceived it to be less turbulent than the United States. Such revelations were not always promptly shared with me as participants expressed varying degrees of comfort discussing racism. In some instances, some made ambiguous allusions to racism, and I had to probe for further elucidation. Kweku, for example, told me that he considered going to the United States. but decided against going there "because of the way the country is". Intrigued by his response, I probed for a clearer understanding of his point:

"Well, I'm talking specifically about racism. I haven't experienced that in the United States because I haven't been there, […] people have just been… you know whatever happened to them, killing them because they are Black or Hispanic or whatever, they don't fit to the form […] they are just haphazardly killed, and I don't mess with that so I wasn't about to go to the United States. for four years of my life"

Despite a keenness to avoid tensions in the United States, Kweku did not think of Canada to be entirely devoid of such issues. Instead, like many others, he perceived racism in Canada as more subtle and tolerable, which made it more manageable for him:

"Why I came to Canada? I don't really perceive Canada to be any different, but what I would say is that they…they tend to harbor it within them than show it. I wouldn't say majority are racist, but those who are tend not to show it as much compared to the United States."

Rhian, a student from Barbados, made similar juxtapositions between Canada and United States. Like Kweku, Rhian, highlights an awareness of racism in both countries, but positions Canada as less hostile than the United States.

Well, they say Canada's welcoming, they want immigrants like, Canada is accepting of everyone. Everyone can express themselves here. It's a multicultural place. But I also heard Canada is just like the US, it's just less in your face about the racism and the issues that they have. It's just, I guess, the US is the one that we see on the news all the time. But truly, what I also heard is, Canada is no different. Its just that just people are more polite about their racism.

Gabriel presented much of the same picture, presenting the United States and Canada, and seeing former as more hostile towards Black people:

"I was reluctant to go to the States because of the international reputation of race, right. So, there was much more pronounced cautionary tale, what it will mean for me as an African to go to America. So, there were some factors that

felt more severe for me to handle, and I was much more interested in a context that felt less severe. I may go back on my

word on that but those were my first impressions."

Another participant, Anna makes a more direct reference to – albeit implicitly – to being attracted by Canada's reputation for multiculturalism and respect for cultural diversity:

"I think Canada has a great PR, whoever it is that's in charge of marketing Canada to the world does a fantastic job [...] You know they have this image of…errr…the cultural mosaic I believe.. I felt, compared to America where things are always politically tumultuous [...] concerning race, and even other things. America just always seems on fire […] Especially at that time [2016], I think. I think we knew Obama was leaving office. And it was just nasty. And it just seemed too fast."

Interestingly, none of the participants who held unfavorable views of the United States. had visited the country, and only two had family or close peers residing there. In most cases, strong opinions of the United States. emanated from media coverage of fatal violence against unarmed Black people. However, some participants could not coherently trace the source of their perceptions about the United States. or Canada. Rather, views of both groups were often expressed as "common-sense" assumptions which required little elaboration to unpack. Other critical remarks about the United States concerned issues of gun violence. Roxanne received admission to universities in the United States and Canada, but chose Canada due to concerns about mass shootings in the United States:

So, I targeted both the United States and Canada, and I had offers from both, I had an offer from Vigrinia Tech in the United States and I had an offer from the U of A [University of Alberta] in Canada. But I decided to come over

here [Canada] because in the news, you're seeing this gun violence here and there in the United States, I mean it's not

everyone that experiences it, but I saw it a lot in the news and I didn't want to put myself out there.

The United States is still the most popular destination for international students, however, between 2017 and 2022, enrollment at their colleges and universities has declined by 7% (Anderson, 2022). Within the same period, Canada's enrollment rate increased by 52% (ibid). Empirical literature examining student mobility shifts is scant (Gboliie and Gong, 2021), yet some commentary has highlighted factors behind this change, such as mobility disruptions caused by the coronavirus pandemic, differences in immigration policies and work opportunities, and tense geopolitical relations with major sending countries (ibid). Adding qualitative depth to contextualize these rationales, my participants' insights underscore how perceptions of sociopolitical climate both inform a deterrence towards the United States, and, in turn, a fondness for Canada.

Positive views of Canada also stemmed from negative racialization experiences in other countries. Sheran was one of two participants who completed a master's degree program in Germany. Both were appreciative of the country's free-tuition policy, but neither considered staying beyond the duration of their programs. Sheran described German society as "reserved" and starkly different from her home country, Ghana. However, more serious concerns were her experiences of gendered racialization:

Germans are very reserved, they keep to themselves, so that's one point of it. It was more or less like a cultural shock

and also, as a Black person, I experienced racism from one or two people, there was a time I was walking to the library,

and there was a guy that was riding a bicycle who rode past me, and when he rode past me, he spoke German and said

"Scheisse" which means, "Black woman shit", and he spat at me, and I had to jump, otherwise the spit would have

been all over me. That one I never forget.

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In addition, Sheran recounted experiencing more subtle, racialized social interactions on public transit.

"If you sit on a train, if there is, there are other seats, even if the train full to the brim, and it's by you that there's a vacant seat, they will never sit by you. And if you happen to be the person that enters the train to sit in that vacant seat, with all other seats being occupied, you realize that they will start getting up. They will leave the area for you, they will stand and hold the holder in the train so that they don't fall, and it will be as if they are alighting, no they will just stand in the train, so, another white person gets off for a seat to be vacant before they sit. They will never sit by you as a Black person."

To explain such occurrences, Purifoye (2015) coins the term 'nice nastiness' – a form of racial microaggression which combines "expressions of politeness with disdain and distancing" (p. 287). Nonso, another participant who studied in Germany, recalled being profiled by police and asked about his whereabouts, as he matched the description of someone they were looking for. Despite answering several lines of questioning, the police would not let him go. He was only released and after some Germans who had been waiting at a bus station with him intervened and confirmed that he had indeed been waiting for the bus with them. In addition, Nonso and Sheran recounted structural challenges, such as the inability to secure gainful employment after graduation, attributing this challenge to not having German citizenship or being fluent in the language. Based on these interpersonal and structural challenges, Sheran and Nonso saw their time in Germany as a transitional period. Moving to Canada presented an opportunity to settle in a more welcoming environment, as Sheran asserts "I mean there is no place like home but at least, you can get a place that feels a bit like home, but to me Germany never felt like home, it also felt like I'm in some sort of transition, like I need to leave." (Sheran)

Overall, this line of inquiry revealed interesting insights into international students from sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean factored political climate of host nations in their decision making over study destination. Not only were participants aware of their racial identity, but they used it as a basis by which to evaluate their prospects in various countries. Unfavorable perceptions of countries such as the United States and Canada, coupled with the idea of Canada as less hostile, shaped their decision to study in Canada. From such insights, we develop empirical grounding to accommodate claims such as those expressed by Pillay (2015, 69) that […] peoples who choose to immigrate to Canada base their decision, in part, on government policies which promote the image of Canada as a tolerant, accepting, and multicultural society […].

Racialization experiences in Canada

Having expressed relatively positive views of Canada's political climate, I asked participants' whether their preconceptions matched post-migration experiences matched their preconceptions. All participants noted that they had not experienced any of the issues they attributed to the USA such as gun violence or police brutality. However, most participants recounted experiences they attributed to racism. They ranged from being followed by security at retail stores, to being subjected to racial slurs at school and social gatherings. Two participants recounted instances of "nice nastiness" on public transit, like the experience of Sheran in Germany. Experiences on public transport also took on an overt character. John-Bus, a Francophone from Cameroun, recounted an incident where he was speaking French on a bus ride home and heard someone at the back of the bus yell "speak white!" as he exited. Understandably, for many participants, such experiences provoked feelings of sadness and anger. They also underscored how race interests with language in complicated ways in Alberta despite Canada's status at the federal level as officially bilingual in English and French, as well as multicultural.

In fact, multicultural policy operated a bilingual French and English framework when it was introduced by Pierre Elliott Trudeau in 1971.

There was also a general acknowledgment amongst many students that racism is hard to identify; while many had negative experiences, it was sometimes difficult to accurately determine whether racial difference was the motivating factor behind it. Moreover, in some interviews, participants described their negative experiences as irksome, but not to the extent that they dwelt upon it. In making sense of their responses to these, a few students drew on their home country socialization experiences. They described how growing up in countries with a majority-Black population had instilled only a nascent race consciousness which they had not possessed before coming to Canada. Consequently, some participants often felt conflicted in their sensemaking around and reaction to negative incidents. While some participants noted feeling shocked, angered, and emotional distress, others perceived themselves as lacking acculturation to race dynamics in Canada to downplay the effect of negative experiences as minor irritations. drew on their lack of acculturation to race dynamics in Canada to downplay such incidents as minor irritations. Interestingly, participants who downplayed the negative incidents occasionally drew distinctions between their reactions and those of their Black Canadian peers. They perceived Black Canadians not only as more adept at spotting and naming racism, but also more emotionally impacted by it. Such insights are not without precedent – a report by Statistics Canada (2019) finds that Black Canadian-Born Blacks were five times more likely to report experiencing discrimination than Black immigrants. Thus, according to this sub-group of participants, Black Canadians possesses greater familiarity with race dynamics in Canada due to longer residency, in contrast to them. My conversation with Tenzu, a student from Ghana, illustrates point: I asked him, "Have you experienced any racism since you've been here", to which he responds:

Tenzu: Just racial slurs, you know, at the party scene, a couple of white guys, ganging up on you, tryna ask you if they can call you the N word, and stuff, tryna feel like they're part of a gang or something Me personally, it ticks me off, but again, growing up in Africa, I never knew how much of a weight a word had until I was out here. So me personally, it does piss me off, but it doesn't piss me off to the point where I want to confront them or anything …

I respond to Tenzu by asking whether he believes a Black Canadian would react differently to him:

Tenzu: A Black person that was raised here? Yeah, because, the meaning, it's kinda putting you down. For me, it wasn't, because I didn't have to grow up around that stuff. When you grow up in Africa you have different things that you have to be aware of, whereby people here have different stuff that they have to be deal with, and that's one of the stuff they have to deal with

Thus, Tenzu draws a distinction between his reaction as a recent migrant to Canada and those of his Black Canadian counterparts, whom he perceives as more acclimatized to cultural codes of response to racially charged incidents. Tenzu acknowledges the derogatory nature of the racial slur yet views his newcomer status as a mitigating factor which allows him to compartmentalize such incidents as ignorable annoyances. In positing Black Canadians as adopting a less tolerant stance towards these incidents, Tenzu also highlights the broader socio-cultural matrix of race-relations Black Canadians have navigated. He describes how racial slurs, particularly in the Canadian context, serve as tools of degradation, used to reinforce, and perpetuate a hierarchy of racial inferiority. In this regard, the use of anti-Black racial slurs remains an ever-present feature in the lives of Black Canadian children attending public schools (see Morris, 2023; Hristova, 2022). Thus, Tenzu acknowledges these experiences as important contributing factors in the construction of Black Canadians' proactive stances on confronting racism. Framing his narrative in this manner, Tenzu provides a nuanced

understanding of differential racial experiences in Canada, detailing the intersection of race and migrant status in experiences of cultural adaptation.

Participants also framed Black Canadians as more willing to mobilize around racist encounters, either by confronting the transgressor, or reporting the incident to an authority figure. In a similar vein, I spoke to John, who narrated an experience he had within his first few days in Canada:

John: In 2016 or something. I came to school, I was 14 t. So everything was new, even the language was confusing, and I went to seek help from academic advisors, I actually have the email. And the lady tells me "I know you're African but you should learn how to read." Like…okay…like straight out. I think I have an email I sent to the dean or chair or whatever, and his answer was like "okay we're gonna find out about this", and that was the last time I heard of it. The woman still works there anyways. I think she was assuming Africans don't read at all.

Prof: Were you affected by that experience at all?

John: "When it happened it didn't really get to me until […] like I knew it was wrong for her to say that, but then because I wasn't really exposed to the race thing, I didn't really act until I spoke to someone who's been here for long and he was like "nah you need to take this on" because he was exposed to racist behavior for longer."

Like Tenzu, John clearly identifies a racially charged incident but downplays its impact on him, citing a perceived lack of familiarity with race dynamics as his justification. Furthermore, similar to Tenzu, John compares his reaction to that of his Black Canadian counterpart. In this instance, however, his Black Canadian peer acts as an interpretive guide, ascertaining whether John's experience warrants reporting to school authorities. Tenzu and John's insights illustrate the findings indicate that while race remains a core aspect of my participants' experience in Canada, the extent of their reactions and

understandings of it are dependent on a possession of a contextualized form of cultural capital acquired from relations with Black Canadian peers and longer tenure in the host country.

Participants also acquired knowledge about how to navigate relations with law enforcement. None of my participants encountered police on or off-campus, but some students explained that they had learned how to navigate such experiences from Black and Indigenous friends. Their learning experienced concerned how to interact with police officers while calmly asserting their legal rights:

James: I have met some good African brothers, Caribbean brothers that talk to me about laws in Canada, […] Black Canadians brother. How the laws work. When someone does this, this is what you can do, what you can't do, what you are owed or not owed [...] There was this white lady I met at campus residence, well she's not full white, she's white and native […] She told me about the police [...]. If the police stop you, you ask them "am I being detained, or am I just being checked" if he says you're just being checked, you stay in your corner, if you say you're being detained, you ask "why am I being detained" if he asks you for your papers, you ask again "am I being detained". If he says yes , you ask why again. He has a body camera, so all these things are being recorded […] So if you're co-operating with him and you're more into this communicating back and forth with him, he has no power.

Prof: She taught you all of this?

James: She taught me all of this brother. I swear to God.

While interpersonal interactions dominated discussions of racism, participants were alluded to systemic issues. A few graduate students cited the problems around the lack of race-based data as "a sign that there is a problem that they don't want you know about". In sum, both overt and covert racialization experiences disrupted preconceptions of Canada as devoid of racism.

Learning about Canada's colonial history

Gaining an understanding of Canada's political climate also involved grappling with its colonial legacy. All except one of my participants admitted that they did not know Canada had an Indigenous population before migrating to Canada. Their knowledge about Indigenous people was acquired through different sources. For example, one participant, Rachel, participated in a sensitivity training exercise called 'the blanket exercise' while working as a resident assistant in her dormitory. This interactive activity was designed to teach about the history of colonization in Canada (Faithful Action for Justice, 2022). Another interviewee, Bianca, worked on a research project which provided the opportunity to visit Indigenous reservations. These experiences were immensely appreciated as they provided valuable insights into structural inequities and resource disparities faced by Indigenous communities. Through such experiences, Bianca perceived Canada as hypocritical by not addressing its own issues with systemic racism:

It's disgusting. Like there's no other word to describe it This is disgusting and it's scary because […] it just feels like Canada sometimes can be quite hypocritical, because they'll they're pointing their fingers at the US and they'll say all this stuff about the US [...] but truly, you guys do the same things, you are just not in the news, and its not highlighted. And, and especially when it comes to Indigenous issues. It really makes me sad, because when you think about it, the white, the white person, I don't think that they see much difference between the Indigenous and the Black person. So it just makes me feel like what they'll do to them, they'll do to us, and vice versa. (Bianca)

Bianca forges an emotional connection to the treatment of Indigenous peoples by juxtaposing them alongside her own knowledge of anti-Black racism. Scholars writing on Black and Indigenous solidarities have gestured towards points of connection and solidarity between both struggles while also acknowledging their unique specificities (Amadahy and Lawrence, 2021; Maynard and Simpson, 2022). Bianca continues:

"I guess because I'm new to Canada, I can't ever imagine what it's like to grow up in a culture, that this has been your land, and it was just taken from you, and ever since then you've been fighting, just for your basic human rights, and still fighting, like having access to basic clean water, why is that an issue? It seems insane to me" (Bianca)

Bianca's attentiveness to the lack of adequate water supply in Indigenous reserves stems from her academic interests in disparate access to water resources amongst racialized communities:

I actually did a paper looking at it, because I'm interested in like water quality. And in the paper I was looking at how disproportionately, let's say a lot of industrial companies, and landfills. And toxic ways are intentionally placed in communities that are predominantly Black, predominantly with Indigenous people. And right next door, you have a white community, and they have the best water treatment, they don't have any issues with access to clean water. And that's just it's like, it's so blatantly in your face. And it's just like, how, how could you do that?

