

**Towards a More Critical Consciousness: Race-Making, Affect, and Counter-Knowledges**

by

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## **Abstract**

While the development of a critical consciousness in racialized youth is not a new subject area, the inclusion of the human capacity for, and the necessity of, affect as crucial components of identity formation and collective action are often missed. Through four semi-structured interviews with 18-25-year-old Black and African young adult attendees of an annual week-long camp for multi-racial families, as well as a content analysis examining the cultural and pedagogical foci of the camp's youth-focused strategic plan, I seek to determine whether and how the camp facilitates the development of a critical consciousness in its youth attendees. Guided by a Gramscian-Marxist theoretical framework, I seek to understand how experiences of a double consciousness can be transformed in order to foster counter-knowledges. In this reading, the relationship between double consciousness and counter-knowledges also becomes a fruitful site for the formation of forms of affect that can cater to anti-capitalist struggles.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

The conception of this thesis project began in the summer of 2018. My research interest in the development of Black forms of identification<sup>1</sup> is something that has existed for numerous years, though my research primarily focused on the American context. In the US, there is a well-documented and widely acknowledged rich history of race, class, and disposability. When I began my graduate studies, I recognized that my desire to study Blackness in America was undermined given the geographical distance between myself and my potential research participants. While I pondered Blackness in Canada for what felt like the millionth time, I struggled to contemplate how being Black and adopted might mediate my understanding of a “true Canadian” experience of Blackness. My parents are both white, which meant, as I have since realized, I was not associated with the many Black children in Canada that often live in lone-parent households and/or below the poverty line (Livingstone and Weinfeld 2015). My family was, as I have since realized, comfortably middle-class.

I also grew up attending a week-long conference/camp (Camp A)<sup>2</sup> in British Columbia (BC) held every summer. The camp’s targeted attendees are multi-racial<sup>3</sup> families who have

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this thesis project, I follow Rosemary Hennessy (2008) in opting for the terms *identification* or *forms of identification* rather than “identity”. Hennessy uses them in the context of arguing for a more nuanced understanding of how identities are underpinned by reified social processes. Within this thesis, I aim to pinpoint the social processes that inform Black forms of identification that ultimately relay how Blackness should be understood and who and what is Black. In doing so, I argue that “Blackness” is not a fact *sui generis*, but only exists as a fact because of the way it has been socially constructed and produced through interaction. Later in this introduction, I write race as a discourse, following Stuart Hall (2017a), arguing that it has functioned to circulate meanings about how one’s skin hue can be read. This reading is always informed by a history of power relations.

<sup>2</sup> Name changed to maintain the anonymity of my participants

<sup>3</sup> Camp A prefers the term “transracial”. I have instead chosen to use the word “multi-racial”. This substitution has been made to better align with sociological literature on families comprised of multiple racial categories. It also takes into account recent sociological discourse regarding the “changing” of races, most notably discussed in relation to Rachel Dolezal.

adopted children who are racialized as Black. Starting out as a camp of only four families, it has since expanded to include over 120 families from across North America.<sup>4</sup> The camp has also since developed into a non-profit organization ('the Society'). The outlined vision of the camp that ultimately guides its programming is to ensure the education and happiness of its young attendees. The camp's mission statement has the ultimate goal of teaching families about the heritage and cultures of the African diaspora. While the bulk of its actions occur during the summer, the Society attempts to provide access to the services at camp throughout the calendar year for families. These services typically address parenting adopted children, or focus on African-specific cultural and ancestral knowledge. In a similar fashion, peer mentoring is encouraged throughout the calendar year. These initiatives are intended to align with the larger visions of the organization, and to fulfill the requirements of its charitable status.

Given Camp A's focus on Black and African individuals and the dissemination of knowledges associated with these forms of identification, Camp A presents a unique case of an educational institution. All institutions of civil society, as Stuart Hall (1986a) notes, play "an absolutely vital role in giving, sustaining, and reproducing different societies in a racially-structured form" (26). The focus of the camp, however, and the experiences of its participants, suggest not just the smooth reproduction of hegemony, but the possibility of contestations over what racially-structured forms are reproduced or re-formed, primarily in the Canadian context. The way in which this camp conveys and enacts race and understandings of the African diaspora within Canada through its services and curriculum directly affects how its participants understand and engage with their own worlds, forms of identification, and each other.

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<sup>4</sup> All information in this paragraph comes from the mission statement and related documents provided by the Society, though the precise citations are withheld to maintain the anonymity of the camp and the research subjects who agreed to share their experiences.

In focusing on Camp A as an educational institution, this project seeks to explore if and how this organization contributes to the development of a critical consciousness in its racialized youth. I am particularly curious about how the camp impacts Black youths' understandings of self and forms of identification, and how these understandings produce frameworks for engaging with the world. Moreover, I am interested in understanding whether what the camp taught its Black attendees produces particular ways of engaging with their communities away from camp, especially within the political realm. And lastly, I am concerned with whether and how the camp creates the conditions for its Black youth to develop counter-knowledges that challenge white-washing Canadian narratives of inclusion and equality for all, couched as 'multiculturalism', despite race, gender, or class. If Camp A is to create this space, it might offer insight for those engaged in education for social justice elsewhere.

To answer these questions, I interviewed four Black youth who have attended this camp, and I analyzed Camp A's strategic planning focus on youth. Ultimately, I argue that although the camp does not directly instill the development of a critical consciousness in its young attendees through its programming, it does create a space for Black young people to come together in which the contradictions that persist between the lived experiences of Black individuals in Canada and the dominant narrative of multiculturalism and equality that is often disseminated may come to the fore. Their experiences as adoptees also positions them as straddling an interesting boundary between themselves as racialized subjects and Canada's white dominant society. It is through the understanding of these contradictions that these Black youth are able to engage in more critical forms of thought. These contradictions, I argue, are a result of what William Edward Burghardt Du Bois (1903/2005) documented as a "double consciousness".

## Theories and Concepts

### *Double Consciousness*

The Du Boisian concept “double consciousness” is a core component in understandings of the racialized self within the context of modernity (Itzigsohn and Brown 2015). Racialization refers to “the process[es] of intersubjectively constructing racial categories and meanings that structure the experiences of groups and individuals” (Itzigsohn and Brown 2015:232), and Du Bois employs the concept to decipher the two-sided nature of understandings of self experienced by Black people who live in predominantly white societies (Du Bois 1903/2005). Their position within a white supremacist social structure makes Black individuals constantly aware not only of their own perceptions of self, but also how they are perceived by white individuals (Du Bois 1903/2005). This duality also emerges and persists along gendered lines, where the position of women within a white dominant structure also dictates their (mis)recognition (Hill Collins 1990). For my participants, the ability to understand how social structures produce one’s experience of a double consciousness, I argue, can allow for more critical engagement with the power that sustains Canada’s capitalist formation. The exclusions that capitalism requires places Blacks subjects as the constitutive outside of Canadian society, which shapes and constrains their everyday lives. Through interviews with four Black youth, I offer an account of Black selfhood in the Canadian context.

### *A Gramscian Reading of Marx’s Base/Superstructure Model*

The contradictions that produce a double consciousness arise out of Canada’s social formation.<sup>5</sup> For Marx, there exists an omnipresent relationship between the economic structure of

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<sup>5</sup> Hall uses the term “social formations” to recognize that society is a complex organism of “structured totalities, with different levels of articulation (the economic, the political the ideological instances) in different combinations; each combination giving rise to a different configuration of social forces and hence to a different type of social development” (Hall 1986a:12).

a society (the material conditions that make up social life) with its superstructure (the sets of ideas, language, and understandings of the world that coincide with this economic base) (Hall 1986b). The superstructure “arise[s] from and reflect[s] the material conditions and circumstances in which they are generated”, *but only in the first instance* (Hall 1986b:31). Gramsci (1975/2007) argues that the role of the economic in society is to organize the basis of social life as to be more favourable so in order to maximize development. He warns of translating this economic structuring immediately into their political and ideological effects, however. This is because this economic base exists as a process, rather than a pre-existing state (Williams 1973). Rather than being predictive and fixed, the base provides a set of limitations or boundedness (Williams 1973), acting as a horizon on which social and political action are possible. The complexity of the superstructure operates in a variety of intersecting ways, while still existing in relationship with a given society’s economy as “no social practice or set of relations floats free of the determinate effects of the concrete relations in which they are located” (Hall 1986b:43). This relationship between the superstructure and the base also indicates the hegemonic apparatuses that cater to the maintenance of capitalist life (Williams 1973). Thus, an analysis of social formations allows for a non-reductionist approach to understanding societies as it inherently affords these societies with unique articulations that are unidentifiable when only examined through a reading of the economic (Hall 1986a). When studying Camp A, then, my starting point is the recognition that it exists in a neoliberal context which may have tangible effects. Before introducing neoliberalism, however, I want to set out the operating power that has been afforded to race through time.

### **Race as a Sliding Signifier**

When thinking about race and racisms, the most important question is *'what does race do'?* Framing race as serving a function suggests that race and its coinciding categories circulate in such a way that produces effects. Stuart Hall (2017a) argues that fundamentally, race functions as a discourse, that is,

that which gives human practice and institutions meaning, that which enables us to make sense of the world, and hence that which makes human practices meaningful practices that belong to history precisely because they signify in the way they mark out human differences. (Hall 2017a:31-32)

For race to be located as a social, historical, and political discourse means that race represents a circulation of systems of meaning that produce material effects in the way that they affect human action. It is not to say that racially ascribed meanings are truths. Rather, it is because of the operations of power and the regimes of truth that underpin and inform discourse that such meanings come to exist alongside our everyday concepts and ideas about the world (Hall 2017a). It is because of the multiplicity of meanings associated with race, primarily referred to alongside ethnicity and culture, that Hall (2017a) calls race a "sliding signifier". In this sense, race cannot just be understood as terms of reference related to one's skin hue, but instead as a combination of systems that co-construct the everyday practices of peoples, and establish power differences between social groups. Historically, this has been the case for racial categories.<sup>6</sup> I argue the

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<sup>6</sup> This becomes particularly recognizable when taking into consideration less obvious representations of race. For example, within the American context, many biracial individuals 'passed' as white throughout the Jim Crow era. Passing as white afforded them safety and rights that were not granted to those racialized as Black. In recent years, however, many biracial individuals choose to identify as Black as opposed to white (Khanna and Johnson 2010). More recently, there is the case of Rachel Dolezal in the United States who, despite being born with a 'white' skin hue, has chosen to racialize herself as Black. Her form of identification had been widely accepted until it was discovered that she was not 'born Black'. These two instances demonstrate an additional complexity of historical and contemporary racializations. Passing, whether by choice or not, indicates the significance of historical specificity of constructions of race and how they are recoded through time. They also undo typical conceptualizations of what it means to exist within racial categories. This 'undoing' points to common sense understandings of forms of racial

discursive trajectory of race, within Canada, is linked to its history as a white settler colony.<sup>7</sup> This relationship between skin hue, land, and nation has come to be known as “ethnicity” in contemporary society. Ethnicity specifically refers to “the shared languages, traditions, religious beliefs, cultural ideas, customs, and rituals that bind together particular groups” (Hall 2017a:83). The interplay between race and ethnicity results in supposed visible differences that are embodied by racial collectives.

Understanding race as a discourse acknowledges that race operates actively in Western society. Being aware of the underpinning truth-claims that come to mobilize race is part and parcel of understanding how Black forms of identification come to be positioned in Canadian society, which impacts understandings of self and the race-based inequalities my participants described. Because Camp A is an educational institution oriented around developing understandings of self in Black young people, their pedagogical decisions and curriculum might be in a position to directly inform how these young people engage with and imagine their social worlds. While this camp is not the only space in which my participants wrestle with their racial identification, I am interested in the possibilities opened up through Camp A’s programming. Understanding how these young people take up what they are taught at Camp A and utilize these conceptual frames to inform their everyday lives provides a significant lens into the subjectification of Black individuals living in a neoliberal multicultural Canada.

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identification, ultimately indicating the structural and hegemonic work that must accompany them in order for them to remain stable over time. This is perhaps why ‘passing’ so thoroughly troubles racial categories.<sup>7</sup> This European centre must be traced back through Canada’s colonial history. The racist, sexist, and classist exclusions characteristic of pre-confederation Canada’s beginnings as a settler-colonial society led to the establishment of Canada as Eurocentric, which prioritized the racial superiority of those with a white skin hue. (c.f. Abu Laban 2014; Bilge 2013; Sneath 2016).

## The Neoliberalisation of Race in Canada

The principal inquiry guiding this project is concerned with how neoliberal discourses shape racialized consciousness and contemporary identity politics. Neoliberalism plays a fundamental role in shaping the subjective experiences of Black peoples as it constitutes the grounds on which the contradictions that produce a double consciousness emerge. Neoliberalism is founded upon an ideology of individual freedoms, which simultaneously characterizes the state as “tyrannical and oppressive” (Hall 2017b:318). In this model, the key to socio-economic development is said to be the free market (*ibid*). The drive to liberalize markets is thought to be best achieved through “economic deregulation, elimination of tariffs, and cuts to social and health services” (Kennelly 2011: 6).<sup>8</sup> The state, then, must never govern society or the individual (Hall 2017b). This has significantly reduced the ability of many young people to connect private issues to larger, structural problems. Under neoliberalism, David Goldberg (2008a) argues, racism has been privatized and reframed as an individual issue. Acts of racism appear only to exist as individual moments, rendering them ahistorical, rather than being understood as in connection with a series of structurally sanctioned racist exclusions and exploitations that sustain Canada’s social formation, producing material consequences in the lives of those of colour.

This is paired with a discourse of ‘colourblindness’. In Canada, this must also be read through a discourse of ‘multiculturalism’. Multiculturalism is often considered “as one of the hallmarks of Canadian society, given [its] ethnic and racial diversity” (Mahtani 2002:68). Broadly defined, multiculturalism refers to the co-existence of the various cultures that exist in the world within a given nation (Mahtani 2002). In the case of Canada, multiculturalism has been enshrined

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<sup>8</sup> Canada has increasingly adopted such an economic framework. Since the 1980’s, Canadians have “seen colossal cuts to social services, increasing liberalization of trade, the privatization of such common resources as energy and water, and anti-union legislation at both provincial and federal levels” (Kennelly 2011: 6)

into the country's constitutions and laws (*ibid*), often boasting of the 'cultural mosaic' that persists within this nation. Multiculturalism supposedly allows all subjects of Canada to flourish and participate in the rights afforded to such subjects on equal grounds. Instead, however, it responsabilizes racialized subjects and marks them as un/governable through the collapsing of race into culture, asserting cultural, and therefore personal, insufficiencies as the reason some are unable to succeed within Canada's social formation.

In order for neoliberalism to sustain itself, it must do so through acquiring the consent of the people that make up civil society (Gramsci 1975/2007). One way in which this consent is attained is through the institutions that comprise a given society. These institutions are responsible for "moulding and maintaining the moral, ideological, ethical, and cultural leadership over the masses" (*ibid*:213). This establishes a 'system of alliances' across civil society, whereby these institutions, which operate politically, socially, culturally, and pedagogically, come to preserve the capitalist system. As one of these (educational) institutions, I will interrogate Camp A's role in this complex structuring of social relations. In being informed by this neoliberal context, it has the capacity to reproduce or challenge these very hegemonies.

## **Methods and Methodology**

The participants in this research study are four Black identifying individuals who grew up in BC attending Camp A. They all grew up in small, rural, predominantly white towns. They were also all adopted (three from Haiti and one from Atlanta, Georgia in the United States). Three still live in British Columbia, while one has since moved to Montreal to attend university. Three out of the four individuals I interviewed are college or university students. Two of the participants identify as women, while the other two identify as men. I attempted to ascertain their class

backgrounds by asking questions about their level of education, their jobs, and their familial structures. I did not ask them specifically how they identified their own class positions, although in hindsight this would have been useful (if not definitive). My participants were all also at a point where they had recently (within the last five years) moved out of their parents' houses, or were attending university, with unstable incomes.

I conducted five interviews but the fifth interview was significantly shorter than the others; this participant told me she was very nervous during our interview and we both agreed that her data would not be used to inform this thesis project. All of the participants who contributed to this research project were obtained through the Camp A Young Adults Facebook page, for which I am the moderator. Their ages ranged between 19 and 25; I chose this age range because of the ages of those who can participate as Camp A mentors.<sup>9</sup> Given that I grew up attending camp alongside them, I knew all of them, although I have not spent significant time engaging with them on a personal level.

All interviews were audio recorded with a password protected device. They lasted anywhere from 30 minutes to just over an hour. The interviews took place between January 13<sup>th</sup> and February 4<sup>th</sup> of 2019. Prior to each interview, participants were told they could withdraw from the study at any time, including after the interview had concluded. They then gave their verbal and written consent to indicate their willingness to participate. Questions throughout the interview concentrated on what my participants learned while attending camp, how they understood camp, how they understood Blackness and community, how they understand their own forms of identification (with Blackness and more broadly), and political participation in Canada. In addition

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<sup>9</sup> During the week of camp, Camp A allows those aged 19-27 to act as "mentors". Those who decide to take on this position are responsible for answering any race or adopted related questions asked by parents or other Black, adopted youth, preparing for and closing down activities, running activities, and often general camp clean up.

to interviews, I attended one strategic planning session as a member of the Camp A Board. Those participating in the session were members of the Camp A Board, as well as two selected male youth. The aim of this discussion was to decide on 2019 programming initiatives. I took notes during this discussion. I then integrated components of this discussion into participant interview responses. This allowed me to take into account the tensions between constraints placed on participants due to the culture of the camp, and the perceived ‘freedom’ of the campers as social actors; moreover, it allowed me to develop a deeper understanding of some of the themes that emerged during my interview process. It is because of my active participation in Camp A that I have integrated components of auto-ethnography into this research study. Deborah Reed-Danahay (1997) defines auto-ethnography as “a form of self-narrative that places the self within a social context” as both “a method and a text” (9). This methodological practice most heavily emerges in Chapter Four when I engage with participant data on the formal and informal teachings at Camp A. Given my role on the Board, I was able to integrate my knowledge related to Camp A programming as I analyzed my participant data.

My concern with pinpointing the mechanisms that mediate and constrain the lived realities of Camp A’s Black youth in order to highlight their experiences of oppression within Canada’s larger neoliberal multicultural landscape situates my project within the critical (race) theorist paradigm (Lincoln, Guba, and Lunham 2017).<sup>10</sup> Lincoln, Guba, and Lynham (2017) write critical race theory (CRT) as a set of theories predominantly concerned with social justice. As a set of theories, CRT relies

on intersectionality [...], a critique of liberalism, the use of critical social science, a combination of structural and post structural analysis, the denial of neutrality in scholarship, and the incorporation of storytelling or, more precisely,

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<sup>10</sup> My project does, at times, converge with the constructivist paradigm. (see Lincoln, Guba, and Lynham 2017)

‘counternarratives’ to speak against the dominant discourses. (Donnor and Ladson-Billings 2017: 361)

These counternarratives are often regarded as an imaginary for a future, post-racial society. It is my intention to develop such a counter-imaginary through my participants’ experiences at Camp A. CRT also prioritizes racialized voices that are excluded from dominant narratives in order to offer alternative perspectives (Lincoln, Guba, and Lynham 2017). I see the racialized experiences of my participants as moments that situate them as the constitutive outside of Canada’s neoliberal multicultural landscape. Thus, it is my intention to use my participants’ common experiences of exclusion and oppression in order to disrupt Canada’s neoliberal multicultural narrative of ‘equal opportunity for all’. This allows me to offer insights into the structural challenges that my participants are facing. These structures, I argue, have been historically produced.