Bianca's shock at discovering the lack of access to clean water for Indigenous is even more striking when considered with the fact that Canada possesses 20 percent of the world's freshwater reserves (Fraser Institute, 2018; Freeman, 2016). The country's water wealth is so significant that it exports water to other countries – for example, Detroit has relied on Canada's water reserves since 1964 (CBC News, 2008). Such discoveries led Bianca to lament the blatant, yet relatively overlooked discrimination faced by Indigenous peoples in Canada. Also, through such discoveries, participants came to understand that racism continues to affect Indigenous peoples in the present day, rather than being confined to historical events of a bygone era (Wolfe, 2006). A section of interviewees attributed their initial lack of awareness to a deliberate attempt by Canadian institutions to sanitize Canadian history. Izundu, for example, laments the fact that he had learned some of the popular tropes about

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Indigenous welfare long before he learned about Canada's residential school system and the forced adoption of Indigenous children (Sixties Scoop):

"I've been here for four years, and I've just learned about residential schools, and it's a huge part of the history, and […] between those four years, I have learnt how Indigenous people get benefits, and Indigenous people get allowances, you hear these things and you think "okay" Canada is out here doing nice things". […] I've been in different classes. No one thought about mentioning the [sixties] scoop … so there's a lot of things that people hide from you, deliberately, to make you feel like "oh there's no racism here" racism is here … its just a matter of where you get your information." (Izundu)

Participants also contextualized Canada's settler-colonial political structure by comparing ongoing struggles for self-determination with the historical context of their own countries. As all interviewees were natives of countries that were formerly under colonial control, some participants contemplated the potential impact of experiencing colonial rule on their lives, imagining how much worse their circumstances might have been: One interview, a native of Tanzania said:

I feel bad, because, when I think about, what if Tanzania never got independence, and we're still under colonization, that's what I think about. Like, its like, the settlers came, and overtook everything to the point where they own it. You know, that happened to us but we were able to get independence, and we were able to get sovereignty to run our own country, and I think about that (Izundu)

Such comparisons were discomforting; however, through deep introspection on this topic, participants expressed a sense of empathy for, and solidarity with Indigenous peoples.

Tuck and Yang (2012) describe immigration as a "colonial pathway" which "invites the refugee/immigrant/migrant to be a settler" (p. 18). While some participants viewed the contemporary

settler colonial as white, a few revealed difficulties grappling with how migrating to Canada had also resulted in their entanglement in the settler project. Such persons were usually graduate studies of a social science orientation. Shandi, from Botswana, was completing a Doctorate of fine arts degree in theatre. Through collaborations with Indigenous artists and performers, she had learned a great deal about colonialism in Canada. At the time of speaking with her, Shandi stated that she had no intention of staying in Canada beyond the length of her program as she felt "complicit" in the dispossession of Indigenous peoples. Another participant, who earned his master's degree in South Africa, talked about the difficulty of thinking about his involvement in   projects while striving to fulfill his goal of achieving social mobility through education:

When we come to Canada, as immigrants, some of us get these opportunities to leave […] Even if we make just few dollars, and we are able to send back home, we think that we have really achieved something, and we look at this new land as our messiah home. But there's something that we always ignore, the structure of this society […] what has been put in place for you to be able to make the small money you send back home. We ignore the history of this place […] We know in Canada the structure is in the hands of the white people, we know the history, how they got in here, how they took over power, the oppression, the destruction, the dehumanisation of Indigenous culture and the Indigenous people. But what they [white people] are doing now, to rationalise their power, is through empowering immigrants who will see Canada as this messiah land, and who will see white people as the people who opened opportunities for them […]. So we join in bad mouthing them [Indigenous people], painting negative images of them, based on incomplete knowledge that is passed to us […] so it's a thing of concern for me. (Abugraib)

Abughraib establishes a connection between immigration and continued patterns of colonial dispossession. He emphasizes how the fulfillment of migrant aspirations for economic prosperity in Canada can involve an uneasy alignment with rhetoric that portrays Canada as a welcoming space of

economic opportunity, while disregarding its foundational colonial history in shaping political and economic structures. Contemporary understandings of settler colonialism have sought to explain the intricate connections between the precarious settlement of migrants and the ongoing dispossession of Indigenous peoples. Chatterjee (2019) articulates settler colonialism as structure linking immigration, exploited labor, and Indigenous dispossession, to grasp how "immigrants' racialized vulnerability and disposability supports a settler colonial project" (Day, 2016, 21).

Discussion and Conclusion

In their scholarly work, Rose-Redwood and Rose-Redwood (2017) contend that the political dimensions of the international student experience have received insufficient scholarly attention. Writing in the United States context, their assertion followed a series of exclusionary policies pursued by the Trump administration, most notably the "Muslim travel ban," which sought to limit immigration from seven Muslim-majority countries. Despite being blocked by various courts, the xenophobic nature of the ban prompted Rose-Redwood and Rose-Redwood to investigate the implications of such exclusionary measures for international students and scholars. To shift the focus of scholarship towards a political perspective, the authors proposed five potential areas of research, of which the policy environment and the socio-political climate were part. This article draws attention to both aspects by investigating how international students factor political climate in their decisions over study destination. While some of my findings encompass themes that have been highlighted in works to date, I add qualitative depth and context to these works, further emphasizing the significance of this research to contemporary understandings of international student mobility.

My research also contributes to the limited existing scholarship that explores multiculturalism as a lived experience. My participants' insights demonstrate how multiculturalism operates as an

ideological attraction for racialized international students who are apprehensive about racially motivated violence and harassment in commonly chosen destinations. Existing research has demonstrated how international students experience varying manifestations of racism (Guo and Guo, 2017; Scott *et al.*, 2015; Lee and Rice, 2007) but these studies tend to capture experiences encountered after migration. Understanding how students anticipate, assess, and base their migration upon subjective notions of race relations in prospective host countries, remains an underexplored aspect of international student mobility scholarship. While my findings support existing scholarship that highlights racism as an actively manifesting in the lives of international students, I also show that avoiding racism is an active consideration in the preliminary decision-making process of international students contemplating studying abroad. While existing scholarship privileges discussions of the material advantages international students acquire by choosing to study in Canada over competitor countries, I show that the value of attending to subjective, interpretive factors that are also crucial in the study abroad decision-making process.

As such the findings of my study are testament to the social fact of race in relation to international students' migration trajectories. While race is not an essential category, I echo Bonilla-Silva (1999) in conceiving of it as a "central principle of social organization [...]" that profoundly shapes the life courses of individuals irrespective of their level of belief in its effect. My findings show that race and racism are dominant concerns for students hailing from majority-Black regions such as sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean, when determining potential study locations. While extant scholarship subtly makes this point; I notice an overriding tendency in scholarship to couch such analysis in euphemistic terminology, employing terms such as "discrimination", "tolerance" and "friendliness". While these terms possess substantive value and shed light on different aspects of international students' decision-making process, they also encompass an assortment of other experiences which may obscure or divert attention from race-based analysis. Based on my findings, I

contend that not explicitly highlighting race and racism risks reproducing a linguistic form racial colorblindness (Bonilla-Silva, 2002) that falls short of concretely addressing both topics while discussing fundamentally racialized issues. I also echo Yao and Viggiano's (2019) call to incorporate international students into wider discussions of race, ethnicity, and migration.

My findings highlight several instances where participants directly reference their racial identity in predicting their acculturation experiences in a host country. It bears mentioning that, judging by the selection of dominant source regions to Canada, most international students are non-white (Buckner *et al.*, 2021). Also, the concerns expressed by participants – such as gun violence and over policing – possess racialized outcomes. For example, existing research shows that Black populations in the USA and Canada are disproportionately affected by gun violence and policing (Herhalt, 2022; Center for American Progress, 2022). My suggestion of foregrounding race and racism echoes similar calls that have been directed at other institutional fields. For instance, Buckner *et al.,* (2021) study how universities in Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom discuss race and diversity in institutional documents. The researchers analyzed strategy documents from 62 universities in these countries and found scant references to race, racism and racialization. where such references appeared, they were abstractly framed as global issues, or instrumentalized to enhance institutional reputation. Consequently, Buckner *et al.* urge universities to reject colorblind depictions of international students and recognize race as a social fact shaping international students' experiences in higher education.

My data also speaks to the potency of multiculturalism as an ideological attraction for students considering Canada as a study destination. In several participants' decision-making process on study destination, my data points to several instances where participants conceive of Canada as more racially harmonious than competitor nations. While some of these notions – especially those concerning the United States– are based on prevailing issues that have received widespread network coverage, participants' ideas about the political climate are also borne from experiences of racism in other

countries. Considering that student migration is now popularly leveraged as a pathway to immigration, students are not only concerned about their safety and wellbeing for the duration of their study, but also their long-term prospects afterwards.

In making sense of multiculturalism's appeal, I draw on philosopher Charles Mills (1997) concept of the "epistemology of ignorance". Mills argued that projects of racial domination are partially sustained by the construction of truth regimes that sanitize, suppress, and prevent critical engagement on matters of racial domination. Not only were my participants surprised about the negative experiences they encountered, but the greatest shock concerned learning about Canada's settler-colonial history. Using CRT parlance, personal racialization experiences and acquired knowledge about the treatment of Indigenous peoples represented counternarratives that challenged the preponderant reputation of Canada as racially harmonious. As Lawrence further asserts that the favorable image of Canada relies on the continuous erasure of historical records of land expropriation and relentless dispossession of Indigenous peoples. Participants lamented not knowing about the history of residential school system, yet, it warrants mentioning that between the years 1936 and 1944, over 15 tons of documents related to the residential schools were destroyed (Sachedina and Neustaetar, 2021).

While international students may experience racialization and various other forms of discrimination, they can also become complicit in the projects of anti-Indigenous domination by upholding white-supremacist settler projects illustrated by land dispossession, expropriation, and ignorance of Indigenous history and culture, and legitimising uncritical patterns of settler belonging (Chen, 2017). Yet my participants' insights also reveal several instances in which academic endeavors have facilitated opportunities to learn about indigenous history and Canada's colonial legacy. Through research projects, on-campus jobs and courses, participants developed intimate knowledge of Canada's colonial history and ongoing patterns of systemic inequities experienced by Indigenous

communities. Such endeavors also provided opportunities to reflect on their complicity in settler colonialism and responsibility towards Indigenous self-determination, such that a few doubted whether they would settle permanently in Canada

Together, these findings aptly illustrate the fraught, contradictory space education occupies. Elaborating on this point, Chen (2021; 757) points out that education maintains an ambivalent relationship with colonialism. On one hand, education is complicit in perpetuating Eurocentric discourses and practices. On the other hand, education holds the potential to undo and challenge insidious impacts of colonialism. My participants' initial lack of awareness of Indigenous presence in Canada can be attributed to exceptionalism in marketing practices - amongst Canadian institutions within and outside of higher education - which portray the country as devoid of racial discrimination and colonial legacies. This persistent feature of Canadian public relations operates as a political veneer, preventing students from critically interrogating the structural harms in host countries (Buckner *et al.*, 2021).

Yet education can also represent a core medium by which international students learn about Indigenous history in Canada. It is important to mention that the in Truth and Reconciliation's calls to action, a section of responsibilities are assigned to post-secondary institutions, thus highlighting the important role of these entities in furthering reconciliation and decolonization in Canada.

In sum, this article takes as its analytical premise an agentic understanding of international students, recognizing their ability to act in their best interests, while bound by structural constrains, cultural beliefs and unfavorable experiences stemming from one or a combination of their social positions. Several scholars have lamented the lack of focus on the agency of international students (Deuchar, 2023, 2022).

Chapter Four: Article 2 – Exploring Black international students' sensemaking of Black-themed racial justice movements in Canada.

Abstract

In the last five years, Canada has become a major destination for international students from sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean. This surge has coincided with a rise in Black student activism influenced by movements like Black Lives Matter. This study explores the political inclinations and participation of Black international students in Canadian universities, focusing on their understanding of and relationship to Black-themed racial justice movements within or outside their institutions. Drawing from 40 semi-structured interviews, the research uncovers the complexities of Black international students' political engagement, highlighting three distinct clusters of participants with varying degrees of political activity. I utilize the frameworks of "diasporic consciousness" and legal consciousness to detail how students negotiate their relationship to Black-themed racial justice movements based on their ethnic identity, nationality, and legal status. My findings emphasize the need for a nuanced understanding of Black students. I also contribute to broader conversations about race, racism, and racial justice as they pertain to international student experiences.

Introduction

In the last two decades, Canada has emerged as a major player in the pursuit and recruitment of international students. International student recruitment is viewed as crucial to the vitality of the higher education sector and economy, as evidenced by Canada's recognition of international students as "ideal immigrants" for permanent settlement (Scott *et al.*, 2015). Because they are young, possess

Canadian qualifications, are proficient in at least one of the two official languages (English and French), it is presumed that they will integrate more smoothly into the labor market compared to other immigrant groups.

Between 2017-2022, both federal and provincial governments, as well as higher education institutions, outlined the need to diversify source regions for international students to maintain a dependable pool of potential recruits. Consequently, sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean are two of a collection of regions from which Canada has experienced a marked increase in international student recruitment (Campus France, 2022). A recently published report from Campus France (2002) states that international student recruitment from sub-Saharan Africa has increased by 67% in the last five years. Nigeria, the country with the highest concentration of Black people globally, has quickly risen to become Canada's third largest source of study permit applicants. It is reported that between the years 2015 and 2020, Nigerians submitted 4.19% of all study permit applications, larger than all other countries except India and China (Canadian Association of Professional Immigration Consultants, 2021). In Quebec, growth in the international student population is largely attributed to recruitment from African countries such as Nigeria, Ghana Cameroun, Mozambique Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco (ApplyBoard, 2023). While statistics demonstrating the heightened focus on the Caribbean are hard to identify, experts working in the region have observed Canada's increasing popularity as a study destination (see Barbados Today, 2022).

Thus, the composition of the Black student population is changing by virtue of the increasing presence of international students from regions where most of the population identify racially as Black (Onyenekwu, 2017). This demographic shift coincides with a resurgence in Black student activism on campuses, particularly in the United States and Canada. Influenced by transnational movements such as Black Lives Matter, Black students in Canada have mobilized to draw attention to challenges hampering their university experiences (Furman *et al.*, 2018; Cameron and Jefferies, 2021). While the

impact of student involvement has been acknowledged in academic and media commentary (Turner III, 2020; Rim, 2020; Rhoads, 2016), the perspectives of Black international students have been largely ignored. We have limited knowledge about how these students, who identify racially as Black, but differ in their ethnicity, national origin and citizenship status as compared to Canadian-born Black students, perceive and participate in such movements. Yet, considering their increasing presence on Canadian campuses, and the prominent impact of Black students in wider racial justice transformations (hampton, 2020; Cummins and Mohabir, 2022), it is important to understand their insights and experiences. Additionally, as Canada intends to retain and incorporate international students into its body politic, studying the factors that shape their political behavior in relation to contentious political movements is an important avenue to understand their political incorporation (Bloemraad, 2011).