Of course, there is the risk that, given my involvement as a camper and as a Board Member, I have projected or interpreted my own experiences onto my interviews. But again, within the practice of research, the researcher is never outside of their process (Louis 1991; Flyvbjerg 2001; Humphreys 2005; Schwartz-shea and Yanow 2012). How I interpret and write my participants’ experiences, then, must be considered a process of discovery, rather than the mere interpretation of research data (Richardson 2000). This process includes a practice of reflexivity, whereby the researcher comes to understand how they themselves are implicated within the research process. More specifically, this entails questioning how I, as a socially, historically, and personally produced self, have come to know and interpret what has emerged both in the field and throughout the writing process (Richardson 2000; Schwartz-shea and Yanow 2012; Lincoln, Guba, and Lynham 2017).

To engage in my own practice of reflexivity, I had numerous conversations with other researchers about my data interpretation and I listened to audio recordings of participant data while

also taking notes on numerous occasions to more critically reflect on my methods of interpretation. I also engaged with my participants throughout my research process, as a form of “member-checking” (Schwartz-shea and Yanow 2012: 106) as a means to properly organize the different levels of interpretation that emerged as a camper, a Board member, and a researcher. There are many limitations that exist within my research project, though these findings are still significant. Due to time and resource constraints, only four individuals were interviewed. As such, my findings are not representative or generalizable to all of Camp A’s youth and should not be taken as such. At the same time, I am a subject of Camp A. While I am an active member of the camp’s Board (though currently I am on ‘sabbatical’), I also grew up attending this camp, marking me as a Black subject. While this is so, my Blackness and participation in Camp A were significantly beneficial in terms of building rapport with participants. I was also able to better understand their experiences as I had an overarching awareness of the context in which they were speaking. Thus, I argue that the inclusion of my participation in Camp A has increased the validity of my research and trust on behalf of my readers (Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffman Davis 1997; Schwartz-shea and Yanow 2012). While there is some possibility that my findings have been mediated by this involvement, I assert that my pairing of theory with participant responses, as well as my engagement with my participants throughout the research process, significantly outweighs the risk of improper interpretation.

## **Overview of Chapters**

Over the course of the next five chapters, I outline how Camp A contributes to its young attendees’ understandings and developments of self. Through this analysis, I consider what this camp offers for those concerned with combatting structurally-determined inequalities. Though this

is not one of Camp A's explicitly stated goals, I argue that their focus on Black selfhood necessitates a deeper analysis of Black forms of identification.

In chapter two, I provide a history of Black people in Canada, including a more comprehensive focus on how neoliberalism disproportionately affects Black people in this country. Historicizing the context in which Camp A has evolved puts it in relationship with the current hegemonic context that has produced this contemporary iteration of racializations.

The third chapter documents theoretical understandings of dualities in consciousness, as developed by Du Bois and further expanded by Patricia Hill-Collins. Here I discuss the contradictory nature of Black forms of consciousness; this includes a critical engagement with what it means to identify as Black and be racialized as such. This ties into how Black individuals organize their own understandings of self, thus elaborating on how Camp A contributes to the formation of subjectivities.

In chapter four, I detail the competing understandings of Blackness that my participants discussed that emerged as a result of the formal programming offered by Camp A. In this chapter, my participants describe the constraints that inform their racialized experiences as they came of age attending Camp A while living in Canada. I also highlight the complex relationship between race, adoption, and class. In the end, this chapter identifies the limitations to developing counter-knowledges the camp presents given their focus on individual human interaction as the primary mobilizer of racisms.

In chapter five, I discuss the predominant reason my participants shared that they attend Camp A. For all, camp has been, or still is, a space where they can engage with those who have similar 'lived experiences'. These engagements developed another strand of informal teaching which characterized their experiences at Camp A. I use my participants' accounts in order to

theorize about how their shared experiences can inform social justice groups and movements in order to form collective attachments, motivated by what Rosemary Hennessy refers to as “revolutionary love” (2008: 205).

Finally, in the concluding chapter, I reflect on the previous chapters and draw final conclusions about Camp A’s positioning as an educational institution. I then write about the limitations that persist within my research, and provide recommendations for future research.

## Chapter Two: Blackness in Canada

### Introduction

This chapter is an engagement with Black life in Canada. Camp A itself focuses on both Black children and children who identify anywhere along the African diaspora. Most of the youth who participated in my study did not identify as African, nor with its diaspora. Instead, most opted for the term “Black”. I write this chapter keeping in mind that most of my participants’ knowledge of the history of Blackness is informed by how race operates in the American context. They identified the (predominantly American) media as the principal source that taught them what it means to be Black in Western society. My participants did not have a deep awareness of Canada’s historical relationship with Blackness.<sup>11</sup> Only in recent years has the camp contextualized Blackness within Canada by contracting Canadian service providers to offer more Canadian content in its workshops on Blackness. Thus, my participants typically had to extrapolate from what they were taught about Blackness in the United States (just as they often had to do in public school – if it was taught at all), and consider whether it made sense given their own experiences.

Yet Blackness in Canada indeed has a distinct history that shapes the experiences of Black subjects in this country. It is a history that the campers share with other Black Canadians, and one that they experience in subtle, often hidden ways, whether or not it is ever foregrounded in curricula. It shapes explicit discourses of race in Canada, as well as the social structures in which

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<sup>11</sup> For example, in a workshop I attended with numerous other female campers on educational experiences, the service provider started a discussion about Black female activists in North America. Most girls were able to name Rosa Parks as a key contributor to Black feminist struggles. However, when she asked who Viola Desmond was, nobody in the room was able to raise their hand. Upon realizing this, a discussion ensued about how, in all of the girls’ schools or community spaces, they had only ever been taught about Rosa Parks. In addition, Camp A just recently began offering an organized trip for Black youth to go to Washington, D.C. to learn about the history of Blackness in America.

my participants were growing up. Race is not, of course, an independent variable in these structures and discourses. Rather, the economic, political, and ideological practices of Canadian capitalism have always been racialized – at times in step with their trajectory in the United States, but often independently. In this chapter, I will demonstrate that this is as true in today’s era of neoliberal multiculturalism as it was in pre- and post-Confederation Canada. Following Stuart Hall, I understand race to be a ‘floating signifier’ that has been repeatedly mobilized to secure the power and dominance of white settlers over others. For white Canadians, this is experienced as the normalization of their histories and sets of experiences; for Black Canadians, it is experienced as an ‘Otherness’, in a complicated articulation with class.<sup>12</sup> Understanding how neoliberal multiculturalism affects Black peoples as a heterogeneous collective then allows me to theorize how Canadian structures of what Cedric Robinson terms "racial capitalism" (1983/2000) have both consciously and unconsciously shaped the experiences of Black subjects.

### **Writing Blackness**

Writing and understanding Blackness is always a political task, but especially so given Canada’s self-styling as ‘multicultural’, and putatively beyond racisms and structurally determined racial inequalities (see Thobani 2001; Mahtani 2002; Maynard 2017; Walcott 2018). Yet Black people live the legacy of having not always been welcomed into Canada. While initially allowed into pre-confederation Canada as slaves, and then as free labourers amidst a labour shortage, Black peoples’ presence in Canada has always been underpinned by the Canadian state’s desire for certain kinds of racialized subjects. Thus, I agree with Rinaldo Walcott (2018) who argues against

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<sup>12</sup> I take seriously Hall’s (1980) insistence that “race is the modality through which class is lived” (341) – which does not reduce race to class, but highlights that the experience of racialization, both directly and indirectly, often plays a determining role in class formation and reproduction. Similarly, class experiences for subaltern groups are often understood most immediately through race and oppression.

writing Black people in Canada as positively sutured into Canada's story as a multicultural nation. This erases the experiences of those of colour who have been pushed to Canada's margins and excluded from its narrative. In the same way, this notion disregards the historical and continual practices of colonialism and dispossession experienced by Indigenous people in Canada; this was recognized and commented on by some of my participants.

Foremost in my understanding of Blackness is that there is no one, essential 'Blackness'. Blackness, just as race and racisms more broadly, always exists within a given historical context. Though there are general features to Blackness as a form of identification and a racial category, it is always being reworked given the historical specificity of any temporal period. As Awad El Karim M. Ibrahim's (2000) noted, we "need to imagine subject categories as always occupying different and multiple sites" (131). Blackness must be understood as a relation: it is in relationship with a multiplicity of identity categories (including class but also gender) that are invoked and called upon in a variety of contexts. To understand Black instead as a sole unifying and static category would be to reignite discourses and representations that have served to legitimate practices of racism and the arrangement of peoples into hierarchies over time.

This recognition of an historical, non-essential Blackness — and indeed, that there is more than one Blackness — also takes into account how my participants came to live in Canada in the first instance. All of my participants were adopted into white, Canadian families. Some were born in the United States, with others being born in Haiti or countries in Africa. Some remember living in their birth countries prior to their residence in Canada while others do not, often due to trauma or their age at the time of their adoption. My decision to historicize the existence of Black people in Canada may be questioned due to my participants not sharing the same subjective experiences as those who have migrated here, or not having the same history of other Blacks in Canada who

are a part of all-Black families. I argue, however, that to understand Blackness as a fixed category read through slavery and migration is a misreading of Blackness that ultimately undermines a more complex understanding of the lived experiences of Black people in Canada. At the same time, it is a misunderstanding of how race exerts itself, and is always being negotiated, in the lives of racialized subjects more broadly. Because all of my participants grew up and attended Camp A in Canada, the history of Blackness in Canada informs their accounts and experiences, as well as the way the camp itself understands its position and its role.

For the remainder of this chapter, I explore the structural relationship between Blackness and the Canadian nation-state. I begin with a brief historical sketch of the movements of Black people to Canada, beginning with slavery and immigration policy and then the more specific context of British Columbia.<sup>13</sup> I read the rise of neoliberal multiculturalism to be a shift, but not a radical break, in Canada's historic relationship with race and its formation as a white settler colony. This is experienced in the subjectivities of my research participants and the ways in which they take up their racialized forms of identification in everyday life. Exploring this relationship allows me to establish how power is mobilized through race, notably the production and sustenance of white dominance.

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<sup>13</sup> Writing Blackness from the British Columbian perspective proved difficult as the Canadian scholarship that does explore Black people often focusses on Eastern and Atlantic Canada. This makes sense given the depth of history of Black lives in these geographical spaces, as many Black people were enslaved in Eastern and Atlantic Canada. Similarly, places like Nova Scotia have been the site of extreme anti-Blackness in Canada (e.g. Africville, Viola Desmond). Despite less research focussed in British Columbia, this province is not exempt from Black life nor from anti-Blackness. This includes structural practices that exclude and mediate the experiences of Black people, as well as the modes of thought that contribute to understandings of social life that work to exclude and mediate these experiences.

## **Black Peoples in Canada**

The history of Black peoples in Canada is complex and contested. It is a history marked by years of domination and exploitation, which still often characterizes the lived realities of Black people in Canada. The enslavement and subjugation of Black peoples was exercised on a global scale, beginning in 1444. This marks the beginning of the relationship between Black bodies, labour, and exploitation throughout the transatlantic slave trade. From 1444 to the 1880s, approximately fifteen million Africans were enslaved and forced to leave their continent (Maynard 2017). It was this enslavement that allowed for the formation and settlement of the Americas by white Europeans. Within Canada, slavery was practiced for over 200 years, with most Black slaves not arriving until after the conclusion of the American War of Independence in 1782 (Backhouse 1999), when they arrived with the postwar wave of British loyalists. Over 2,000 slaves were brought to Canada: 300 to Lower Canada, more than 1200 to Nova Scotia, and approximately 500 to Upper Canada (Bramble 1988; Whitfield 2007). Slavery continued, legally, until the *Slavery Abolition Act* in 1833. While slavery was never legal in British Columbia as a political entity—colonization began following abolition—the experiences of its white and Black settlers (predominantly from eastern Canada, the British Isles, and the United States) were themselves shaped by the experience of slavery. The pervasive relationships of domination and exploitation (white supremacy generally, as well as anti-Blackness specifically) established the foundations of Canadian settlement which long outlasted abolition.

Following confederation, Canada used immigration as a tactic to secure its expansion and further development. While white immigration was encouraged, the Canadian government actively worked to prevent the immigration of Black people (Maynard 2017). In 1910, the *Immigration Act* allowed the prevention of migrants if they were “deemed unsuited to the climate or requirements

of Canada” (Calliste 1993: 133). What little Black immigration there was subsequently declined. The exclusion of Black subjects from the Dominion of Canada clearly reinforces the anti-Blackness that informed Canada’s earlier history as a white settler colony. While slavery was not the method employed to exclude Black subjects after confederation, structural practices still remained intact as a means to secure their rejection from Canadian life. Domestic policy was strongly oriented around the sustenance of a white nation-state. For example, schools were legally segregated in 1840 and continued to be throughout most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; as late as the 1950s many Black schools were forced to close due to inadequate (and obviously unequal) funding (Maynard 2017).

The policies surrounding migration have directly affected the familial structure of many Black families in Canada, taking a distinctly gendered form. During the 1950s and 1960s, when Black immigration began to grow again, it was predominantly through the movement of female migrants. During this time, the Canadian government invited numerous Caribbean domestic workers and nurses to acquire temporary visas to work in Canada (Calliste 2001; Livingstone and Weinfeld 2015), after which they were allowed to stay as temporary or permanent residents (Austin 2007). The government eventually discontinued the program, without ever extending it to Black Caribbean men (*ibid*). The “Live-In Caregiver Program” followed, resulting in the migration of many more Black women into Canada (Arat-Koc 2001). This has resulted in many Black one-parent households within Canada as these women would later come to sponsor their children (*ibid*).

### **Black People in British Columbia: From California to Vancouver Island and Beyond**

Often missing from accounts of the experiences of Black peoples in Canada is an engagement with the British Columbian context. While slavery was a component of the history of

this province, as it was elsewhere, the first large wave of Black migration to British Columbia was in the context of the 1858 gold rush (Kilian 1978). In the 1850s, California made concerted efforts to push its Black population out of the state through both physical violence and harsh legislation.<sup>14</sup> The legitimization of violence stimulated a movement for Black people living in California to relocate. Migration to what is now called Vancouver Island, BC presented a promise to escape these harsh conditions.

On April 20<sup>th</sup>, the *Commodore* sailed from San Francisco to Vancouver Island with the first Black emigrants, travelling in order to ascertain whether Vancouver Island was a fitting place for migration. They were told, in some cases disingenuously, that land could be acquired for twenty shillings an acre, and after nine months, land owners gained the right to vote, could sit as jurors, and were protected by law (Norris 1971). The Governor of the Colony of British Columbia, Governor James Douglas, also promised that they could become British subjects after seven years if they were to recite an oath of allegiance (*ibid*). By 1859, approximately 400 Black people had immigrated to Victoria expecting such conditions (*ibid*). Many, however, left within 10 years of their initial arrival; Governor Douglas' promises were often left unfulfilled (Norris 1971), the immigrants encountered substantial anti-Black racism,<sup>15</sup> and many still were not afforded the rights of citizens.

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<sup>14</sup> One piece of legislation, the *Civil Practice Act*, excluded Blacks in America from testifying in the court of law against whites (Kilian 1978). (Although the act was overturned in 1853, the practice continued.) This worked in tandem with another American law (the *Fugitive Slave Act*) which required empowered Americans to capture any escaped slaves. Blacks in California—a so-called “free state”—also faced significant anti-Blackness around this time, from a poll tax and disenfranchisement to immigration legislation aiming to register Black residents and prohibit Black immigration to the state (Killian 1978). California was considered by many a particularly unsafe location for Blacks to reside: it was notably very violent, Black people who owned property and had earnings struggled to hold on to them, and those who had not earned anything struggled to find stability (*ibid.*).

<sup>15</sup> See, e.g., any editorial page of *The British Daily Colonist* circa 1858-1880.

Black life in BC was thus no more welcome as part of the British Canadian identity than it was elsewhere in Canada.<sup>16</sup> A year after their migration, in 1860, a group of Black people living in British Columbia formed the military group, the Victoria Pioneer Rifle Corps (Norris 1971). They were quickly forced to disband a year later upon protests made on behalf of the white Vancouver Rifle Group, another military group within the colony (*ibid*). At this time, racial tensions heightened. Fear of racial contamination and lack of job prospects mobilized stronger expressions of white supremacy, resulting in the exclusion of Blacks from public spaces (*ibid*). As the gold rush neared its end and the economic depression began, many whites in the island colony increased their expressions of dissatisfaction with the presence of Black people.

The end of the American Civil War presented new opportunities in the US for those who had tried to relocate northward, with many returning to the United States. Slavery had been abolished and the Republican government had begun to encourage the flourishing of Black peoples, via Reconstruction; this was significant given the decline in Black livelihood that many saw in the British Northwest (Killian 1978). The second major migration of Black people to British Columbia did not occur until the twentieth century, with most migrating to Vancouver, coming from the US, the West Indies, and other parts of Canada (Norris 1971). This period of migration also brought with it numerous organizations that were integral in establishing space for Black people in contemporary British Columbia. These include struggles carried out by the Marcus Garvey movement, the Union Brotherhood of Railway Employees, the Canadian Pacific Railway clerks, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, the British Columbia Association for the Advancement of Coloured People, and many more.

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<sup>16</sup> In British Columbia, anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism developed together, as part of a clear direction of white supremacist settlement (cf. Maynard 2017).

## Foregrounding Black Struggles in Canada

Black peoples living in Canada collectively struggled over their independence and right to fully participate in Canadian life for many years. These collective acts of resistance have actively contributed to the history of Canada and Black forms of identification as they constitute the grounds on which Blackness has been produced and reshaped over time.<sup>17</sup> For example, in 1883, the African United Baptist Association organized struggles against *The Education Act*, which had established a system of school segregation the previous decade (Saney 1998). In 1946, Viola Desmond, a Black woman from Halifax, was removed from the “white section” of a movie theatre, initiating a wave of anti-segregation activism from Desmond and her community (Saney 1998). In the latter half of the 20th century, coinciding with the decolonial movements for liberation throughout the Third World, Black student groups at Canadian universities were often at the forefront of activism.<sup>18</sup> More recently, the Black Lives Matter movement (beginning in 2013) has become the touchstone for struggles against anti-Blackness across North America. This movement is intended to challenge the dominant systems of racialization that “systemically and intentionally” make disposable Black individuals and Black communities (Garza 2014:para 2).<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> However, as with much of Black history in Canada, these events are not often discussed at camp (nor within the public schools that my participants attended).

<sup>18</sup> In Montreal, a group of Caribbean students ran the *New World Quarterly*, a newspaper dedicated to researching social, political, and economic issues, particularly those concerned with Caribbean struggles for liberation (Austin 2007). In 1968 another Black student group, comprised mostly of students from McGill, called the “Congress of Black Writers: Towards the Second Emancipation, The Dynamics of Black Liberation”, struggled for Black rights in Canada, primarily arguing that Black peoples in Canada should be afforded the same rights as their white counterparts (Austin 2007). In 1969, a student group from what is now called Concordia University protested against a racist professor who taught at their university; their occupations took over spaces throughout the school. Many protestors were sent to prison as a result, which mobilized solidarity demonstrations in the Caribbean (Saney 1998).