This article provides an account of Black student politics in the contemporary "internationalized" Canadian university, drawing on the perspectives of Black international students. I examine the factors influencing the involvement or non-involvement of Black international students in Black student activism. My guiding research question is as follows: How do Black international students negotiate their understandings of, and relationship to Black-themed racial justice movements occurring within and outside of their respective institutions? To answer this question, I conducted 40 semi-structured interviews with students from sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean. Echoing existing scholarship (George Mwangi *et al.*, 2019), my data complicate the notion of a "universal Black experience" and emphasizes the diversity of ideological positions, and perceived structural constraints that shape the political inclinations of this group. As I show, understanding how Black international students identify with Black-themed racial justice movements depends on the extent to which they position race, ethnicity/nationality, and legal status as central aspects their self-concept and lived experience. My data uncover three clusters of participants: 1) a group which is politically active because

they perceive race to be a pan-ethnic identity that cuts other social locations: 2) a group that is politically inactive due to nativist tensions with Black Canadian peers and lack of identification with issues highlighted by race-based movements; 2) a group which perceives their possession of temporary legal status as a structural barrier hindering their active political participation. To elaborate on these points, I draw on theoretical frameworks from the fields of Black politics and migration which have sought to understand the dynamics of immigrant political behavior. Using Smith's (2014) framework of "diasporic consciousness", I analyze how international students factor ethnic and racial identity in their sensemaking around racial activism. I also employ the concept of legal consciousness (Ewick and Silbey, 1998) to explore how participants' perceptions of vulnerability to deportation acts as a structural barrier. Overall, my study adds to a burgeoning collection of studies that have sought to incorporate international student perspectives in topics of race, racism and racial justice (Yao *et* al., 2023; Yu, 2022). I also answer scholarly calls to foreground the political aspects of the international student experience, paying particular attention to the factors that shape participation/non-participation in movements.

Black Student Activism

Scholarship on Black student politics primarily revolves around historical accounts of African American mobilization during the 1960s Black power movements (Kendi, 2012; Williamson, 2003; Rojas, 2010; Bradley, 2018). These accounts detail how disillusionments with the gains of the civil rights movements stimulated the creation of a "Black power" ideology among students, centered on the affirmation of Black identity, advocacy for racially centered curriculum, and prioritizing of Black collective advancement (Williamson, 2003).

Evidencing the transnational influence of Black power ideology, the sixties are also remembered as a time of vibrant Black student organizing in Canada, although they have received less attention than those which occurred in the United States. A notable example is the peaceful protest-turned riot at Sir George Williams University (now known as Concordia University) - acknowledged as the largest recorded student riot in Canadian history (Henry & Tator, 2009). In the spring of 1968, six Black students of Caribbean origin challenged the grades assigned to them by a biology professor, alleging that they were consistently subjected to racially discriminatory grading practices. Having pursued the case through university policies and protocol to no avail, the students, and their sympathizers (up to 200 of them) escalated the issue by occupying the university's computer room for two weeks until riot police were called upon to evacuate them (hampton, 2020). The eviction process would end in a fire damaging 2 million dollars' worth of school property, and the arrest of 97 people - more than half of whom were white (Lindeman, 2014; hampton, 2020). The Sir George Williams affair is remembered at a catalyst for Black organizing across the country. The affair also garnered international attention, attracting the attention of renowned Black power activists and scholars like Stokely Carmichael, C.L.R James and Walter Rodney to Montreal for a lecture (CBC, 2019, para. 12). Ultimately, the George Williams affair spurred the creation of a local and international consciousness around institutional racism in Canada at a time where such issues received scant attention (hampton, 2020). The affair prompted demonstrations at other institutions in the country, as well as the creation of education programs and initiatives designed to promote equitable access to higher education for Black communities in Montreal, Toronto, Dalhousie, Halifax etc (hampton, 2020).

Following the 2020 killings of Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery in the United States, as well as Regis Korchinski-Paquet and Chantel Moore in Canada, Black student activism in North America has witnessed a resurgence. Current Black youth organizing is significantly influenced

by the transnational impact of #BLM, which, though largely centered on acts of police brutality, also sheds light on a range of vulnerabilities experienced by Black people (Franklin, 2016). Following Floyd's murder in particular, students across Canada called on their respective institution leaders to develop concrete measures to redress racial inequities facing Black and racialized students (Baig, 2022; Jackson, 2020). Resulting from these efforts, Canadian universities and colleges have instituted changes aimed at cultivating a stronger sense of belonging for Black students and promoting Black-centered studies, such as the creation of designated spaces for Black students (Baig, 2022) the introduction of Black studies certificate programs (Benchetrit, 2021), cluster hires of Black faculty, and the signing of charters prioritizing the advancement of Black people in higher education (Scarborough Charter on anti-Black racism, 2021). This article seeks to understand how Black international students relate to organizing efforts which so often serve as catalysts for such changes. While contemporary studies of Black student political participation are meagre, I offer that the existing body of scholarship has not holistically captured the perspectives of Black international students who are presently a priority recruitment target for Canadian institutions.

Scholarship on Black international students

The available but scant literature on the political participation of Black international students reveals discernible themes, primarily in the U.S. context. These studies depict this group as having complex and nuanced connections to racial issues, as they navigate a spectrum of perspectives rather than being fully invested or disinterested in these matters. One fundamental explanation for this occurrence is the identity development process of Black international students, which can be attributed to the acculturative stress they experience (Berry, 1994) while adjusting to race dynamics in the host country (Madriaga and McCaig, 2022; Boafa-Arthur, 2014; Fries-Britt and George Mwangi, 2014; Okeke and

Spitzer, 2005). In addition to adapting to new academic expectations and forming social networks, Black international students often find themselves ascribed a racial minority status and are subjected to the same stereotypes that are often associated with the domestic Black population (Tradore, 2004). This stands in contrast to their experiences in their home country, where racial considerations were not as prevalent. Consequently, due to their different racialization history compared to their native Black peers, Black international students frequently question the appropriateness of their involvement in Black-themed racial justice movements (George Mwangi et al., 2019). This point is aptly illustrated Noreiga and Justin's (2021, 21) article, where both, as Black international students, detail their journey towards developing a Black racial consciousness after moving to Canada:

I experienced confusion about my identity, social groups, belief system, cultural and historical background, and overall self-confidence. Amid my social identity crisis was a global Black Lives Matter protest march after George Perry Floyd Jr.'s killing, an African American man, by a white police officer […] I never expected to be part of a protest march while pursuing my degree and trying to make sense of my social identity. I navigated my entire university experience by asking myself, "Who am I? Where do I belong? How do I fit in?"

In some cases, Black international students' struggles reckoning with the racial minority status may result in distancing from native Black peers (Thelamour and George Mwangi, 2021), and asserting their ethnicity or nationality over their racial identity (Fries-Britt et al., 2014; George Mwangi, 2014). More recent scholarly contributions have inverted the analysis of Black international students by documenting how domestic Blacks understand Black international students' relationship to race-related issues, and more generally, racial identification. In this regard, research documents how Black international students are framed as possessing class privilege which shields them from severe experiences of racial discrimination. Hampton's (2021) study of Black student experiences at McGill

University (Canada) is an apt example. Though not a central theme of the study, hampton uncovered contrasting perceptions of Black international students among Black Canadian participants. Some viewed them as privileged and disconnected from the realities of class-infused racism affecting Black Canadians. This perception challenged dominant narratives about Africa as a hotbed of strife. On the other hand, some Black Canadian students delivered more critical assessments of Black international students, describing them as defenders of an inequitable education system and exploiting the rhetoric of Blackness and diversity for personal gain. These attitudes were seen as evasive towards issues of racism and detrimental to mobilizing efforts of Black Canadian students who experienced structural disadvantage.

Taken together, the available literature depicts a state of ambivalence concerning Black international students' relationship to race justice matters, stemming from one or a combination of acculturation struggles, and occupying diverse – oftentimes contradictory – social positionings. In my research I found it useful to conceptually organize themes regarding the dynamics of Black international students' relationship to Black-themed racial justice movements. Just as Black students in general are not a homogeneous group, the same applies to Black international students. They encompass a diverse range of backgrounds, experiences, perspectives, and identities, and outlining those positions offers interesting insights into the vigor, appeal, of Black student politics in today's "internationalised" university context. It also situates Black student politics within broader scholarly inquiries into the influence of ethnic diversity resulting from immigration on collective Black political behavior.

To this end, my analysis is informed by two distinct, but related schools of thought and their concerns with explaining immigrant political behavior and claims-making practices: diasporic consciousness and legal consciousness. In her text "Black Mosaic: The Politics of Black Pan-Ethnic Diversity", Candis Watts Smith (2014) describes diasporic consciousness as "(the) mental tightrope

that people of African descent […] walk as they try to balance their superordinate racial identity (and the political interests associated with it) with their subgroup or ethnic identity and its closely associated political interests" (7). Differing from pan-Africanist notions of group consciousness, diasporic consciousness "both appreciates the factors that lead to unity among Blacks and problematizes the notion that unity will always be the best characterisation of Black politics as diversity increases" (Smith, 2014, 16). Thus, with diasporic consciousness, Smith conceptualizes pan-ethnic political solidarity amongst native-born Blacks and Black immigrants as an achievable, but conditional outcome, capable of engendering instances of collaboration as well as divergence. Put differently, diasporic consciousness seeks to outline the factors that shape intraracial coalition building, as well as interethnic conflict and distancing:

"When their identities and political priorities overlap, we are likely to see racial unity; conversely, when they do not overlap, we see ethnic distancing, at best, and competition, in the most tense situations." (p. 201)

As Alao (2023) notes, the novelty of diasporic consciousness is its ability to connect "the globality of Blackness (and anti-Blackness) with the complexities of the African diaspora" (2). As its key analytical prompt, it considers the forceful potency of racial classifications as well as a host of other factors that define the diversity of Black identities, such as ethnicity and culture, language, differences in colonial histories, levels of acculturation, and generational status (Alao, 2023). The outcome of this engagement, according to Smith (2014) is an incongruent set of political instances which serve as points of connection or disagreement between domestic and immigrant Blacks.

To operationalize Smith's framework, I drew upon the model of diasporic consciousness developed by Alao (2023) which employs the terms "diasporic cohesion" and "diasporic fragmentation" to describe instances of political solidarity and political difference between both groups. Both concepts are employing diasporic consciousness enhances my analysis of how race and

ethnic identification shape the sensemaking processes of Black international students in negotiating their relationship to Black-themed racial justice movements. But like extant studies of Black intraracial politics, diasporic consciousness excessively relies on race and ethnicity as primary interpretive frameworks for Black political behavior, at the expense of other important factors such as temporal legal status. To comprehensively capture the conceptual premises of my participants' perspectives, it is crucial for me to consider and address this additional factor of influence. Hence, this study also draws on legal consciousness.

Chua and Engel (2019) define legal consciousness as how "people experience, understand and act in relation to law", comprising "both cognition and behavior, both the ideologies and practices of people as they navigate their way through institutions in which law could play a role". Legal consciousness does not depend on one's knowledge of law, but the capacity (or lack thereof) to act either in accordance with, or in disregard of its presence. Chua and Engel (2019; p. 336) best explain this through the analogy of the Cheshire Cat - "law appears and disappears in the picture of everyday life drawn by legal consciousness researchers."

Immigration scholars have employed legal consciousness to examine how immigration status affects claims-making tendencies of immigrant groups. Shannon Gleeson's (2010) study of documented and undocumented Latino migrants in the U.S is a noteworthy example. Gleeson found that the lack of legal status for undocumented persons exerted several negative effects centered mainly on the fear of deportation. As a result of this apprehension, workers refrained from complaining to employers about unfavorable work conditions. The fear of deportation also instilled a sense of pragmatic mindset which rendered the conditions of their work bearable to them. Bloemraad *et al.*, (2016) describe how legal status children living with undocumented parents adopt a "don't rock the boat" notion of citizenship, characterized by a strict adherence to laws and regulations. Based on such findings, some immigration scholars have advocated for a recognition of immigrant status as a master

status (Hughes, 1945), created by law and influencing one's relationship to it, and possessing an overpowering effect on other social identities (Enghceren, 2009; Gleeson, 2010; Abrego, 2011).

Methods

The data for this article is derived from 40 interviews conducted with self-identifying Black international students. These interviews were part of a larger qualitative study that aimed to explore the sociopolitical integration of Black international students in Canada. I employed a semi-structured interview approach, allowing both the participants and myself to delve into unexpected yet crucial aspects of their experiences (Presser and Sandberg, 2015). Initially, I did not consider the migratory decision-making processes of international students as a central aspect of the study. However, the spontaneous responses I received during the initial interviews, particularly regarding perceptions of racial politics in Canada and other countries in Europe and North America, prompted me to prioritize this topic in subsequent conversations. Thus, I asked questions such as "Tell me about your journey to Canada," "Where were you before you came to Canada?" and "What factors did you consider when choosing Canada as a place to study?"

In terms of sampling, I employed a combination of purposive sampling and snowball sampling to recruit participants. Purposive sampling involves selecting individuals based on specific criteria, such as their knowledge, experience, or social position related to the topic of study (Palinkas et al., 2015). The eligible participants for this study needed to meet four criteria: 1) self-identify racially as Black, 2) be current or former international students within the past five years, 3) be enrolled or have been enrolled at a post-secondary institution in Alberta within the past five years, and 4) be 18 years or older. The age range of the participants varied from 18 to 43 years, with 22 identifying as women and 18 as men.

To recruit participants, I utilized personal and professional networks. Additionally, I reached out to Black, African, and Caribbean student associations and university institutes in Alberta that frequently interact with international students by sending recruitment emails. In all cases, I provided a clear description of my project and the eligibility requirements for potential participants. I also mentioned that the study had received ethical approval from the University of Alberta and provided the unique approval code (Pro00113693). Snowball sampling was employed to identify additional interview.

Analysis

I adopted thematic analysis to identify, organize, analyze and report patterns present within my dataset. Braun and Clarke, (2006) cite many benefits of adopting thematic analysis: its highly flexible nature which makes it adaptable to a variety of research studies; its ability to force the researcher to adopt a well-structured approach to handling data; its provision of a more accessible form of analysis for early career researchers; finally, its ability to handle the similarities and differences among research participants, thereby generating unanticipated insights. I also complemented my adoption of a thematic analysis by drawing on Attride-Stirling's (2001) concepts of global, organizing, and basic themes to categorize my data. I identified simple premises emerging from the data (basic themes), categorized them under mid-size clusters summarizing the main ideas emerging from these basic themes (organizing themes) and finally, I created superordinate groups that encompass the main clusters of ideas emerging from the data in total. To analyze Black international students' political proclivities, I asked specific questions such as "Would you describe yourself as politically active", "Do you think #BlackLivesMatter has any relevancy in Canada", "Do you think Black international students should be involved in Black-themed racial justice movements", and "In what ways have you

been politically active?" My initial analysis of the data involved careful reading of the transcripts and open coding of responses to unearth themes which I corroborated using subsequent interviews. My results have been organized in sections that reflect the main themes related to how participants defined their relationship to Black-themed racial justice movements.