<sup>19</sup> In October of 2014, a Black Lives Matter (BLM) chapter—joining over 40 throughout North America—was started in Toronto following the police killing of Ontario citizen, Jermaine Carby (“Black Lives Matter – Canada” 2019), who was shot at a traffic stop in Brampton. The organization has led protests against police murders of Black men and women, both in Toronto and elsewhere (as solidarity actions). An additional BLM chapter was subsequently started in Vancouver, where they protested the presence of

The collective nature in which these moments of resistance took form shapes Black identifications as it supposes an essentialized group within Canada's social formation. This does not, however, posit an essentialized Black subject. Instead, it marks the experiences of these subjects as a set of commonly unique oppressions emblematic of anti-Blackness. As a site of political struggle, then, this produces a relationship between Black subjects and the state. This determines the rights afforded to Black peoples on the basis of this identification, which both explicitly and implicitly shapes and constrains how Black subjects participate in Canadian life. While this determination operates at one level, Black selfhood is still experienced autonomously through the various identity categories (e.g. class, gender, (dis)ability, etc) that also inform an individual's self-understanding.

These moments are also indicative of the limits of the capitalist social formation and its exploitation of racializations and racisms to maintain power and dominance over peoples. The exclusions on which anti-Blackness are (and historically have been) premised requires the constant fixing of Blackness as an identity category; this produces the grounds on which Blackness has been struggled over through time. This is a reflection not of Blackness, but of the whole capitalist formation which attempts to govern subjects through a variety of economic, political, and ideological apparatuses. Resistance struggles directly confront the contradictions that uphold these dimensions. These contradictions can be located through the positioning of Black peoples as the constitutive outside of Canada's white settler society. While Black peoples are invited in as members of the nation-state, their (un)secured exclusions signify how power operates through this

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uniformed police officers at the Vancouver Pride March in 2017, as well as the "rising corporate involvement in the city's annual Pride parade" (CBC News 2017: 3). Vancouver protests against police presence followed Toronto BLM debates that occurred the previous year when BLM participants halted the Toronto Pride Parade for over an hour. The chapter in Toronto has also started a "Freedom School" for those aged four to ten to more critically engage with the systemic practices of disposability that undermine the rights of Black subjects in Canada ("BLM to Freedom School" 2019).

integration in order to sustain itself. The capitalist system is always unsettled in this reading. Counter-struggles are thus made possible through the limits inherent to it.

### **Contemporary Canada:<sup>20</sup> Neoliberal Multiculturalism**

In 1947, Canada passed its first citizenship policy, determining who was considered a part of the Canadian population. Those born in Canada were now considered citizens of Canada, rather than British subjects. Naturalized immigrants were also granted the same status. This formal deferral of citizenship served to establish a narrative of the ideal Canadian subject (Marshall 1950/2009), a kind of ideal, (generally white) subject that could be actively sought after. Yet by the middle of the 20th century, discourses of white supremacy became less explicit, largely as a consequence of revelations about the Holocaust. Claims buttressing biological racism were further challenged by the North American civil rights movements and decolonization struggles in the Caribbean and Africa (Maynard 2017). For Canada, this meant an unraveling of legal discrimination; country-specific migration limits were lifted and the country's discourse shifted toward liberal multiculturalism.

There was also an economic context for this shift. By the 1960s, the gains of the post-World War II economic boom were waning (Cairns 2017), and both internal policies and

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<sup>20</sup> Today, the number of Black people in Canada continues to grow. Census data from 2016 indicates that Canada's Black population is 1 198 545, making up approximately 3.4% of the total population (Black History Awareness Society 2019), with approximately 56% being born outside of Canada (Statistics Canada 2019). Of this population, 26.6% are 15 years old, or younger (Statistics Canada 2019). Approximately 43,505 Black people reside in British Columbia (*ibid*). Current adoption data does not detail the number of Black children who have been adopted from outside of Canada, though 8% of Canadians' international adoptions in 2009 came from Ethiopia, with 7% coming from Haiti (Statistics Canada 2016). An article from *The Oregonian* that addresses the number of children being adopted from the US into Canada notes that since the 1990's, "several hundred" Black American children have been adopted into the country (Glasser 2004). One Chicago adoption agency in particular placed approximately 70 Black children from the US into Canadian homes between 1993 and 2004 (Glaser 2004).

international relations were restructured as a means to prevent a return to the market collapses that characterised the 1930s (Harvey 2007). Employers, state actors, and corporate leaders saw this economic period as a motivator to re-organize the structure of the work world (Sears 2014). By the end of the 1970s, numerous governments and workplaces had “launched a coordinated offensive to roll back union power, labor rights, and employees’ wages, benefits, and conditions of work” (McNally 2011:42). This also extended to an attack on the social rights that had expanded following the war (Cairns 2017). The attack was led by Britain’s Margaret Thatcher and the United States’ Ronald Reagan, but enacted across multiple scales and throughout the world.

I highlight the emergence of neoliberalism because it is an historical reference point necessary in establishing the “concrete historical ‘work’” that the function of anti-Black racism has served “under specific historical conditions – as a set of economic, political, and ideological practices, of a distinctive kind” (Hall 1980:338). It is thus not my intention to reduce anti-Black racism to simply serving the needs of capital, nor as simply a psychological disposition expressed by one group in order to dominate another. Instead, I understand the economic context as one which is always racialized, which shapes the articulation of race with class, and molds the way race functions as a system of power (Hall 1980; Gramsci 1975/2007). Economic structures (and economic common sense) thus shape the experiences and possibilities of racialized subjects.

As a specific iteration of capitalist policy and practice, neoliberalism refers to the free market, enhanced competition and free trade through deregulation, the purging of tariffs, and the implementation of policies in favour of corporations over that of citizens (Brown 2005; Harvey 2007; Hall 2017b). An integral feature of the operating power that characterizes neoliberalism, in relation to the former liberal iteration of capitalism, is its preference for the market (Hall 2017b). Still rooted in discourses of the free, possessive, and self-interested individual, neoliberalism has

expanded market relations and logics, as well as the relationship between the social and the market (Hall 2017b). This marks neoliberalism as not just a series of economic policies, but also a political rationality that has come to organize, regulate, shape, and structure human behaviour. This rationality posits all human beings as productive, rational, and entrepreneurial (Hall 2017b). Individuals, rather than the State, then, are responsible for organizing themselves to suit this formation. This is often measured by an individual's ability to care for themselves, relayed through discourses of happiness, well-being, and discipline (Lemke 2001; Brown 2005; Binkley 2011). Thus, the subject is free to act as they choose, but only within the confines of that which is offered to them. Further, their actions are only rewarded insofar as they align with the rational and entrepreneurial citizen-subject. As an economic practice and political rationality, neoliberal rationalities recode any state intervention that may be a threat to the flow of capital and the growth of the capitalist system.

Canadian neoliberalism emerged alongside a set of shifting immigration policies, as Canada looked to sustain comfortable rates of economic growth. An increasing number of immigrants, and a desire to differentiate itself from more explicitly racist discourses found in the U.S. and Europe, led to a shift in Canadian rhetoric, whereby Canada claimed itself to be a 'multicultural nation'. In October of 1971, Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau introduced this rhetoric into policy, marking Canada as the first country to mobilize multiculturalism as a means to integrate immigrants (Berry 2013; Winter 2015; Uberoi 2016) and as a means to address the nation's labour shortage (Thobani 2007). Canada then presented itself as tolerant and racially diverse, often referred to as a 'cultural mosaic', both domestically and internationally. However, positing Canada as "tolerant" was something of a smokescreen, allowing for a sustained ideology of white dominance. Tolerance, rather than bringing more people into a

nation's social contract, de-politicizes identifications and inequalities through a veil of acceptance (Brown 2012). This change in policy also contributed to the ongoing erasure of the colonization of Indigenous peoples in Canada that still exists today, and failed to address the persistence of structural racism and white supremacy across multiple scales (the labour market, the education system, and immigration policy, for example).<sup>21</sup> The shift to multiculturalism recoded "racial classification within the politics of cultural diversity and confin[ed] the economic and political struggles of people of colour to the realm of culture" (Bannerji 2000; see also Thobani 2018:170). At the same time, it rearticulated difference, in relation to the Other, as the nation's most significant feature (Thobani 2007; Creese 2011).<sup>22</sup> Within Canada, the recoding and re-articulation of racial difference highlighted the presence of differences amongst races, or cultures in the language of multiculturalism. This essentializing of difference, along the axis of race and ethnicity (alongside sexuality, gender, and class) through multicultural policy indicates Canada's reliance on the exploitation and negotiation of difference in order to maintain its capitalist system.

The existence of multiculturalism alongside Canadian neoliberalism also mediated the capacity for progress, primarily through two key defining characteristics: the prioritization of the individual and the retraction of the state. Many immigrants were still excluded from full participation in Canadian life due to their "lack of English- and French-language skills" (Thobani 2007:156). Canadian multiculturalism was to be established alongside a reaffirmation of the nation's two official languages. Thus, claiming multiculturalism but doing so within the boundaries of a bilingual nation marked Canada as a country of equality while also privileging those who aligned with its settler-colonial underpinnings (Winter 2015; Thobani 2007; Thobani

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<sup>21</sup> cf. Creese (2011); Thobani (2007); Dei et al. (1997)

<sup>22</sup> Importantly, this shift in rhetoric and policy was made in response to the United States' perceived 'melting pot' which served to obscure the presence of difference in the US altogether (Thobani 2018).

2018). Canada's racist logics were thus translated into individual problems purportedly stemming from language or cultural insufficiencies – not, ultimately, so different from the intent of the *Immigration Act* of 1910. If Canada is a multicultural nation, then any person or persons can participate in Canadian civic life as is instantiated in law, regardless of ethnic background. Those who do not succeed and share in the rights purportedly afforded to them therefore have a very incoherent ground on which to conceptualize the forces constraining their lives.