All research is conducted from a position, and reflexivity is an important aspect by which researchers conducting qualitative research can reflect on how their intersecting identities shaped understanding and collection of the data (Wilson, 2008). I identify as a Black, African, cisgendered, man pursuing a doctorate degree as an international student. At various junctures in the data collection phase, all these identities influenced my rapport-building with participants in mostly positive ways. I found that participants felt comfortable speaking candidly about emotionally charged topics such as race, and racism. In some cases, my sexual identity facilitated a degree of comfort with male participants, who would occasionally refer to me as using terms "brother" (or "bro" for short). Although such patterns were not present when interviewing female participants, I found that participants spoke freely about their experiences without hesitation.

Of my identities, I discovered that being Black and an international student provided the most significant points of commonality with participants. Participants felt at ease when describing certain feelings and experiences. In some cases, some interviewees would hurriedly provide insights in a manner that implied I understood them without much elaboration. Participants from Nigeria, for example, would make statement such as "you know how hard it is to come to Canada", when referring to the elaborate nature of the visa application process. In some cases, I asked a few participants to provide more details when sharing their insight for the purpose of creating good, usable data.

One aspect of my profile proved a notable but surmountable barrier. At the time of interviewing, I was serving the second of two terms as president of a race-themed student association.

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I maintained an active presence as an advocate for Black students, appearing on serving on several committees, appearing in news articles, and speaking at social events. I was concerned that my extracurricular endeavors would discourage participants who held little interest in Black student politics from freely expressing themselves. This proved to be the case on a few occasions – an interviewee would respond to a question by first stating "I know you're going to disagree with me […]". Such phrases revealed participants' own preconceived notions not only of my political stance on certain issues, but their disagreement with my presumed position. I mitigated this occurrence by clearly articulating the details and purpose of my study, emphasizing that my research was exploratory in its intent and thus, was open as diverse ideological positions. I also made this point in my emails soliciting participant. Importantly, in all written communication, I explicitly noted that the research was not being done in collaboration with, or on behalf of the association I represented. I bore the responsibility as the principal investigator.

There were also moments were participants" foreknowledge of my participation in student politics facilitated informative conversations. A recurring theme in scholarly and autobiographical accounts of student political participation is the students' perceived disconnect with support networks who do not value the endeavor or cannot relate to some of its rigors; for example, balancing such involvements with academic commitments, or the incessant fear about whether one's efforts will provide tangible benefit (Linder *et al.*, 2019; Rhoads, 2016; Lewis, 1998). Thus, I was able to forge relatability with participants with similar histories of political engagement.

Setting

The research setting for this study is Alberta, which possesses Canada's fastest-growing Black population, and third largest concentration in the country (Statistics Canada, 2019). Over the past two

decades, Alberta has experienced a fivefold increase in its Black population, primarily due to immigration from African countries (Statistics Canada, 2019). In 1996, the Black population in the province was approximately 25,000, but by 2016, it had risen to nearly 130,000 (Fundira, 2021).

I now proceed to my findings. The first two sections of this segment are entitled under Alao's (2023) two concepts: diasporic cohesion and diasporic fragmentation, as they adequately encapsulate the opinions of participants' viewpoints. I approach the last section, titled "The fear of deportation" with the same intention of encapsulating participants' insights.

Findings

Diasporic consciousness: Cohesion

About 60 percent of my participants expressed support for racial justice organizing at the student level. Often, participants rationalized their support for these movements by referencing their racial identity as superseding ethnic identity as well as their statuses as non-citizens. Some participants understood their racial identity as a source of discriminatory treatment and thus a more striking aspect of their experiences in Canada. Hence, rallying around a Black consciousness provided an avenue by which to push-back against the negative effects of discrimination. Take Jordana, a master's student from Barbados, for example. Jordana shared that she had attended several protests and joined Black student associations as an undergraduate student, having earned her bachelor's degree from a university in Ontario, Canada. As a graduate student, she had maintained her commitment to such endeavors. Jordana perceived her persistent involvement as a responsibility inspired by her racial consciousness as a Black student living in Canada as a part of a racial minority group. When I asked

her if she thinks Black international students should be more involved in such affairs she responds as follows:

Yes. In think so, I mean, being international doesn't change the fact that you're Black. And, and if I live in Canada, whether I'm Canadian or from another country, if someone is going to be racist to me, they're going to be racist to me regardless [of whether she is an international student or not], so that doesn't make a difference to me whatsoever.

For Jordana, racial identity is a significant motivator in her decision to be politically involved in racial justice matters. She perceives race as a salient aspect of her identity, one which possesses a greater determining effect over her experiences in Canada than her status as an international student. Jordana also perceived race as a pan-ethnic identity which cut across geographical and ethnic boundaries:

Oh, one thing I wanted to say earlier, outside of our history, we [Barbadians] do recognize that there's a difference in the way the world views Black people and white people. But we believe that we're separate from that. And so, we feel like that's the world's problem. But it's not a Barbados problem. So, it's not something that we really have on the forefront of our mind. So, let's say the George Floyd incident that happened, like, some of my friends back home, they will just be like, "yes, like, that's an American thing". And they don't realize it's not just America. It's everywhere. Like, I'm sure there were people in Barbados, who are racist, but they're, like, people are still they're the minority group. So, the effects of it are so minute compared to when you're somewhere where the white people are the majority group, it has a bigger impact. So, I think there's this one thing that I, I was thinking that we should work on is just realizing like, yes, because Black people are the majority and Barbados, we're not separate from issues of racism. It's just that because we're the majority, you may have a one-off incident somewhere, and it doesn't hit the mainstream news and blah, blah, but it still happens […] And it's not something that anybody, any Black person really ever gets to escape.

Drawing upon embodied knowledge of race articulations in her home country, Jordana questions seemingly "colorblind" (Bonilla-Silva, 2006) notions of anti-Black racism as an issue specific to North American countries. Instead, Jordana opts for an understanding of Black racial identity as an inescapable form of racialization which affects the livelihoods of Black people irrespective of ethnic boundaries. Jordana was also one of a several participants whose political engagement was shaped by preliminary considerations of race relations in the host country. This subgroup of individuals noted that they considered the implications of their racial identity, in addition to understanding the general situation regarding the treatment of racialized groups. Yemi, a doctoral student, from Nigeria, explains:

I did my research before I, before I left [Nigeria]. So, I also see myself to be coming to Canada, I'm going to be a settler. settler in a country that is already polarized in terms of race, because we have, we have Blacks, the Black Americans who move from the US or Canada as early as you know, after the Civil War in the US, people move on migrated to Canada. So, I already knew about these things, but I also knew that I would be a minority, not any minority, but a visible minority. Because one is that your blackness is already known by everybody. And if you look at the Black race anyway, they find themselves outside the continent is issues of stigmatization, either in Asia, either in North America, or in Europe, you find that strong stigmatization. So, I'm already aware that these are the biases, these are the stigma, I'm coming to find myself in. So, in my mind I am already preparing. But the kind of stigmatization, I have no idea what I'm going to encounter. The consideration I took when I was leaving Nigeria is that I'm leaving my country coming to a white country.

Yemi conceives of Blackness as a pan-ethnic identity defined by struggles on various continents. Yemi's insights represent a departure from prevailing themes in existing research that construes international students as reckoning with racial identity after arriving in the host country. Yemi's commitment to pursuing a doctoral degree and afterwards, a career, and eventually, immigration to

Canada with his family served as a driving force behind his research into race relations in the country. Yemi also understood being politically involved in racial justice as a paramount responsibility which he must embrace to improve conditions for his children. In the following excerpt, Yemi rationalizes his political engagement by viewing it as an expression of civic responsibility, in other words, an opportunity to make a significant contribution to Black advancement in a manner he felt was largely available as a political avenue in Nigeria:

I was talking to people on campus about Black rights, and I was talking about Black scholarship and the issue of recruitment and other stuff. So those are critical issues. I believe in the word of Mother Theresa, service to humanity is the price we pay for any position we occupy. And that has been my driving force. Most people see it as waste of time. No, but I see it as service because I need to serve. I need to get things fixed. I need to speak out, I need to be a voice so that when history is being asked by my kids, "what did your generation do". Because that's one of the questions we don't ask in Nigeria. What did my generation do in their own time to stop Nigeria from getting to where we are today? [...] What did they do? We don't ask those questions. You know, we don't ask, you know, and that's a really big issue, but I find that I need to say things and get things done.

Yemi alludes to the prospect of pan-ethnic racial solidarity operating as an outlet for political engagement in a manner some perceive to be less available in ethnic communities. Yemi attributes the struggles of his home country to an unwillingness to seek political accountability, and his value of this right motivates him to actively promote Black empowerment. Contrary to research that portrays race and ethnic-based politics as diametrically opposed in their ideological stances (Greer, 2013; Rogers, 2006), Yemi's insight hints at how both work in tandem in their influence on political engagement. Another participant understood his political involvement as an extension of parental guardianship towards his children. This insight was shared when the topic of police brutality arose:

So, I think as a parent, I have to remain active. I didn't know I know, some other parents who would say they don't want to have anything to do with it. And for me, I laugh because what I always tell them is to pray something doesn't happen to your children. I have friends who say, "Well, we Black people we do this and that, we don't mind our business […]. I said, well, it's not about minding your business, just pray and hope the police, one lousy police person doesn't get into your business. Then you'll appreciate the fact that you have to be politically active. So yeah, I'll remain politically active for as long as my body, mind, and soul permit. (Chude)

When I asked Chude what forms of political activity he had engaged in, he shared that he was a member of the Black student associations at his university. He proceeded to offer a nuanced understanding of political participation as acts not always tied to overt expressions such as protests or sit-ins. For him, joining a student association with a racial focus, specifically with the "Black" theme attached to its name, was in itself a political statement:

The mere fact that people can see it, people can mention people can reference it, it stands as a symbol or an icon of advocacy. So, because sometimes people think that advocacy means you just have to go on the streets, or you just have to go and confront politicians, or start riots, but the fact that you have a name that can draw attention to what Blackness stands for, or what Black graduate student experience stands for, is advocacy. And so I would want to I want people to appreciate this. Because we need to appreciate the fact that there are people who come together to say, […] to put their time, their resources, their energy to say "we are here", the fact that we can say "we are here." Its advocacy in itself.

Abughraib was one of three participants who co-founded Black student associations at their institution. Abughraib highlighted the importance of developing a collective voice for Black students to enhance the effectiveness of advocacy efforts:

Yeah, to some extent, I, I think that's [the association] helped, because it's made me appreciate what was at stake. And, as you would know, any experience one gets in life, will always come to be useful one way or another. And so for me, I could appreciate the need to support the Black graduate students' association, not just because I was a Black student, but because I felt we need to institutionalize a structure. And in as much as we can have our individual voices, it makes more sense, I have to say there's only a certain number, it makes more sense to have a collective voice. (Abughraib)

Some participants with extensive international travel histories developed a strong racial consciousness from negative racialization encounters in other countries. Tesfaye, a student from Ethiopia, had spent time in numerous countries including Egypt, Bahrain, Ethiopia, and Thailand Africa, due to her mother's job as an airline consultant. Having lamented about the constant disruptions to her studies caused by multiple temporary short stints in various countries, Tesfaye recalled that throughout her primary and secondary schooling experience, she and her brother were two of a minority of Black students. Tesfaye recalled several instances where she was subjected to racial maltreatment. For example, reflecting on her time in Thailand, Tesfaye said:

Yeah, I lived in Thailand for years. Um, yeah, I feel like they're they're definitely like, more upfront, but there is some, […] it's like they're helping you. And I mean, I feel like whatever, like I'm at the mall or anything or whenever, like, I'm out in the sun or anything, like people will be like, you're gonna get darker or like, they'll suggest like whitening creams to me, like, you know, it's like, they're trying to help me because they don't, because they think I don't want to be dark, you know. And like, they also have this idea that if you're black, or if you're dark, it's because you are like, lower class, because before people would work outside a lot, and then they would get tan. And that was because they have a lower socio economy and they can't work indoors

Such experiences were hard to process in the immediate aftermath of their occurrence, as Tesfaye felt she lacked the literacy to identify racism:

And like, nobody really educated me about what that is. And like, I'm realizing now what that was, you know what I mean? Like at the time, I'm like: "This doesn't feel right". But then I don't know what it is. But like now, it's like, connecting the dots. Yeah.

Through such experiences, however, Tesfaye understood the need to develop a community with Black people, and this motivated her to seek out friendships with fellow Black colleagues. Tesfaye is a founder of the Black student association at her university, and is also a connected to the ethnic community in her locale:

Finding, like, a community of people like Ethiopian and Eritrean, like the Habesha communities will be nice because […] I don't know, it's just, it feels more homely and like, yeah, that's, that's nice. That's been a positive experience for me. And I think like, just the way that I felt like moving here and everything, like I think it's helped me, because we started like a student association […] and I feel like a large part of that was possible because of like, my personal experiences here. And like, me wanting people to, like have a community like whenever they come in, and like not feel like they're not welcome. Because I think for me, like moving here, I didn't have like any Black friends. And so I think I felt kind of intimidated, just to go up to like a group of Black people and be like, hey, like, you know, and so I never like even my first semester, And like my other friends have like invalidated my Blackness that like what if like, invalidate me, you know what I mean? And so I think, just like going into the, like, a community of people and like, just spending time there. You just feel like he like you're falling into place like you feel like they can relate to you and

stuff, you know, just kind of nice. And I just wanted to create that space for other people. And so I think my experience has definitely helped in doing that.

Interestingly, Tesfaye acknowledges the importance of her ethnic-based communities, however, she does not draw a distinct boundary between ethnic and racial identification. Rather, her excerpt reveals a fluid interchangeability between ethnic and racial identities. For example, she considers the Ethiopian community as a means to connect with more individuals of African descent.

Overall, this sub-group of participants expressed a diasporic cohesion through their understanding of Blackness as a pan-ethnic identity defined by shared phenotypical characteristics. Moreover, they recognized the presence of anti-Black racism as a pressing issue that requires collective action. However, another sub-group of participants expressed a more complicated, distant relationship to racial consciousness.

Diasporic consciousness: Fragmentation

A smaller but notable group of participants highlighted a lack of identification with Black-themed racial justice movements; however, such sentiments were not based on a failure to identify with a racial identity. Rather, all participants unanimously acknowledged their Black identity. Their positions, however, stemmed from a few sources, one being within-group tensions with Black Canadians. This theme was most pronounced amongst international students from the African continent. According to these students, Black Canadians devalued them based on their accents and language. George, a doctoral student from Nigeria, for example lamented:

You know, the ones [Blacks] who are born here.. they actually treat us like sheep. Like the Ethiopians and Eritreans do that, but the Black Canadians also do it as well. This is something that if a white person does it to them, they will never take it. But they do it to us. And nobody talks about it. It's not good.

George elaborates on this point by recalling an incident he and a friend experienced while participating in a research project:

This program, it was on mental health, we were doing something like that, there was a PhD student that was doing the research, and he needed Blacks, so they called Black Canadians. And there are lots of Black Canadians, lots of them are undergrads. So we're in a particular room […]. We joined them. So, they broke us into groups. And when we started talking, they [Black Canadians] started laughing at my friend, the way he is talking. Like […] they knew he was an African. They were just laughing at him. They were looking at us like "these guys, where are they from." And I was like: "No white has ever treated me like this since I came to the country".

George points out difference between his and his friend's positionality as Black African and Black Canadian Though George shares the same racial characteristics as Black Canadians, accent and language differences constitute an intracultural difference distancing both groups from each other. Such moments challenged participants' notions of solidarity with Black Canadians and served as a reminder that similarities in skin tone did not always subsume cultural distinctions:

I don't even have any of them as friends. I don't have any of them [Black Canadians] on my phone as friends. You understand? […] So no, I won't complain about white racism […] when my own people are treating me worse, like I am not a human being.

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However, in unpacking George's discontent with Black Canadians, I also noticed that he subscribed to elements of cultural racism. George revealed that most Black graduate students at his university were international students. When I probed him for reasons behind the lack of Black Canadian representation, George noted that the Black Canadians he had come across – primarily through his teaching role as an instructor and collaborating on research projects – were lazy and unambitious, and unwilling to take advantage of opportunities for educational advancement:

I was on the train one day, and there was a Black Canadian […]. He was talking to his two white friends. He said "Well, I don't really care. As long as I just leave this university with like my 2.0[GPA], am okay." I was just looking at him. How can I, coming from a third world country, thinking of getting good grades and achieving well. You were born here with all the opportunities, and you just want a 2.0? Now, this is just a single person brought out on random from a subgroup. You know? So, for me, that's another problem.

Again, in rejecting the notion of pan-ethnic identity, George frames himself as lacking the opportunities that are supposedly more readily and bountifully available to Black Canadians. A final topic wherein themes of diasporic tension were highlighted was on the matter of police violence. Some participants shared their disgruntlement with BLM's prominence. This group thought of the movement as politically misleading and exaggerating the issues of police violence against Black people. For some, BLM had little relevance Canada compared to the U.S. Yet, a few participants acknowledged that the extent of their support for the movement depended on their personal experiences of racism. As they had not personally been subjected to overt racist prejudice in Canada, they could not identify more intimately with the movement. However, the same participants expressed profound support for protests concerning police brutality taking place in their own country. Gbenga, a doctoral student from Nigeria is one example. When I asked Gbenga whether he supported BLM, he stated that he

supports the principle of valuing Black life: *"Okay, Black Lives Matter, okay, yes, of course, Black Lives Matter."* Yet, he also felt the movement had overstated the extent to which racism was a problem in the U.S.. Gbenga also felt that racism in Canada was a less pronounced issue than the U.S, and Europe, but admitted that his understanding of racism was limited by the fact that he had not experienced racist treatment:

So, in a way, I was like, the US racism was a bit blown out of proportion. There is racism in the US. I'm not disputing that. I was like, it's a bit blown out of proportion [...] That was that's what I thought, then with Canada's racism […], you know, you'll be biased in your opinion, because, especially if you've not really experienced something, so maybe I'm biased, but I've not really experienced racism yet [...] I've had some people say they've experienced some form of racism or another, but I think the racism here [Canada] is not that much. That's, what's what I think. So, to answer your question, I think it's more of […] racism is more of a European thing in a way. But the light is not shown to Europe is shown to us. So everybody's eyes, the US. So that's why I think, people, that's why I think people think is mind us. So that's my opinion.

The social upheaval surrounding George Floyd in June 2020 was quickly followed by another major period of protest against police brutality in Nigeria, the most populous Black country in the world. Popularly referred to as the *#ENDSARS* movement, scores of predominantly young Nigerians took to the streets to bring international attention to the unlawful harassment and killings of young Nigerians at the hands of state officers (Uwazurike, 2021). Logically, with Nigerian participants, I usually followed up my questions about BLM with inquiries about the #ENDSARS movement:

I had interactions with Nigerian police and […] you know that this is a huge deal right. So when it happened then I think I participated in this small gathering here people were walking around is it is a like a rally right? Yeah, there was

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a small rally. I was part of that those people with placards and the like [...] so I felt more connections that because I've

experienced [...] So I felt connection with them because I've experienced Nigerian police brutality. I have had interactions

with Nigerian police several times, and I can see that they need a lot of improvement. So, I felt more connection to that.

Gbenga's insight reveals several ways in which he distances himself from discussions of racism. First, he notes that he has not experienced racism, then conceptualizes racism as a more pressing issue in Europe than in Canada and the U.S. While he cannot identify with police brutality in either country, his first-hand experience of it in Nigeria motivates him to get involved in public demonstrations. George, whose excepts I provided earlier, also recounted negative experiences with police brutality in Nigeria but recognized the #ENDSARS protests as primarily concerning Nigerians:

I was looking at #ENDSARS as our [Nigerian] thing. It's our thing. We solve our issues. Black Lives Matter was more of a racial issue. We don't have that racial issue.

Thus, while scholarship and media reports have sought to draw parallels between both movements (Nwakanma, 2022; Obaji Jr, 2020) by highlighting the common theme of anti-police brutality mobilization (Nwakanma, 2022), and links between the Nigerian Police Force (NPF) and U.S-led international police training schools (Miah, 2020), George establishes a distinction between both movements by viewing them as taking up fundamentally different issues.

Legal Consciousness: The fear of deportation

While the first two themes discussed center on participants' ideological inclinations, this final theme is more concerned with the pragmatic constraints felt by participants experienced when contemplating

whether to participate actively in Black-themed racial justice movements. Several participants expressed concerns about participating in movements as temporary legal residents. Several students noted that engaging in overt demonstrations of contentious politics risked jeopardizing their long-term prospects of permanent settlement in Canada. The possession of temporary legal status allowed for participants to perceive participation in Black-themed racial justice movements as a privileged act that Canadian citizens could engage in more readily. In contextualizing their anxieties, participants positioned permanent residency and citizenship as providing considerable certainty and a sense of security over one's residency. Both elements in turn provided a strong footing upon which participation in contentious politics could occur more freely. In elaborating on their decision not to get involved, participants reflected on myriad investments they and their families had incurred in securing the opportunity to study abroad.

In some cases, deciding whether to participate in protests involved extensive deliberation with family members, most of whom served as primary financial sponsors for undergraduate students. Nosa, for example, narrated an incident where she was verbally abused with a racial slur. Distressed by this experience, but unable to express herself, a local public demonstration – one of several that followed the murder of George Floyd – offered an emotional outlet and the potential for some relief. In deciding whether to attend, Nosa noted that she had "long and hard conversations" with her family in Nigeria, who paid close attention to the protests via international news coverage. Nosa's parents empathized with her but advised her not to attend any of the protests, as they seemed unsafe. Her parents also reminded her that she was not a Canadian citizen, and thus would be adversely affected by any potential negative outcome. Ultimately, Nosa opted against attending, citing her non-citizen status and the potential ramification for her immigration plans as decisive factors:

I'm a foreigner, I have no claim to this country, what mercy will they show me […] this country owes me nothing, I am not their citizen, I was not born here, you know, if they need another international student they will find one, so the risk of putting myself in this position and potentially all my future plans, hopes, dreams eliminated by them seeing me as a threat and carting me away, I was scared, and I decided that it wasn't something that I was comfortable about, it wasn't a risk I was willing to take.

My conversation with Nosa also revealed interesting framing. For example, in stating "I have no claim to this country" and "this country owes me nothing", Nosa makes visible hidden power asymmetries in prevalent configurations of, and rationales for international education. These configurations frame international education as a form of "charity" bestowed upon international students to enhance their supposed 'development' while maintaining western dominance (Johnstone and Lee, 2022; Stein, and Andreotti, 2019). As Beck (2012; 4) notes, the historical impetus of Canada's international education agenda has been "tinged with the drive to improve and help those seen as backwards, needing our help, and seeking improvement." Nosa's insight illustrates how such rationalizations are ingrained into the sensemaking of international students. Not only do such assumptions position the host country, Canada, as a benevolent benefactor of education to international students, they also act as symbolic barriers, preventing students from engaging in more adversarial forms of demonstration in opposition to state actors.

Additionally, Nosa and several other participants cited concerns about deportation due to lack of citizenship. Much of scholarship and popular discourse on deportation directs empirical focus to populations viewed as navigating more severe forms of socioeconomic precarity than international students, such as temporary foreign workers, and undocumented immigrants. Yet, one-third of participants made a combination of explicit and implicit references to fearing forced removal for engaging in contentious politics. I spoke to Zian, a graduate student from Zimbabwe, who stated that

he adopted a meticulous approach in deciding what activities to get involved in because of his temporal legal status:

When you are an international student, you're very careful about the spaces you put yourself in, so protests become sometimes a bit different to negotiate, if you're arrested, then plans have to change […] it's always a conversation of who can get a second chance and who can't.

Zian expresses similar sentiments to Nosa in framing contentious and political participation and its resultant implications as privileges international students did not have access to. However, Zian noted that he preferred to participate in anti-racism, and Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) committees, which he thought of as a safer alternative to protests.

Another participant, Bose, expressed similar concerns about the lack of citizenship:

There's no safety net of citizenship or permanent residency, you're kind of floating in a sense. One major mistake and boom […] It's a joke that we international students talk about in school … any little thing and they can just deport you, even if you are legally allowed to stay here, there's that fear of deportation, so you just kind of pick your battles here and there.

For Bose, concerns over temporary legal status extended into less confrontational political gestures, such as signing a petition.

[…] even if I was signing a petition I would do it anonymously, it has to be something that seems safe, not something that is very rebellious or…yeah.

Nosa alludes to the ambiguous position of Black international students occupy as they assess the perceived costs and rewards of political participation. In some cases, such conundrums brought about temporary inability to reconcile aspects of their identity. As Black students living in a society stratified along racial and other significant lines of difference, participants shared similar stories of racism and racialization to their Black Canadian peers yet felt that they lacked the structural advantage of permanent residency or citizenship to address it in a manner perceived to be different to Black Canadians.

Another participant interviewed in the same city as Nosa expressed that he had attended the protest, but could not stay for its entirety due to unconfirmed rumors that international students were at risk of having their study permits revoked:

There were rumors that international students were going to have their study permits revoked – I was also worried about it turning violent, and if the police were gonna use force. So I didn't stay too long, because I felt something might take off at any moment…there was a lot of worry, especially when I heard about that study permit thing.

Finally, concerns about temporary status also caused participants to be hypervigilant about their involvement with race-themed student associations. Some participants were worried about joining Black-majority student associations due to the perception of such groups as confrontational. Previous research on Black students has uncovered this theme. For example, in Charles *et al.*, (2022) research on of Black students in the United States, some students with immigrant-origin backgrounds expressed ideological disagreements with Black student groups and perceived them as "too militant" in their organizational approach. Similarly, my participants expressed similar reservations about Black student groups. I asked John-Paul, an undergraduate student from Ivory Coast, whether he had

considered joining the Black Students' Association at his university. After taking a long pause, he said "No". When I asked what he thought about such association, he responded:

Another reason why [long pause] when I think about it now it's pretty messed up [long pause] I just didn't want to be associated with it [long pause] My perception of these groups was that … I just didn't think it looked professional on my resume. Maybe it's how I grew up [...] sometimes being part of the Black students' community, certain events happen. Being Black we already have a lot of stigma which we have to deal with. Let's just say something happens with the association and it doesn't look good [...] I just didn't want to have to deal with that.

For John Paul, the decision not to get involved in a Black student group was a conscious attempt to avoid further stigmatization and potential trouble. Interestingly, none of my participants about whether they'd known anyone that had gotten into any sort of trouble, and none could recall any. I asked if they'd known or heard of anyone getting deported – again – nobody could confirm.

Discussion and Conclusion

Contextualized within the field of Black student politics, my findings underscore the political aspects of the international student experience by illuminating the factors shaping the political proclivities of Black international students. Using diasporic consciousness as a theoretical framework, I analyze a series of identity-based tensions, affinities and instances characterizing Black international students' political engagement. While my findings provide further empirical grounding for themes established in previous work on Black international and immigrant students (Fries-Britt *et al.*, 2014; George Wangi *et al.*, 2019), the introduction of diasporic consciousness provides a useful framework for future research.

More importantly, my participants' highlighting of legal status as a barrier to political participation adds an additional point of consideration not established in extant scholarship. Thus, in addition to ideological affinities and disagreements brought about by competing (dis)identifications with race, ethnicity, and nationality, this finding underscores the need to attend to the structural hindrances that also constitute a formidable barrier to Black international students' political participation. Although scholars have hypothesized that the possession of temporary legal status may hamper international students' claims-making (George Mwangi, 2020; Yao and George Mwangi, 2019), empirical research testing the validity of such claims in relation to international students, and Black immigrant populations is scant. Studies on other demographic groups, for example, documented and undocumented Latino immigrants (Leyro and Stageman, 2018; Abrego 2011; Glesson, 2010) and Indian expatriate workers (Bannerjee, 2010, 2006) have documented this phenomenon. Yet as Black populations increasingly constitute a growing component of temporary migrant regimes, there is an urgent need to analyze this trend. Hence, I have dedicated the bulk of this section to a detailed discussion of its implications.

The influence of legal status on non-citizens' claims-making interests has received scant attention. As scholars contend, this gap forms part of a wider disconnect between citizenship and social movement scholarship (Bloemraad and Voss, 2020; Bloemraad *et* al., 2011). Bloemraad *et al.*, (2011, 5) proclaim that a great deal of social movement scholarship is constructed on the archetype "of the protesting citizen […] who may act independently, as a voter, or in a collective, as part of a civic association, political party, or interest group." Because of the lack of cross-disciplinary collaboration, little is known about how migrants lacking the security of citizenship or permanent residency negotiate their involvement in contentious politics. Hence, the findings of this study support efforts to promote interdisciplinary collaboration between both scholarly fields, to develop a detailed

understanding of immigrant-led social movements with the goal of outlining the factors that motivate migrant participation in contentious politics.

My participants revealed anxieties around various forms of political activity – whether signing a petition or joining a protest – attributing their hesitancy to a lack of citizenship. Notably, participants' concerns mostly centered on the fear of deportation. It is crucial, then, to understand deportation in a manner that goes beyond the social and political fact of forced removal. Immigration scholars argue that deportation can operate as a post-entry social control tool, regulating the behaviors of non-citizens in subtle and overt ways, and instilling a heightened sensitivity regarding one's conduct in the host country (Kretsedemas and Brotherton, 2020; Gleeson, 2008). It exerts disciplinary effect on non-citizens, constantly reminding them of their vulnerability to expulsion from the country (Kretsedemas and Brotherton, 2020). Legal scholar Daniel Kanstroom (2010) likens to being on "eternal probation", an indefinite period where one monitors their actions closely, ensuring that they are in alignment with the presumed expectations set by the host society. Under such a disciplinary regimen, non-citizens are discouraged from engaging in activities perceived as oppositional to the host country. While existing research has captured the limiting effect of the lack of citizenship on other non-citizenship populations, such as expatriate workers (Bannerji, 2018) and undocumented immigrants (Gleeson, 2008), my study shows how international students are also affected by this phenomenon.

The role of Higher Education in the surveillance of migrants has not been adequately examined (Brunner, 2022). This is despite Higher Education's prominence in the selection, settlement, and retention of temporary migrants, who Canada is increasingly reliant on for future economic prosperity. International students constitute a significant proportion of this population (Crossman, 2022), and their admission into Canada follows a two-step migration process whereby their academic pursuits are viewed as part of a longer-term move towards permanent settlement (Hawthorne, 2014). As international students undergo this process, they are subjected to an experience not unlike being

on "trial". According to Dauvergne (2016; 176), the state "pre-tests potential permanent migrants" and ensures that "many of the costs and concerns of settlement are borne by the individual prior to the time when the state takes moral responsibility for the immigrants by giving them formal permanent membership." Thus, it is under such disciplinary mechanisms that my participants perceive political participation as having the potential to jeopardize future plans. These anxieties can thus be considered as a manifestation of neoliberal rationalities which continue to influence the governing practices of state institutions.