This then makes race an illegitimate mode of analysis or means of understanding social problems. The exploitation of the perceived link between race and culture also “suppressed public discussion of [...] racism, both institutional and personal, which barred the full participation of people of colour within the economic and socio-political establishment” (Thobani 2007:156).

Thobani continues:

in defining the population as belonging to discrete ethnic and cultural groups, this communalizing power of the state suppressed the legal distinctions between immigrant and citizen, ideologically equating their status and identity by emphasizing only their shared membership and ‘their’ cultural communities. The constitution of cultural communities as homogeneous entities erased the very many differences among them. The inequalities of class, gender, sexual orientation, disability, and so on were all rendered secondary and less material. Cultural difference was to be the primary modality for mediating relations among nationals, immigrants, and the state. (156-157).

Thobani's analysis identifies race's articulations within the political, ideological, and economic domains of the Canadian nation-state. Neoliberal multiculturalism, as a particular social formation, reworks race, which then modifies and shapes the subjective experiences of those who are racialized through a preoccupation with cultural differences. This secures power within the State, marks white Canadians as the centre, and writes racialized others as the Other. David Goldberg (2009) refers to this ‘neoliberalizing’ of race as “racisms without racism” (360). Under such conditions – in which race becomes ostensibly consolidated into culture, masking its articulation

with class – race itself becomes privatized along with almost all aspects of everyday life under neoliberalism. Within the social realm of society, then, race appears to disappear. Thus, the very invocation of race, or racialized experiences, then stigmatizes race conceptually, which positions only ‘extreme’ cases of racism as racist (*ibid*). Those who invoke race are then maligned, and racisms, though existing as a structural and historical force, become reified. This ultimately allows for the maximization of “flows of capital, people, goods, public services and [...] information” (Goldberg 2009:232).

Because Canadian neoliberal multiculturalism requires the exploitation and negotiation of differences in order to sustain itself, those who are racialized, have immigrant status, or are identified as Indigenous, fare worse on the labour market than their white counterparts, despite similar levels of education or skillsets (Badets and Howaston-Leo 1999; Creese 2011). Since 1986, the socioeconomic status of the majority of Black families with children has deteriorated relative to others living in Canada, an especially wide gap exists in relation to their white counterparts (Livingstone and Weinfeld 2015). Sub-Saharan African immigrants to Canada are not easily able to translate their educational attainment into job prospects on the Canadian labour market (Creese 2007). Those who are racialized as Black struggle to participate in the rights afforded to those who live in Canada, a struggle that is connected to a wider struggle against neoliberal, finance capitalism that affects all Canadians, regardless of racial category.<sup>23</sup> However, along class lines,

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<sup>23</sup> Throughout the 80s and 90s – growing significantly under Conservative Party leader Brian Mulroney and further sustained by the Canadian Liberal party – Canadians saw numerous shifts in unemployment programs as a result of the neoliberal policy regime. Universal programs became selective, eligibility requirements were tightened, and caps were implemented to cut program costs, among other adjustments (McBride and McNutt 2007). Unemployment insurance coverage was decreased from 74% to 39% between the 1990s and 2001 (Canadian Labour Congress 2003). In British Columbia, under Liberal Premier Gordon Campbell who was first elected in 2001, the government’s main focuses were expanding the information economy, encouraging the entrepreneurial spirit, increasing the province’s competitive capacities, and enhancing the flexibility of workers (*ibid*). These objectives were seen as the “best way to increase

capitalism mobilizes a (false) sense of scarcity and risk (Giroux 2015; Nayar 2015; Taylor 2016) which undermines the potentiality for a more cohesive class consciousness:<sup>24</sup> if there is always a sense that there is not enough, then the ability to imagine a world where everybody can fully participate cannot exist. This works alongside the heightened ethic of competition facilitated by neoliberal logic (Taylor 2016). For this very reason, the contradictions that emerge between the level of experience and the normative scripts of neoliberalism are a site of struggle within a given social formation.

## Conclusion

The power mobilized through the recognized meanings ascribed to racial categories produces the experiences of racialized subjects, who are then marked as the Other within Canadian society. This is not to say that they are excluded from full participation in this country, but rather, that they are situated as the ‘outside’ to structures of white dominance. Discursively, race is then ascribed alongside a set of cultural differences, or ethnicity. In other words, the way in which race is produced reproduces the conditions for the ongoing exploitation that capitalism relies on in order to develop. This therefore requires an understanding of the ideological function of race: the

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efficiency, productivity, and consumer choice” (Campbell 2003 as cited in McBride and McNutt 2007: 188). Since this time, Canadians have increasingly seen a declining welfare state, reforms to local and community economies, an increasing homeless population, cuts to student funding (and therefore an increase in student debt), and a rise in youth unemployment (Kennelly 2011; McBride and McNutt 2007; Young 2008).

<sup>24</sup> I write about “class consciousness” keeping in mind that there is no inherent class consciousness. It must be struggled over, continuously. Gramsci writes about the lack of an innate sense of class consciousness in his works, opting for the term “mixed consciousness”. He writes that under the ‘right conditions’ a class consciousness can develop (Hall 1986a). A class consciousness must be actively worked on, constructed, and produced via the institutions of civil society (i.e. education, politics, cultural apparatuses, etc). Gramsci’s usage of ‘under the right conditions’ suggests that there is no ‘universal moment’ at which all people of a particular class come into unity; this is the tension Gramsci attempts to capture when discussing the relationship between coercion and consent.

different mental frameworks, including language, thought processes, and categories, used as discerning tools to make sense of the world (Hall 1986b). To understand ideology is to make an account for ideas that become so pervasive that they become material forces (*ibid*). For those racialized as Black living within Canadian society, this means understanding the constraints and limitations placed on their critical engagement and participation in Canadian civic life via who is conceptualized as the ideal Canadian racialized subject.

In the next chapter I continue my argument that race's discursive function informs the subject formation of Black people in Canada. Canadian multiculturalism policy works in tandem with—indeed, it requires—the ostensible disappearance of race, highlighting certain differences as “culture” while erasing others. If race no longer exists within the public sphere, what does this mean for Black subjects? How do they negotiate and understand their Blackness if it does not exist? I will use the work of W.E.B DuBois to develop a micro-understanding of the subjectification of Black individuals, highlighting the contradictions that emerge between the dominant narratives of equality and multiculturalism and the lived experiences of Black people in Canada.

## Chapter Three: Double Consciousness and Counter-Knowledges

### Introduction

In this chapter, I lay out how Canadian neoliberalism and multiculturalism affect Black subjects in everyday life. I argue that race's discursive function is currently informed by a neoliberal variant of multiculturalism which has produced common sense notions about how Blackness in Canada should be read. This way of perceiving Black individuals then serves to mediate, constrain, or open up developments of self for Black people themselves. Following Du Bois, I refer to this dynamic of perception and self-understanding as a "double consciousness" (Du Bois 1903/2005). While Du Bois was writing in the American context, I employ his theorizing to explore a similar reading in the Canadian context. In doing so, I am able to specify some of the contradictions that emerge between Canada's dominant narrative of 'equality for all despite difference' and the lived experiences of Black subjects.

It is my intention to use this reading of the Canadian experience in order to conceptualize how a Black individual's understanding of self is also deeply informed by affect. Using Sarah Ahmed's (2004) work in "Affective Economies", I hypothesize that the way in which the Black body can be read as a surface, or the discursive function of the Black body, circulates human emotion which has the capacity to foreclose the possibility for the formation of collectives while opening others. To include affect in my analysis develops an unrefined reading of Black forms of identification, wherein the circulation of human emotion, or affect, in moments of racial (mis)recognition is produced by the historical context in which Blackness in contemporary Canada has been produced and made legible. Emotions, then, do not just arise out of a given interactional space, but they rest on surfaces, always unsettled and awaiting their reading. This suggests that

anti-Blackness is also experienced affectively. Having established the link between race and affect opens up racial identifications to an analysis of what stimulates emotions in the first instance. Making an account for the legibility of the Black body in relationship to Black selfhood can be read alongside Camp A's focus on creating a space for Black youth to understand themselves and the world around them. Education is inherently socially reproductive; and the educative function of Camp A positions this camp as a critical site that can provide the necessary conditions for Black young people to more explicitly comprehend their dualities in consciousness. To understand the contradictions between experience and Canada's dominant narratives allows for an analysis of the operations of power that shape, constrain, and mediate the subjective experiences of Black people in this country, ultimately determining which Black subjects are good and governable.

In what follows, I begin by outlining Du Bois' theory of double consciousness. I extend his insights through the theorizing of Patricia Hill-Collins (1990), particularly using her work in *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. I then trace the legibility of the Black body to the production and circulation of human emotions during moments of interaction to identify the affective modalities through which race is experienced. I will then re-contextualize Du Bois' theorizing within Canada to develop an understanding of the subjective experiences of Black people living in this country. I explain how power and knowledge circulate in such a way as to make the Black body legible; I argue that this occurs through the dissemination of knowledges on multiple fronts, particularly through educational institutions. It is because of its educative, reproductive role that Camp A is a potential site for the production of counter knowledges. To close the chapter, I reintroduce the circulation of emotions to assert the counter-hegemonic possibilities that open up through Camp A for Families.

## Double Consciousness

W.E.B. Du Bois (1903/2005) argued that Black individuals living in predominantly white societies experience a form of double consciousness. This duality in consciousness makes them “always aware not only of themselves, but of how they are perceived by whites”; this also includes a hyper-awareness of this division of perception (Du Bois 1903/2005: 272). This indicates that the way in which white people perceive and recognize Black individuals works as a constitutive force, i.e., it shapes the consciousness of Black subjects. This suggests that the Black body *in itself* produces a system of meanings that have material consequences, which can be observed in the lives of Black subjects. However, in using Du Bois’ theorizing, I argue that the way in which the Black body is read does not exist as an a priori factual structure. Instead, it is informed by the historical context in which Blackness emerged and has been reworked over time and presented in its current form.