Finally, considering the disciplinary effects of temporal legal status may complicate established notions in student activism scholarship of students as structurally unencumbered in a way that facilitates political engagement. Here, I center the argument put forward by Nick Crossley (2008) in his landmark article *Social networks and student activism: on the politicising effect of campus connections*. In advocating a social network-based understanding of campus politicization, Crossley established that "university campuses [...] facilitate the formation of a critical and connected mass of previously politicized actors who then use their further networks to recruit political novices into activism" (18). Crossley bases his analysis on a survey comparison of activism involvement between sixth-form and undergraduate students. His findings show a marked increase in activism as students transitioned into higher education. Crossley offers two explanations for this development. The first concerns the structure of the campus environment, which "affords mechanisms which allow the politically motivated to find one another and form networks" (28). It also provides opportunities to share knowledge on a particular cause. Second, Crossley highlights the demographic profile of students, arguing that the absence of parental influence and full-time work engagements creates a situation where they are "structurally freed up for activism" (32). Yet, Crossley's argument can be faulted as he does not account for the immigration status of his student sample. Hence, there is no consideration for the precarities that temporary status may present to non-citizen students who engage in activism.

In sum, this article argues for an approach to studying Black student political participation that accounts for the myriad ideological and structural factors shaping the willingness to get involved in racial politics. My findings revealed that Black international students possess a plethora of standpoints which bring them closer to, or distance them from such movements. While some develop a racial consciousness which cuts across ethnic and national boundaries, others assert ethnicity and a lack of identification with issues highlighted by Black-themed racial justice movements as reasons to remain uninvolved. Also, some students perceive their lack of citizenship and possession of temporary legal status as a barrier to active involvement. The influence of all three factors on the political inclinations supports sociological assertions of political participation/non-participation as a socially acquired phenomenon (Hensby, 2019; Bourdieu, 1984; Braungart and Braungart, 1990).

Chapter Five: Article 3 – Queer, Nigerian, International: A multifocal exploration of student migration and identity negotiation.

Abstract

The phenomenon of student migration is a core feature of contemporary transnational migration systems, and much scholarship has foregrounded the diverse experiences of precarity encountered by international students studying and living abroad. However, little focus has been given to the experiences of LGBTQA+ international students. In this article, I address this gap by analyzing the unique experience of a queer Nigerian student as a case study of how precarity manifests as a multifocal experience, involving complex negotiations of sexual, racial identity, as well as temporal legal status. I document how international students negotiate queer identity making while managing home country ties and post-migration adjustment – particularly maintaining good academic standing. In doing so, I advance a heterogenous understanding of international students that acknowledges the diversity of social locations and experiences present within this group.

Introduction

Sociologists have documented the influence of individual background on norms and beliefs regarding political participation. The presumption of this approach is that political behavior is not an innate feature; rather, one's capacity for, or interest in political engagement is a learned behavior, acquired through experience with key socializing agents such as the family, school, peer groups, home and host country norms, and many others (Hensby, 2019; Bourdieu, 1984; Braungart and Braungart, 1990). Consequently, social movement and student activism scholars guided by this analytical orientation

have investigated the life histories of individuals and groups to understand how social identities, historical events, and contemporary circumstances shape political participation.

Relatedly, research on international students is increasingly attentive to diverse social and cultural backgrounds to understand the variability in their educational trajectories (George Mwangi, 2020; Ma, 2019; George Mwangi *et* al., 2018; George Mwangi and English, 2017). This perspective seeks to challenge "deficit" discourses that tend to portray international students as ethnically inassimilable, academically cunning, and more relevant to the focus of this article, politically lukewarm on affairs affecting the wider student populace (hampton, 2020; Hensby, 2019). Such studies have crucial implications for understanding the factors that motivate participation in student activism, especially as Canadian campuses remain hotbeds of student political activity on a plethora of social issues. Yet unpacking the biographical details of international students may reveal incredibly intimate identity-based challenges faced by this heterogeneous group. The encounter I detail here exemplifies one such occurrence. In this article, I document my conversation with Emmanuella, a queer international student from Nigeria who attends a university located in Alberta, Canada. In our interview, Emmanuella shared that she was experiencing several challenges emanating from the involuntary disclosure of her sexual identity to her parents, who are her sole financial sponsors. Through vignettes collected from our conversation, I illuminate the effect of such an event on Emmanuella's academic, mental, and social well-being. In making sense of Emmanuella's story, I also highlight how class, race, sexuality, and citizenship status shape her navigation of her situation as she manages family ties in Nigeria and Canada, seeks mental health support, and plans for her future post-study as a queer woman of color. In making sense of Emmanuella's story, I draw on intersectionality, a central tenet of Critical Race Theory (Crenshaw, 1991). illuminating its potential to conceptualize oppression, privilege and vulnerability as co-constitutive factors shaping human experience (Dunlap and Cranston, 2023; Nash, 2008). Overall, this paper furthers the argument that for African

LGBTQA+ students, sexual nonconformity is not simply a matter of acceptance of rejection. Rather, nonconformity exists in a fraught space of constant negotiation as such persons navigate delicate conditions of precarity stemming from financial dependency, risk of familial rejection, and temporary legal status.

Overall, this article makes a notable contribution to the limited scholarship on LGBTQA+ international students, as evidenced by Nguyen *et al*'s., (2017) literature review, which identified just ten articles explicitly covering the subject (six of which were dissertations). Specifically, I address two calls from Nguyen *et al's.*, (2017), namely the need for more studies examining the experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Trans-sexual, Queer, Asexual (LGBTQA+) international students from countries with stringent same-sex restrictions; and research examining family relationships, given their importance to the well-being of international students.

Throughout this article, I employ the terms homosexual, gay, lesbian, and queer interchangeably. Following Brainer (2018, 917), I do so to keep these terms "in question, as fluid as the forms of embodiment and relationality they describe" […] and to assert that no one term can entirely articulate or embody sexual and gender subjectivities (ibid). Emmanuella deployed different terms to describe her sexual identity. Scholars have highlighted the unfixed manner that queer people employ terms and expressions to describe themselves (Zheng, 2022; Brainer, 2018). Hence, to highlight Emmanuella's agency, when telling her story, I include her preferred terminology.

Studies of LGBTQA+ international students

Over the last two decades, a body of critical work has emerged examining the experiences of LGBTQA+ students in higher education (for a full review, see Lange *et al.*, 2019). However, scant attention has been paid to the experiences of LGBTQA+ international students (Choi, 2022). Nguyen

et al., (2017) suggest that difficulties accessing this subgroup are largely responsible for this phenomenon. Widespread marginalization and stigma towards LGBTQA+ individuals, alongside challenges facing international student populations, such as struggles acculturating to a foreign country, converge to form a double-layered invisibility. Also, there has been a tendency in international student scholarship to adopt a homogenous lens when studying this group in lieu of approaches that foreground intra-group diversity (Mwangi and Yao, 2021). Yet by acknowledging the intersectional nature of identity and experiences, researchers and policymakers can develop a deeper understanding of the complex and nuanced way different forms of social stratification, subjectivities, and discriminations intersect and interact to shape the outcomes of international students. This focus can also complement the nation-building aspirations of major host countries such as Canada and Australia who continue to depend on international students as a source of revenue and skilled immigrants (Scott *et al.*, 2016).

What little literature exists on LGBTQA+ international students mainly consists of conceptual articles bringing attention to the paucity of scholarly and practitioner focus on this subgroup. They also provide analytical prompts with the potential to inspire insightful empirical research. For instance, Valosik (2015) suggests that LGBTQA+ international students experience a 'double barrier' of isolation stemming from the confluence of their sexual identity and student status. This is because LGBTQA+ international students often find themselves in the minority within both the wider LGBTQA+ student community and the international student community. This can lead to feelings of isolation, exclusion, and invisibility as these students struggle to fit into both communities.

Valosik also adds that international students may face challenges in disclosing their sexuality ("coming out") to heterosexual family and peer networks. This challenge is not unique to international students, as several studies have documented the difficulties of coming out for collegians of diverse backgrounds (Rhoads, 1995, 1994; Eaton, 2017; Evans 1999) Yet, for international students, Valosik

highlights the challenge coming out while adjusting new cultural and social norms in the host country. Disclosing same-sex orientation may also be complicated for international students coming from countries with stringent legislation and unsupportive public attitudes towards LGBTQA+ affairs. In Nigeria, Emmanuella's home country, a Pew Global Attitudes survey (2019) found that only 7% of Nigerians believe homosexuality should be accepted as a social practice. This contrasts with Canada, where, according to another survey (Ipsos Mori, 2021) finds that six in ten people support open disclosure of sexual orientation and gender identity. Canada also contrasts widely with Nigeria on same-sex legislation. Same-sex legislation was legalized in Canada through the Civil Marriage Act in 2005. Conversely, in 2014, then-president Goodluck Jonathan signed the Same Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Bill, outlawing marriage, or any form of cohabitation between same-sex individuals, public displays of same-sex affection, and participation in same-sex clubs and social gatherings. Despite these differences in social climate and legislation, it should be noted that LGBTQA+ individuals in both countries still report experiencing challenges emanating from poor mental health, hate crimes, violent crimes, and discrimination in employment (Statistics Canada, 2022; 2021, Human Rights Watch, 2016).

Furthermore, anti-LGBTQA+ sentiments in places like Nigeria and certain parts of Africa are steeped in culturally coded logics. One example is the prevailing notion that same-sex relations as a Western import that conflicts with African laws, customs, and religions (Msibi, 2011). Political commentary from various African leaders has repeatedly framed homosexuality as 'un-African', and a lingering manifestation of colonial imposition aimed at causing societal dysfunction (Cheney, 2012; Gunkel, 2010).

This notion persists despite well-documented accounts of sexual diversity in Africa dating back to pre-colonial times. Murray and Will (1998) assert that African homosexuality is "neither random

nor incidental", but rather a – "consistent and logical feature of African societies and belief systems" (p. 4).

Another factor of concern is the influence of family relationships on the negotiation of sexual identity. The level of acceptance or rejection by one's family plays a crucial role in the overall well-being and social adjustment of LGBTQA+ individuals (Katz-Wise et al., 2016). Research on Chinese, Asian, and African communities has documented the challenge of coming out in collectivist cultures, given the potential repercussions for the family's social status (Acosta, 2010; Narui, 2010). In Chinese communities, deviations from heteronormative parental expectations can be perceived as violations of filial piety – a moral doctrine that advocates respect for parents' wishes and preferences (Li *et al.*, 2021). Thus, revealing homosexual orientation is construed as contravening heteronormative expectations, and an act of disobedience. Similar remarks have been made regarding African immigrant communities. An anonymous contributor to *True Africa* underscores the intricate connections between immigrant status and communal family ties, noting their impact on coming out for queer African immigrants:

For members of the diaspora, our first priority is to make our parents proud because they have laboured to get us to different 'lands of opportunity.' An African knows the fragility of familial relations. And a queer African cannot simply adopt the 'ultimatum' that whiteness dictates. You cannot abandon your family because everything you know is tied up in them. Your sense of belonging, the rules, food, smells, morals (in True Africa, 2015, para. 5)

Parental pressures may be an added stressor in situations where parents are core sources of financial and emotional support. But for a few passing mentions (see Zheng, 2022), the dynamics of managing this delicate relationship have hardly been explored. As such we know little about how LGBTQA+ international students navigate sexual identity development alongside relatively more acknowledged forms of precarity (i.e., lack of citizenship or permanent residency, racial/ethnic discrimination, language barrier; financial pressure) Given, that parents are crucial actors in students'

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study abroad decisions (ICEF, 2019), understanding how that influence manifests in LGBTQA+ international students' sexual identity development is one fruitful avenue through which to examine the operation of sexuality as a distinct but interconnected vector of migrant precarity. It may also underscore how important life-course projections and transitions – such as coming out – have become bound up in migration journeys (Robertson and Roberts, 2022).

Zheng's (2022) study is noteworthy for its explicit focus on how international students navigate the process of transitioning their sexual identity while managing family relationships. Focusing on Chinese female international students in Australia during the Covid-19 pandemic and the constrained mobility it engendered, Zheng highlighted the important role of social media in facilitating students' coming out transition to their parents. Zheng asserted that social media provided students the opportunity to "curate selective presentations" as a form of impression management to ameliorate parents' anxieties. Importantly, Zheng coins the term "queer transitions" to describe the complexity of sexual identity disclosure for these students, noting how it necessitates complex maneuvering, strategizing and risk-taking. Although Zheng (2022) remarks that "maintaining transnational family connections could be important for them since the family's financial support can be the last resort for international students to continue their education and life overseas", she does not unpack this point further. In this article, I draw on Emmanuella's experience to illustrate how LGBTQA+ international students negotiate queer identity making while managing heteronormative expectations from and financial dependency on parents. I provide empirical grounding to situate these above-mentioned conceptual points. In doing so, I also advance a heterogenous understanding of international students that acknowledges the diversity of social locations and experiences present within this group. My encounter with Emmanuella demonstrates the insecurities involved in coming out - or being "outed" – to heteronormative parents who hold significant financial and emotional influence over LGBTQA+ international students.

Methods

The story I analyze in this article is a part of a larger research project examining the post-migration political attitudes and behaviors of Black international students. This project explores the factors that shape how students from majority-Black regions such as sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean, identify with Black-themed racial justice movements taking place within Alberta, and Canada, more generally. I began this study in October November 2021, interviewing 40 students in four institutions across Alberta (22 female, 18 male). Prior to participant recruitment, the study received ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board (Pro00113693).

I follow a second-hand narrative approach, which is one of three forms of counter-storytelling within the Critical Race paradigm (Solorzano and Yosso, 2002). Counter-storytelling serves to magnify the perspectives of less dominant communities, whose experiences "are not often told" (ibid, 32), to challenge, complicate or update majoritarian narratives. As already mentioned in the introduction section, scholarship on both international and Black students often depicts a homogenous group. Emmanuella's story, however, offers an avenue to complicate such established narratives on both demographic groups. With the second-hand narrative approach, the researcher recounts and critically analyzes another person's story of identity-based discrimination.

Exemplifying the snowball sampling method, Emmanuella was recommended to me by another participant. I emailed her with general details of the study to familiarize her with the topic and solicit her participation. She agreed to participate, and we conducted the interview over the Zoom teleconferencing platform, and it lasted about an hour and a half. I began the interview by reiterating the focus of the study. I also noted that the style of interview was structured but flexible; while I had prepared a set of questions for Emmanuella, we could delve into other topics not explicitly included in the study. This key strength of semi-structured interviewing (DeJonckeere and Vaughn, 2019) gave Emmanuella the freedom to steer the conversation as she saw fit, and it also provided me an

opportunity to probe her responses where necessary. It also coheres with the researcher's role as an active participant in the creation of the narrative (Somers, 1992) It was in this manner that Emmanuella delved into the challenges she faced as a queer international student of color.

Regarding positionality, I often found myself straddling insider and outsider status while talking to Emmanuella. As someone who shared the same student status, nationality, ethnicity, racial identification, and religious background, it was relatively easy to understand some of Emmanuella's challenges, particularly those stemming from family pressures and maintaining good academic standing as an international student. At various points in our conversation, Emmanuella would finish points with phrases such as "I'm sure you know what I'm talking about" and "you know", indicating that she did not need to spend additional time elucidating her point as I already knew what she was talking about. At other times, she would use collective words like "we", or phrases like "our people" when referring to issues with her parents and ethnic community. Sharing a similar demographic profile may have provided Emmanuella some comfort and openness in talking about her challenges. But given the hostile climate towards LGBTQA+ affairs in Nigeria aforementioned, Emmanuella could just as easily have perceived me as closed off to her issues. Her openness in sharing her story with me may have also stemmed from my background as a researcher in Canada. Perhaps Emmanuella felt comfortable talking to someone who was not part of her immediate friendship or family network. As Mario Luis Small (2017) suggests, people facing acute difficulties often confide in those who are not in their core friendship or family network, as they are "less deliberative, more sensitive to expectations, less attached to the past, and more responsive to context than normally believed" (p. 7).

However, I also perceived myself as an outsider when Emmanuella spoke about the myriad emotional strains she had experienced in coming to terms with her sexuality. I am a heterosexual, cisgendered man. While I had developed academic and personal knowledge of queer and LGBTQA+ issues, prior to meeting Emmanuella, I had never considered their entanglement in experiences of

transnational mobility and international student precarity. Regardless of my level of understanding of Emmanuella's insights, I gave Emmanuella the utmost opportunity to express herself as comprehensively as she could. Consistent with a narrative approach to research, my methodological approach was principled on the notion that "the best way to capture research participants' repertoires of narratives is to let them be carried away by their own stories." (Sandberg, 2010, 462). I personally transcribed and coded the interview using Nvivo Pro 11. From the interview I coded themes such as "managing queer identity" "struggles with family" "accessing mental health services" "financial pressures" and "academic pressures".

Emmanuella's story

Emmanuella is a 21-year-old woman from Nigeria. She hails from an upper middle-class family. She could not accurately describe her father's occupation but noted that he was a shareholder of a prominent oil company and dealt in real estate. In Nigeria, she resides in a mansion with a pool, a tennis court, and a penthouse. Further describing her family's affluence, Emmanuella recalled a moment where a former vice-President of Nigeria visited her father for a meeting. She migrated to Canada for undergraduate study in 2020, joining her sister who had migrated two years before. Unlike other participants I had spoken with, Emmanuella noted that she had little say in choosing Canada as a study destination. Rather, her parents opted to sponsor her study in Canada due to established family ties in the country, and the relative ease of obtaining permanent residency after study. Her parents considered sending her to the United States of America (USA) but decided against it due to her brother's negative experience in the country. Her brother had encountered mental health challenges which led him to drop out of school. On her account, he had also began using hard drugs and shoplifting, the latter of which resulted in him serving a short jail stint.

After beginning our interview with a few ice-breaker questions, I asked Emmanuella how she had adjusted to life in Canada. Abruptly, she expressed concerns over her academic progress. Emmanuella had just failed her first class and was experiencing severe stress. She felt an acute pressure to maintain high academic standing, and this demand stemmed from being an international student. Emmanuella felt that the negative ramifications of underperformance as an international student, such as the financial costs of studying in Canada and the disruptions to future settlement plans – were too steep to accommodate her underperformance:

Like I am international student I can't, I can't afford to mess up or anything like I have to. It's like I have to like some people who like feel, you know […] its outrageous because you know, I'm an international student and we're paying heavily compared to the Canadian students, yeah that's basically it.

Also adding to her stresses were issues with family both in Canada and Nigeria. Research on Nigerian immigrant communities shows how belief in formal education as a predictor of social mobility operates as a social norm that fuels demand from parents of their children for high academic achievement (Omoagene, 2019). Emmanuella's parents – especially her mother - were highly disappointed to learn of her failure and constantly berated her. She stated:

It's not possible to get over it with Nigerian parents, you know? Because, especially African moms, because they keep bringing it up from time to time.

The constant nagging from her parents made it difficult to move on from the disappointment. I probed Emmanuella to elaborate on how this disappointment has affected her and in response, she revealed a more pressing concern, her family's inadvertent discovery of her sexuality. This was one of

several moments in the interview where she drew on our similarity in continental and ethnic background to ease the tension of sharing this insight:

So, [long pause] you know[Long pause], you know this LGBTQ stuff, for Africans? Igbo, Catholic. I'm very you sure you understand.

For as long as she could remember, Emmanuella was intensely curious about her sexual identity. Dating as far back as high school, she recalled actively trying to convince herself on several occasions that she was heterosexual:

At some point, it's like, I'll just be taking a shower. And then I'll now stop. And I'll say, I like boys, like I just did unconsciously. I say, I like boys. I like it's like, I'm trying to convince myself that I like boys. And then I continue but then after some time, and that's like I said, becoming aware of it.

Yet, she never discussed her sexuality with anyone due to perceived social and cultural taboos surrounding the topic in her ethnic and religious communities (although Emmanuella was raised Catholic, she did not identify whether she was actively practising). Where the topic occasionally arose amongst heterosexual friends, she staunchly affirmed herself as heterosexual, repressing her own curiosities, and in some case, expressing contempt for same-sex relationships:

My friends would say, Emmanuella, are you sure you're not a lesbian" and I'm like: "I'm not, eww, girls doing things to each other, eww."

Patterns in our conversation also reflected Emmanuella's real-time conflictions identifying herself. For example, at one point, she expressed that she did not use sexual identifiers, but later in the interview, she referred to herself as a lesbian. Other researchers conducting research on queer international student communities have highlighted similar patterns of fluid, complex and unfixed terminological usage among participants (Zheng, 2022). Following Brainer (2018) and Zheng (2022), Emmanuella's straddling reflected the fact that terms describing gender and sexuality are not fixed; rather, they are often deployed as fluidly and interchangeably as the embodiments and relationalities they attempt to describe. Yet as she grappled with her sexuality, Emmanuella knew emphatically she "did not like men". However, upon moving to Canada and sharing a house with her sister – whom she had a strained relationship with – it became more difficult to conceal her curiosities. One day, her sister stumbled on an intimate chat exchange she was having with another woman on her laptop and confronted her about it. Upset by the seemingly suggestive nature of the conversation, she gave Emmanuella a three-day ultimatum to tell her parents, else she would do it herself. Petrified by the potential blowback the act of coming out to her parents would provoke, Emmanuella decided against it, yet her sister proceeded to inform their parents. Emmanuella was certain this was how her parents found out, as conversations with her mum – which had formerly been frequent and lively – had slowed. Her mother eventually broached the topic:

I think my sister had already told my mother, like even my mom used to talk like, she calls me every day. We used to talk like on video call. I think she already knew but she was probably waiting for me to tell her […] But when she [her mother] came out with it, I was having a panic attack. So, she didn't shout as much, she was just being calm, soothing and everything. And she's like, oh, but you know, she was like she won't hate me that there's no way that she can hate me that she carried me in her tummy for nine months. So, there's no way she can hate me […] And it is a sin and stuff like that.

In addition, Emmanuella's mother rekindled extant issues she had with her gender expression, particularly regarding her style of dressing. Describing her dress style preference as "more masc than femme" , she preferred to wear men's clothing and non-revealing outfits. This preference elicited tension with her mother, who perceived it as lacking effeminacy. Back home in Nigeria, such conflicts over dress style were most palpable when preparing to attend religious outings. Moving to Canada, however, had not doused this tension, as video calls with her mother also presented opportunities to monitor Emmanuella's dressing. Emmanuella recalls one incident:

I wore a shirt inside, then a sweatshirt outside, a round neck sweatshirt and a hooded top inside, so she [her mother] called me, she said she just wanted to talk to me, but when she saw what I was wearing her face now changed […] she became irritated and she was saying, how can a college girl like me dress like this, don't I see my sister, don't I see how girls in general dress? And the reason she is so keen on my dressing is because, like I told, you, I have no label on my sexuality, but I do not like men.

Thus, despite being in a different geographical location, Emmanuella's dress choices constituted another site of tension, which she had to navigate in managing her relationship with her family.

Emmanuella's father reacted more antagonistically to the news about her chat exchange. He reprimanded her using words such as "idiot" and calling her a "bad child". Such verbal abuse negatively affected Emmanuella's mental well-being, and at one point, she informed her father of this challenge. To her disappointment, however, her father trivialised her ordeal. Instead, he considered Emmanuella as insensitive to the pressures he faces as her primary financial benefactor:

He was like "what about him", there's fuel scarcity [in Nigeria], [he said] if he goes into depression, do I think that I'll be able to be still be in school, that I have no reason to be depressed […] he's paying for everything, he is paying for school fees and giving me allowance, he's paying for rent, all I have to do is study.

Maintaining transnational family connections provides crucial economic support for international students (ICEF, 2019; Qi and Ma, 2021). In Emmanuella's case, retaining such support depended on fulfilling parents' academic and social expectations, and failing to do so could possibly lead to the withdrawal of financial support. At the time of our interview, international students were only permitted to work a maximum of 20 hours off campus. Emmanuella had secured a part-time job, but the money she made could only fund a minor portion of her personal upkeep. Her parents bore the bulk of her financial needs. Thus, in response to Emmanuella's ordeal, her father leveraged her financial precarity by threatening to stop funding her studies:

He also said he would stop paying my school fees, that he would bring me back to Nigeria, take me to the village blah, blah, blah. And he's capable of doing that. He can do that. Because that's happened for two of my siblings. So, he can do that. It's not like "Oh, he's just joking". He can do that.

Emmanuella feels trapped. Maintaining contact with her family is mentally and emotionally exhausting, , however, her reliance on them for financial sustenance makes it difficult to distance herself from them. Conversations with her mother often left her feeling stressed. Emmanuella stated that she experiences heart palpitations after every phone call with her mother:

It doesn't happen immediately after I speak to her. I will speak to her, then I start overthinking. And then I'll start having heart palpitations, I'll just be like let me just die now…

I asked Emmanuella if she had sought out mental health support within or outside of her university, she revealed that she had been infrequently consulting a therapist. However, her sister had also found out about this and informed her parents, who, in turn, told Emmanuella that therapy was an unnecessary expenditure they would not fund. Nonetheless, Emmanuella continued to seek consultation, but registered for it under an alias name and email address to avoid detection by her sister. Interestingly, Emmanuella noted that she avoided in-person social services within the university, as she feared running into her sister, or a mutual friend:

I don't know, what if my sister has a friend? I don't know how my sister gets to know these things. But I'm like, what if my sister has a friend or she knows somebody that is there, and they now see that I'm there, and then they come to me or tell my mom or something. So, I've just been trying to be discreet about everything.

I also asked Emmanuella if she drew inspiration from Black-led movements such as #Black Lives Matter (BLM), which has served as an influential ideological catalyst for contemporary organizing amongst Black youth (Franklin, 2016). Founded by four queer Black women in the United States, a central principle of BLM is its recognition of the heterogeneity of Black communities who have been secondarily marginalized (Cohen, 1999) within Black liberation movements. Thus, I wondered whether Emmanuella had found solace in any of BLM's activities, to which she frankly answered "No, I didn't even know that there was something like this." Emmanuella understood BLM more broadly as a movement focused on addressing racism against Black people but was entirely unaware of its focus on intra-group diversity. I offer a few explanations for this occurrence. One reason is the timing and sociopolitical climate. The murder of George Floyd sparked an unprecedented level of transnational social upheaval, as debates about police violence against Black people spanned

over forty countries across all continents (Smith *et al.*, 2021). Given its prominence in mainstream media, it is logical that Emmanuella referenced this context when talking about BLM's focus on combating racial violence. Despite not experiencing overt forms of racism, Emmanuella explained that racism existed in a more subtle manner in Canada, leading her to mainly pursue friendships with Nigerians and non-white people.

But I feel like there's this kind of subtle racism everywhere because of your background and everything. Even if they don't want to be racist. There's probably subtle racism in them. And everything and I just, I just stick to Nigerian friends or non-white people.

Emmanuella also recounted instances where she experienced subtle racism stemming from comments about her accent:

Even like a taxi driver. One time, he asked me where I'm from. I said Nigeria. He asked me when I came here, I said last year September, then he was like, Are you really Nigerian? Your English is really good. I was like, Yes, I'm really Nigerian. And after some time, he asked me like three times during that ride [...] I was so irritated. I just I just stopped smiling.

I concluded my interview with Emmanuella by asking about her future aspirations. Like other students I spoke with, Emmanuella expressed a desire to permanently settle in Canada. She did not want to return to Nigeria, but not for the same reasons expressed by other interviewees, such as the lack of viable job opportunities. For her, remaining in Canada provided a good opportunity to sever communications with her parents, and returning to Nigeria lessened her chances of achieving this goal. Research documents how queer international students leverage international education as a "mediating agent in the search for multiple freedoms" related to sexual identity (Corkum, 2015; p. 47). For students from non-Western countries, Western nations such as Canada are often constructed as

"queer utopias" where diverse identities are respected and freely expressed (ibid). Emmanuella stated that she intended to stay in Canada and find gainful employment after graduating. However, her current financial reliance on her parents threatened to hamper her plans. Thus, I asked: "What are you going to do?", to which Emmanuella responded:

Like what I want to do is get away from my parents, like my mom, especially. The plan is to graduate, get a job and everything and be able to cut them off […] that's been my plan all along

Emmanuella's immediate plan was to successfully complete her studies and secure gainful employment from which she could build financial self-sufficiency. She hoped that her newfound financial independence would end her reliance on her parents' finances, and ultimately her communication with them. In the meantime, Emmanuella aims to avoid having conversations about her sexuality and concentrate on successfully completing her program. But at the time of our conversation, Emmanuella's troubles with her family were so intense that she doubted whether she would be able to survive the ordeal and get the chance to actualize her plan.

But now it's looking like, like, that might not be the plan anymore because its getting so bad that I want to kill myself […], every time I speak to her [her mother] I start overthinking […] And I don't know, if I do get away from her, would I still be able to go to school? Because I'm an international student. I don't even know what to do anymore.

I finished the interview by empathizing with Emmanuella's predicament. I mentioned in a frank manner that, as a heterosexual man, I could only imagine the stress she was under. However, I noted that her plan for her future seemed plausible, and hopefully would serve as a motivator to improve her academic performance. I asked her to contact me if she ever felt I could assist her in any

way, or if she needed someone to talk to. Also, after our interview, I compiled a list of mental health services and shared with her, even though Emmanuella already stated she was consulting a therapist. She responded almost immediately, thanking me for the recommendations and wishing me good luck in my future studies.

Discussion and Conclusion

In this article, I have detailed the story of Emmanuella as an entrée for understanding international students as a multifaceted group (Shokirova *et al.*, 2022). I have illuminated international student precarity as experienced through the vector of queer identity. My conversation with Emmanuella also provides useful insight into the sensemaking processes of queer international students negotiating their sexual identity while coping with home-and-host country stressors. Several works have documented the experiences of international students at various junctures in their study abroad journey (for a full literature review, see Khanal and Gaulee, 2019), yet little empirical research covers the experiences of LGBTQA+ international students. In this section, I provide structural analysis to situate overarching themes I drew from the conversation.

A central theme of Emmanuella's account is the negotiation of her queer identity while she relies on her family for financial sustenance. Research has underscored the importance of home country social support to the acculturation experiences of international students. It is argued that the absence of family and friendship ties in the host country makes the task of adjusting to new academic, social, and cultural norms more challenging. However, my conversation with Emmanuella stresses how home country ties can also be a significant stressor for international students, especially in cases where the expectations of parents and children do not align. Financial reliance on parents is a common theme for self-funded international students, and it represents an important avenue through which

parents exert influence over their children's decisions (ICEF, 2019). This is an important point to note, especially considering the high tuition cost for international students in Canada, where they are noted to pay four times more than their domestic counterparts (Usher, 2018).