For Du Bois, there are three entities that comprise a double consciousness: the veil, twoness, and second sight. Du Bois (1987) uses “the veil” as a metaphor, intended to invoke the formal and informal structures of segregation in American society at the time of his writings. He had spent time studying the experiences of Black individuals living in Philadelphia, writing *The Philadelphia Negro* in 1899. He was also witness to severe anti-Black racism in the US, expressed through lynchings, race riots, and Jim Crow legislation. As a public intellectual himself, Du Bois also experienced racism within academia. Du Bois argued that it was the structures comprising the veil, both formal and informal, that prevented white Americans from recognizing Black individuals as members of the American polity. This meant that white people were only able to see themselves as ‘masters’, but were unable to see the foundation of white supremacy that their assumptions of dominance rested upon. This is why Du Bois wrote of the veil as something only

worn by Black subjects; they were capable of seeing the practices of exclusion and subjugation that made them disposable in a way that was not necessary for white people. Du Bois' argument suggests that the segregation of Black people in Canada is sustained by a reified understanding of Blackness, in which skin hue posits a meaning in itself.

The inability of whites to see beyond structures of segregation produces a sense of twoness for the Black subject. This marks the first point of constitution: the inability of whites to coherently understand that segregation is upheld by an ideology of white dominance forecloses the possibility of whites recognizing the experiences, exclusions, and rights of Black peoples. This foreclosing of recognition shapes how Black individuals can then understand themselves.<sup>25</sup> The inability of whites to coherently recognize the subjective experiences of Black individuals develops two strands of consciousness within the Black subject: a strand that is recognized by others, and a strand that recognizes this (lack of) recognition and then further internalizes it. As the Black subject takes position on either side of the veil, the white world dehumanizes Black subjects through a lack of recognition (Du Bois 1940/2012). This positions Black individuals to intersubjectively construct their worlds behind the veil while also having the ability to perceive the white world. This is what Du Bois (1920/1969; 1940/2012) refers to as a sense of twoness. The last component of a double consciousness is the development of a second-sight. Second-sight is produced by the

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<sup>25</sup> Within the sociological literature (Mead 1934; Hegel 1807; Hall 1997; Fanon 2008; Coulthard 2014), recognition is often considered central to selfhood and subjectivity (though not all of these cannons of thought agree on the transformative power of this recognition). It is elsewhere written that for an individual to take on a particular identification, this form of identification has to be accepted or assigned by another (Stryker 2007). More specifically, identifications are “self-cognitions tied to roles and, through roles, to positions in organized social relationships” (Stryker 2007: 1092). Thus, certain forms of identification are more likely to be invoked in social situations due to the consistency of which they are called upon and therefore accepted by others. The self is therefore organized into numerous components through self-recognition and external recognition. What can also be interpreted here is that the way in which roles are invoked is tied to the very social processes that have allowed for their recognition in the first instance. This recognition calls the different forms of identification into being, stimulating the development of the self. However, it is clear that Black subjects do not experience this same level of recognition.

veil, or the practices that maintain white supremacy. This allows the Black subject to perceive the organization of society in a way that the dominant members of a society cannot (Du Bois 1897; Du Bois 1920/1969). It is through a second-sight that Black subjects remain aware of how social formations demand their exclusions. This writes Black subjects as the constitutive outside that sustains the boundaries of whiteness, while also shaping and modifying how the Black subject comes to perceive themselves and act within a given social formation.

It is important to note that a double consciousness also emerges along gendered lines (Patricia Hill-Collins 1990). The double consciousness of Black women is characterized by a heightened awareness of the dominant group's languages and behaviours as a result of the need to be continuously aware of how the conditions of oppression presented themselves in their lives (Lorde 1984). This nature of consciousness positioned them to sometimes adopt the languages and modes of being of the oppressor as a survival technique (*ibid*). Behind these adopted behaviours exists their own standpoint, one of which they hid from their oppressors, thus emerging a sense of living two lives – one for the oppressor and one of self-definition – for Black women (Gwaltney 1980). For Black women, then, their double consciousness is intimately informed by their gendered and sexualized experiences, which creates the conditions under which they must be increasingly aware of how they are read by others (Holloway 1995).

While the veil, a sense of twoness, and second-sight are written as separate concepts, they do not operate as such. Instead, they work alongside one another. The veil produces a sense of twoness and a second sight which both splits their consciousness and provides them with a unique standpoint to understand the power relations and thought structures that undergird and mobilize racisms. The lack of recognition motivated by white supremacy works formatively as it assists in the production of the subjective experiences of Black people. Black selfhood then emerges through

social interaction and the ability to reflect on one's position within a racialized social structure. A double consciousness does not uniformly exert itself, nor is it taken up in a homogeneous manner by all Black subjects, however. Patricia Hill-Collins (1990) argues that the shifting nature of the American political economy and the end of Jim Crow segregation resulted in negotiations of how anti-Black racism was and is perceived in the Americas. Individual experiences of oppression, she argued, are thus contingent upon one's position within the "matrix of domination" that comprises social life (Hill-Collins 1990:24-25); this includes their awareness of oppression. As such, there is no universal experience of double consciousness, which itself manifests along gendered, classed, and sexualized lines. These different forms of identification then work together to co-constitute the individual's experience, although they exist and intersect prior to reaching the individual.<sup>26</sup> What this suggests is that, rather than there innately existing an ability to understand one's exclusions, this only occurs under particular conditions. These conditions constrain and mediate the Black individual's ability to recognize their exclusions, or perceive them as such. The purpose of establishing a reading of the subjectification of Black individuals is therefore not to set out a flattened, universal reality characterizing Black life, but instead to locate the meaning-making processes through which Black people in Canada make sense of their always-racialized experiences.

### **Double Consciousness and Affect**

It is here that we can expand our understanding of the Black body as producing modes of understanding and behaviours. The (lack of) recognition of Black subjects relegates Black Others to the boundaries of a white dominant society. This is the un/governable Black subject.

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<sup>26</sup> See McNally (2017); Ferguson (2017)

Misrecognitions are also mobilized and sustained on affective grounds. In identifying the affective modalities through which a double consciousness is experienced, both as the inside and the constitutive outside, it is possible to understand the emotional constituents that both counter and sustain white supremacy, in the present and in the future. In “Affective Economies”, Sara Ahmed (2004) argues that emotions “circulate between bodies and signs” (117). She invokes a narrative on an Aryan Nations webpage in which a white nationalist insists that it is not hate that mobilizes, for example, a white working-class man to be infuriated by immigrants, but instead love: love for the working class man’s nation, one that for him is predicated on whiteness, is the mobilizer (Ahmed 2004). Though not agreeing with the man’s sentiments, Ahmed (2004) is able to conclude that

emotions do things, and they align individuals with communities – or bodily space with social space – through the very intensity of their attachments. Rather than seeing emotions as physiological dispositions, we need to consider how they work, in concrete and particular ways, to mediate the relationship between the psychic and the social, and between the individual and the collective. (119)

Rosemary Hennessy (2008) contributes to this complication of emotion as not inherent to individuals, but as things that are made sense of through the ways in which they are circulated and understood within communities and social spaces. Emotions are never exempt from meaning-making processes, and the ways in which bodies are recognized by others is never neutral. Instead, emotions are political—heavily influenced and mediated by social contexts. Below, I apply this understanding of affect to racial contexts. These examples indicate how affective modalities both inform a reading of Black Othered subjects and produce these subjects through recognition (or a lack thereof).

In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Frantz Fanon (1967) recounts a story of an encounter with a white, Parisian child. Upon seeing Fanon, the child exclaims to their mother, “Mama, see the

Negro! I'm frightened!" (86). Immediately, the child identifies Fanon through his skin colour and fear is circulated via the sign on the surface of his body. Fanon explains that at this moment, he discovered his Blackness and his ethnic characteristics. In this instance, Fanon simultaneously comes into identification through the gaze of the Other, while also being fixed as the Other. What is clear at this moment is how the fear mobilized via Fanon's skin hue immediately binds the white child with their white mother. This binding to the mother is produced by the child's reading of the Black body and the coinciding expression of fear. Here, the reading of the Black body, "takes [the white child] across different levels of signification, not all of which can be admitted in the present" (Ahmed 2004:120). Ahmed later echoes this argument through her claim that emotions are "sticky", whereby the sensation that is mobilized is heavily tied to "the 'absent presence' of historicity" that has informed the child's fear response (*ibid*).

This same moment of coming into recognition is recorded in Du Bois' (1903/2005) *The Souls of Black Folk*. Here, Du Bois is attempting to exchange a visiting-card with a white, young girl. However, the girl refuses his card "peremptorily, with a glance" (Du Bois 1903/2005:6). At this time, Du Bois notices his difference from the Others – white Others – who have not been met with refusal. At once, his skin colour becomes a surface to be read, mobilizing human emotions. It is immediately evident that a sensation has been produced within this space. Emotions are again tied to past histories that have informed this girl's reading of Blackness on the body. Emotions have been circulated in direct relationship with these histories. These examples suggest that emotions come to be circulated and exchanged through social interaction. More specifically, the very circulation of signs produces affect.<sup>27</sup> The affect produced through this interaction works to

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<sup>27</sup> Hennessy relays the same relationship between affect and bodies as signifiers in relation to sexuality. She writes that, under capitalism, sexual identifications and their coinciding discourses "provide the social contexts whereby sensations and affects are made intelligible in terms of normative and perverse identifications and desires" (Hennessy 2008: 217).

align some bodies, while othering Others. This suggests that the affect that surfaces in racialized contexts shapes and modifies the formation of collectives. The exclusion of the Black individual is then experienced affectively, as a result of not quite belonging (marked by their inability to become the presupposed normative subject). Brené Brown (2017) defines belonging as “the innate human desire to be part of something larger than us” (31). She links this to a discussion of spirituality, in which people are able to recognize and celebrate “that we are all inextricably connected to each other by a power greater than all of us, and that our connection to that power and to one another is grounded in love and compassion” (Brown 2017:34). Under capitalism, however, this inextricable connection is continuously undermined. She makes this claim as she brings into dialogue how, within contemporary society, power is held *over* people rather than *amongst* people (Brown 2017). This operation of power then separates people into fractions geographically, politically, and spiritually. Dissent is silenced, ideas and beliefs exist unchallenged, and facts only exist within a feedback loop of similarities (*ibid*). This feedback loop precipitates feelings of disconnection and loneliness, which results in fear becoming peoples’ default emotion.