Scholars have documented how the shouldering of this financial responsibility by parents can create a feeling of indebtedness among children (Ma, 2019). This feeling can either spur them towards achieving high academic and career goals, or lead to negative mental, social effects when students perceive a deficit between their achievements and their parents' investment (ibid). Emmanuella's story demonstrates how parental pressures can extend beyond academic matters; financial dependence on parents may also engender expectations regarding children's personal lives, including their personal identity, sexual orientation, and intimate relationships. By examining Emmanuella's story, we further our understanding of how parental reliance, even from a distance, may act as a tool of social control. In many ways ,the function of parental finances as a social control tool can also be understood in terms of Marcell Mauss (1990 [1925]) work on the social function of gift giving. Mauss contended that the act of exchanging gifts is imbued with an obligatory expectation of reciprocal exchange. In other words, Mauss stresses that rather gifts are never free; rather upon receipt, they instill in the recipient an obligation to return the gesture in one form or another. Therefore, gifts form part of "a system of reciprocity in which the honour of giver and receiver are engaged" (p. 11). Given the high costs of an international education, it could be argued that financial support of international students can be seen as a gift, which international students are required to reciprocate through adherence to standards set by parents, even though fulfilling those standards may come at the expense of the individual in question.

From a theoretical standpoint, Emmanuella's story also illuminates the potential for studies employing intersectionality as a theoretical guide to move beyond a singular focus on oppression (Nash, 2008). Traditionally, intersectionality challenges the homogenization of identity and oppression

and analyzes how interlocking systems of oppression fashion and sustain complex social inequalities (Collins, 2015; Crenshaw, 1991). I am inspired by intersectionality's focus on oppression as a multidimensional phenomenon. However, in analyzing Emmanuella's story, intersectionality can offer a way of understanding how privileged migrant groups "may experience structural advantages as well as personal losses." (Lundstrom and Twine, 2011; 71). It becomes possible to conceptualize oppression, privilege and vulnerability as dyadic, contradictory factors shaping human experience (Dunlap and Cranston, 2023; Nash, 2008).

To be clear, a singular focus on Emmanuella's challenges still provides yet another fruitful illustration of intersectionality's attentiveness to overlapping experiences of oppression. Indeed, if one were to adopt Matsuda's (1987) analytical prompt of "asking the other question" about how interlocking systems of disadvantage are negatively impacting Emmanuella, several points of disadvantage can be highlighted. The prevalence of homophobic rhetoric, coupled with growing up under heteronormative norms both in her home country and amongst her family have, stifled Emmanuella's coming out experience, rendering her sexual orientation invisible and taboo. The pressure of studying as an international student whose legal status is tied to academic performance has led Emmanuella to experience intensified pressure to achieve high academic standards. A lack of financial independence also prevents Emmanuella from avoiding harmful encounters with her parents. Emmanuella is also unable to access mental health support on campus due to the risk of further inviting scrutiny from her sibling. What's more, Emmanuella's proposed solution of suppressing her sexual orientation until she is financially independent, reveals how, even under challenged circumstances, queer international students rely on the now hegemonic neoliberal worker archetype of working hard to achieve personal fulfillment. While in this process, such students must disregard current emotional and psychological tolls in pursuit of a better end.

Yet Ahmed (1999; 342) asserts that migration involves "complex and contradictory relationships to social privilege and marginality". Though Emmanuella's relationship with her family is strained, she is able to rely on their continued financial support. Even though her plans do not involve her parents, their finances offer a viable avenue to her desired end. As such we see how she leverages her class status as a temporary buffer to aid the completion of her studies. I do not offer this analysis to negate the interlocked systems of disadvantages facing students like Emmanuella. Rather, I argue for a detailed application of intersectionality that accounts for the co-constitution of privilege and oppression. Echoing Nash (2008; 12) such analysis has the potential to "offer a more robust conception of both identity and oppression" by conceiving of both as "complex, multivalent, and simultaneous" in their effect on migrant experiences. Rather than conceiving of both as mutually exclusive phenomena, a fruitful alternative approach may consider them as interactive with each other in explaining how LGBTQA+ students negotiate overlapping, and sometimes, contradictory experiences of privilege and precarity. More broadly, analyses of contemporary migration experiences can benefit from a transitory conception of privilege and oppression. Put differently, as opposed to predominant conceptions of both as static socio-economic markers of migrant identity, they can be understood as being in 'flux' as migration trajectories materialize. This is a point expressed by Botterill (2017, 10) who notes that the experiences of privilege or precarity "mutate" as migration (re)produces inequality resulting from "[…] reconfigurations of place, identity and mobility over the life course […]"

Moreover, it warrants mentioning that the Combahee River Collective – a group of Black feminists and lesbians widely recognized as pioneers of the movement to foreground intersectional analysis of Black women's experiences, – noted the necessity of "[…] developing an understanding of class relationships that take into account the specific class position of Black women […]" (p. 5). The collective sought an understanding of "the real class situations of persons who are not merely, raceless,

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sexless workers, but for whom racial and sexual oppression are significant determinants […]" (ibid). Understanding Emmanuella's reliance on her class background also contributes towards an agentic understanding of international students, which not only accounts for the systemic challenges they face, but also their attempts to actively alter their outcomes (Deuchar, 2023; 2022). (Deuchar, 2022). Emmanuella's story contains several instances in which she works either to resist or cope with the conditions of her circumstance. At first, such acts may be interpreted as further evidence of Emmanuella's encumbrances. However, when assessed against her wider goal, such decisions can also be read as savvy tactics.

If the current trend of homogenizing international students persists, stories such as Emmanuella's will be difficult to unearth. The contemporary make-up of the student body at Canadian institutions is changing as we know it, and it warrants a deeper understanding of the diverse social locations encompassed within the international student population. From Emmanuella's story, it becomes possible to chart a new research direction that magnifies multiple, interacting axes of precarity shaping international students' experiences.

Chapter Six: Coda

It is an established notion in the social sciences that one's positionality informs and structures their research approach. Every researcher approaches a subject with their own set of assumptions, biases, viewpoints and ideological leanings. I am not an exception to this rule. In fact, the motivation to explore the livelihoods of Black international students in Canada emerges from my own experiences occupying this very location. I have spent the majority of my adult life as an international student in various countries – England and currently, Canada – accumulating post-secondary degrees as a pathway to a more economically viable life. Throughout my sojourn, I have noticed that the conversations, concerns, and overall perspectives of people constituting this group, operating at the confluence of Black, international, and various other social identities, were scantily reflected in scholarship. This research sought to provide a more nuanced account of the experiences of individuals constituting two prominent groups in social science research – Black and international students respectively. My first article details how perceptions of race relations in Canada – mediated through the ideology of multiculturalism – operate as a "pull" factor, drawing Black international students to Canada. I argue in this chapter that the allure of multiculturalism is an ideological attraction for Black international students that is subsequently complicated by the students' own experiences of racism and acquired knowledge of Canada's colonial history. My second article explores how Black international students negotiate their relationship to Black-themed racial justice movements, an ever-present and increasingly more urgent feature of student organizing in Canadian, and more generally, North American universities. While articles 1 and 2 center themes of race, and racialization as core features in the lives of Black international students, my final article centers the intersection of sexuality and student precarity. Therein, I detail the challenges of a Nigerian international student as she

navigates the challenges of financial precarity, maintaining good academic standing as an international student, while striving to live freely as a queer woman.

I envision this project as an entrée into developing a deeper, contextualized, understanding of international students in the "internationalization" era that Canadian higher education is currently undergoing. As I have repeated throughout the preceding chapters, the findings of my articles evidence that to develop a deeper understanding of Black students or international students, it is imperative that our analysis not end at those categories. To be clear, doing so is not a fruitless endeavor, as there are experiences and standpoints that may cut across all sub-populations constituted within these categories. This project nonetheless underscores the need for more granular analysis that may help scholars and practitioners within the fields under study.

While I have not extensively theorized structure and agency in this project, I see both as prominent themes throughout the articles. My data reveal how Black international students in Canada navigate the country's social, political and ideological landscape. Whether attracted by multiculturalism to seek post-secondary study (article 1), deciding whether to engage with social movements (article 2), or constructing Canada as a haven for LGBTQA+ individuals (article 3), these insights are thematically similar in depicting how Black international students interact with Canada as a social system. They show how their desires, interests, and livelihoods both shape and are shaped by it. My work avoids neatly categorizing this demographic as solely oppressed or privileged. Instead, it supports Robertson's (2018) assertion that international students are "middling transnationals" who simultaneously display characteristics of highly skilled migrant groups, and more vulnerable migrant populations.

Illustrating this point, I would be remiss not to acknowledge the class privilege of my participants. The right to voluntarily choose one's host country, for example, is not universally enjoyed by all migrant groups, most especially refugees. Thus, the very exercise of migration as a voluntary exercise represents a symbol of privilege I recognize at a time where the number of displaced people

worldwide continues to rise (UNHCR, 2023). In fact, debating the significance of my topic was occasionally an arduous task when I spoke to colleagues researching more vulnerable populations such as refugees and temporary foreign workers. Class privilege may also mitigate profound periods of hardship, as seen in the case of Emmanuella, yet I wonder how other persons in similar situations but lacking the financial security she leverages in search of a better future are faring.

However, my participants also shared concerns and experiences typical of more precarious migrant groups. The fear of deportation, a theme often identified as pertinent in the experiences of undocumented immigrants, was also acutely felt by my participants while discussing their relationship to Black-themed racial justice movements. Also, Emmanuella's financial dependency on her parents and the ever-present threat of withdrawal from her program are somewhat similar to how undocumented immigrants are shackled by the lack of citizenship and feel they must endure harsh living conditions in order to avoid removal from their host countries. Therefore, echoing Robertson (2018), this research demonstrates the need for migration theory to acknowledge "a blurring of boundaries amongst different categories of migrants" (5). Future research might further explore international students as middling migrants, unpacking the complex web of experiences that position them both as objects of an increasingly regimented immigration policy and subjects capable of altering these structures for their benefit.

Future research may also explore region-specific barriers facing specific sub-groups of Black international. I make this point in light of recent discoveries that Black international student populations continue to encounter significant issues in accessing higher education in Canada. Statistics show that more than 50% of African applicants are unsuccessful in their attempt to attain a study permit for Canada and the United States (ICEF, 2023). Nigeria, a leading sender of international students, constitutes roughly 4.19% of all study permit applications, trailing only India and China (Canadian Association of Professional Immigration Consultants, 2022). Yet Nigeria's study permit

approval rate is consistently amongst the lowest recorded, and certainly lower than the other two top sending countries. In Quebec, Francophone African countries are the top source region for Canadian French-language institutions, yet, study permit applications from French-speaking African students receive some of the highest refusal rates compared to students from China, France and India.

Finally, future research could also examine international students' transition to permanent residency in Canada. This research could keenly focus on students from sub-Saharan Africa. Despite the promotion of int'l students as 'ideal immigrants', research finds that less than 30% go on to attain permanent residency. In fact, about 88% experience a "staggered migration" trajectory - holding multiple temporary visas without the guarantee of permanent residence. The promise of permanent settlement is a key motivation behind African students' decisions to study in Canada (Esses *et al.*, 2018). The promise of settlement also features heavily in how Canadian education is marketed to these students. So, I'm interested in understanding the structural barriers that prevent the fulfilment of these promises for so many.

Finally, Future research could also advance efforts to understand the fraught space Black populations occupy in settler colonial projects of Indigenous dispossession. Article 1 touches on these themes, and can be considered a notable addition to studies exploring how racialized immigrants reckon with Canada's colonial legacy (Chen, 2021; Gomez, 2020; Chatterjee, 2019). The presumption of international students as "ideal immigrants" for permanent settlement spotlights this group as a key vector that will shape the contours of contemporary settlership.

It can be argued that the circumstances under which some international students leave their country are directly or indirectly linked to sociohistorical colonial practices, which have set in place a dependency on western education as vehicle for upward mobility. Nonetheless the pursuit of that education in Canada, as well as the eventual settlement on contested lands, warrants the prioritizing

of theoretical and empirical works that continue to unpack how international students understand and engage with projects emphasizing the themes of settlership and Indigenous sovereignty.

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Appendices

Appendix A: List of interview participants

Pseudonym	Country of origin	Gender	Level of degree	Type of degree	Length of Time in Canada
Shandi	Botswana	Female	Graduate	Drama and Film Studies	7 years
Nosa	Nigeria	Female	Undergraduate	Political Science	4 years
Tesfaye	Ethiopia	Female	Undergraduate	Sociology/Psychology	3 years
Priscovia	Nigeria	Female	Graduate	Sociology	3 years
Bianca	Bahamas	Female	Graduate	Nursing	4 years
Rhian	Barbados	Female	Graduate	Environmental Engineering	8 years
Bose	Nigeria	Female	Undergraduate	Nursing	3 years
Rita	Jamaica	Female	Graduate	Education Policy	3 years
Nikem	Nigeria	Female	Undergradute	Chemical Engineering	2 years
Emmanuella	Nigeria	Female	Undergradute	Biological Sciences/Chemistry	2 years
Rebecca	Ghana	Female	Graduate	Mechanical engineering	7 years
Uzoho	Nigeria	Female	Undergraduate	Chemical Engineering	4 years
Alhary	Jamaica	Female	Graduate	Education Policy	4 years
Jordana	Barabdos	Female	Graduate	Sociology	5 years
Jennifer	Ghana	Female	Undergraduate	Economics	2 years
Kaylani	Bahamas	Female	Graduate	Educational Psychology	7 years
Anna	Nigeria	Female	Undergraduate	Kinesiology	2 years
Shayanne	Jamaica	Female	Undergraduate	Mathematics	3 years
Sarah	Ivory Coast	Female	Undergraduate	Business	1 year
Janet	Congo	Female	Graduate	Psychology	2 years
Anita	Cameroun	Female	Undergraduate	Business	4 years
Kelly	Ghana	Female	Graduate	Social work	3 years
Kweku	Ghana	Male	Undergraduate	Economics/Computer Science	5 years

				English and Film Studies	7 years
Chude	Nigeria	Male	Graduate		
Bukas	Nigeria	Male	Graduate	Chemistry	4 years
Gabriel	Kenya	Male	Graduate	Performance Studies	5 years
Temi	Nigeria	Male	Undergraduate	Petroleum Engineering	5 years
Yemi	Nigeria	Male	Graduate	Ehnomusicology	7 years
George	Nigeria	Male	Graduate	Civil Engineering	5 years
Gbenga	Nigeria	Male	Graduate	Mechanical Engineering	5 years
Onyedika	Nigeria	Male	Graduate	Electrical Computer Engineering	4 years
John	Ghana	Male	Undergraduate	Psychology/Chemistry	6 years
Izundu	Nigeria	Male	Undergraduate	Political science	2 years
Zuby	Tanzania	Male	Graduate	Chemical Engineering	2 years
John-Buss	Uganda	Male	Undergraduate	Economics	6 years
Abughraib	Nigeria	Male	Graduate	History	8 years
John-Paul	Congolese/Ugandan	Male	Undergraduate	Political Science	6 years
Segun	Nigeria	Male	Graduate	English and film	7 years
Seyi	Nigeria	Male	Undergraduate	Mechanical Engineering	3 years
John-Paul	Ivory Coast	Male	Undergraduate	Mechanical Engineering	5 years