Incorporating Brown’s (2017) work on connection and belonging allows for a more critical dialogue about the power-knowledge relationship that informs the legibility of the Black body. Brown’s argument that capitalism undermines the ‘inextricable connection between’ human bodies that is rooted in love and compassion suggests that affect is a site of struggle capable of contesting Canada’s current iteration of capitalism. This is the same iteration that constitutes the subjective experiences of Black people in Canada, ultimately demarcating the good and integrated Black subject. Thus, it is those experiences where Black young people are able to recognize their sense of ‘not belonging’ that can also produce the foundation of counter-hegemonic movements

(Hennessy 2008). Or, it is a lack of love and compassion, mobilized by the presence and recognition of a double consciousness or sense of twoness, that can serve as the basis for counter-struggles. This sensation of lack of belonging is informed by the subject position of Black forms of identification, which are always underpinned by the histories and common sense frameworks that have come to articulate Blackness over time.

Affect itself then must be understood as historically and socially produced. This marks the complex relationship between racial discourse, identification (and misrecognition), and human emotion. Differences read via the surface of the Black body are produced both in and prior to immediate spaces of recognition, and are always informed by social, political, and economic contexts. As affect is mobilized via the surface of a Black skin hue, it plays a co-constitutive role in how the Black subject is read, which, through the presence of a double consciousness, deeply informs how a Black subject comes to understand themselves.

### **A Canadian Double-Consciousness**

While Du Bois' intent was to illuminate how anti-Black racism in America presented itself in the individual lives of Black subjects, his theorizing precipitates a notion of Black selfhood that characterizes the lived experiences of Black individuals in Canada. This is to say that Du Bois' writing allows for a reading of how structural and relational forces in Canada shape and constrain the subjective experiences of Black individuals. Within Canada, this mediating force has been oriented around the preservation and expansion of a white settler state. In the current moment, it is the Canadian state's reliance on neoliberal multiculturalism that characterizes its veil. This produces a veil in and of itself that has reworked race and racisms so that the very ability to determine them is undermined. Multicultural rhetoric and policy (marking a more formal apparatus

of race-making) also recode racial classifications through a shifted focus on culture and language as the most significant features of difference in Canada. This has reinscribed race as purely negotiable differences that are chosen by Black peoples as opposed to differences that are read and observed. Thus, for example, the veil emerges as the Black individual ‘chooses’ to not speak Canada’s official languages and therefore cannot fare well on the job market. Or, in another instance, the veil also emerges as differences in ‘culture’ are reframed through the acceptance (or tolerance) of Black Others behaving or appearing acceptably different. The collapsing of race into culture precipitated by multiculturalism works to homogenize the experiences of Black people in Canada (Razack 1998). It also works to secure the (supposed) inferiority and inadequacies of Black peoples as innate features of Black forms of identification.

This serves to legitimate the claim that the Canadian state is not racist. This denial of anti-Black racism works to individualize racisms while simultaneously essentializing all Black peoples. This denial of racism also works to cement Canada as tolerant and post-racial (Thobani 2007; Brown 2005). The Canadian state’s multicultural drive serves to qualify inequalities as ‘differences’, thus rendering them as innate preferences (Brown 2012). It then manages exclusions through making subordinate subjects governable as they are made to manage their positioning as the intolerable, securing power for the tolerating (*ibid*). As multicultural policy defines all Black people in Canada, it shapes the double consciousness of these subjects as they struggle to embody the cultural tropes put forth via these common sense frameworks (Thobani 2007). This contradiction also means they must reconcile their (supposedly) personal inadequacies, while also experiencing the affective dimensions of not fitting into what is defined as Canada’s ideal subject. This un/governable Black subject then develops a second-sight, becoming increasingly aware of how Canadian society demands their negotiation of racialized self. The state then becomes itself

hidden behind a veil as though it has disappeared, excusing the structurally determined inequalities experienced by Black subjects that constrain their success on the labour market, their participation in the Canadian polity, or their socioeconomic status in relation to their white counterparts. The illusion of the disappearance of the state is an integral component in the maintenance of the veil in Canadian society, as neoliberal multiculturalism individualizes and privatizes race and their coinciding racisms. However, it is because of this precarious position as the constitutive outside that a double consciousness is a potential mobilizer of a more counter-hegemonic understanding of the relationship between the Canadian nation-state and Blackness.

### **Double Consciousness as a Source of Counter-Knowledge**

If we are to classify a component of what sustains the exclusion of Black subjects (Canada's history of white supremacy) as hegemonic knowledges, then it ought to be possible to identify other, counter-sites where the reproduction of different knowledges occurs. Power sustained through knowledge production "always has technological and institutional dimensions" (Fiske 1996:193), some of which do or can exist on its outside. Schools, for example, are responsible for sustaining, maintaining, and reproducing the population required to exist (and work) within a capitalist society (Battacharya 2017). Thus, spaces of education are among many sites responsible for the dissemination of dominant knowledges (*ibid*). This includes the activities, emotions, behaviours, and understandings of everyday life that shape and influence this population (*ibid*). It is the pedagogy offered by these institutions that has the capacity to be transformative, in one direction or another. Pedagogy is a

moral and political practice that is always implicated in power relations because it narrates particular versions and visions of agency, civic life, community, the future, and how we might construct representations of ourselves, others, and our physical and social environment. (Giroux 2018:85)

To suppose the social production or reproduction of *counter*-knowledges suggests that educational institutions concerned with the subject formation of Black people in Canada can create the conditions for Black individuals to recognize how Canada's social formation demands their exclusion.

When I use the term “counter-knowledges”, I am referring to that which contradicts, uproots, and exposes the incoherence of what Antonio Gramsci (1975/2007) calls “common sense”. Common sense refers to the everyday frameworks one uses to make sense of the dominant society (Gramsci 1975/2007). Not simply the combination of ‘truths’ about the society in which one lives, common sense is instead the accumulation of complex and contradictory logics, histories, “well-tried knowledge[s], customary beliefs, wise-sayings, popular nostrums and prejudices” that are so pervasive and widely acknowledged that they seem terribly obvious and sensible (Hall and O’Shea 2015:9). It is because of this ability to take on this (seemingly) obvious form, that common sense works to sustain certain relations of power. It is sustained through its simplicity. However, because this common sense is continuously transformed through time as its social context and the needs of capital change, it can become disjointed and episodic when critically engaged with. To speak of counter-knowledges, then, is to refer to the ‘teasing-apart’ of these frameworks in order to expose the inconsistencies that exist between them. These inconsistencies and contradictions can then become a site of struggle.

This is perhaps why Canadian educational institutions often fail to properly prepare Black students for their life worlds (Dei, Mazzuca, McIsaac, and Zine 1997; Codjoe 2001; Smith, Schneider, and Ruck 2005; Hampton 2010). In the 1990s, Nova Scotia established an Africentric elementary school; similar schools were also established in Montreal (Hampton 2010) and, more recently, in Toronto (Webb and Gulson 2016). This perceived necessity for Black centric schools

indicates the inefficacy of Western schooling. This is typically experienced by Black students as an inability to situate themselves within the context of the social inequalities that they are facing. While Black students are socialized into the dominant ideology and frameworks, these frameworks contradict their everyday lives. This contributes to their individual experiences of double consciousness, without creating the conditions for a more transformative and critical second-sight.

As an educational institution, Camp A has the potential to be a space capable of reshaping and modifying Black students' experiences of double consciousness. Counter-knowledges are produced when an individual interrogates their own conception of the world in order to expose how they themselves have incorporated modes of popular thought, or common sense, into their everyday frameworks used to make sense of the world (Gramsci 1975/2007). The emergence of new counter-knowledges, then, occurs when Black subjects are able to trace their dualities in consciousness and themselves to the underpinning (historical) frameworks that have sustained white supremacy in Canada. It is this relationship that expels Black bodies to the constitutive outside of Canadian society and that works to maintain this country's social formation. As an institution that offers services to a specified Black (heterogeneous) collective, Camp A can create the conditions for Black young people to understand the discursive operations of the realities in which they live. Such a form of critical engagement allows individuals to comprehend how they exist both with and in the world, with it and in it, simultaneously (Freire 1970). There are, however, no guarantees that the camp will do this or that the campers will take up the knowledge in any particular way.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have utilized Du Bois' "double consciousness" in order to theorize about the subjective experiences of Black people in Canada. In doing so, I have offered an analysis of

the common sense frameworks of neoliberal multiculturalism that make the Black body (il)legible. These frameworks are not just taken up as perceptions, but also shape, constrain, and modify the developments of self experienced by Black individuals themselves. This possibility arises out of the contradictions between material and affective experiences and their encounters with ‘common sense’ that emerge as Black subjects move through the world. It is because of a sense of twoness that emerges within the consciousness of Black individuals that they become intimately aware of the perceptions of (white) others, but it is the development of a second sight that offers the possibility for the production of counter-knowledges.

Only by exposing the concealed operations of race under neoliberal multiculturalism and the context in which Blackness in Canada emerged, can race in Canada be sufficiently understood. At the same time, human emotions must always be made visible where possible in order to understand how they play a role in constructing Black subjectivities. Emotions are not just static entities, but rather are always in motion or only processed through motion and exchange. Further, the more a sign is circulated, the more ‘wealth’ it takes on (Ahmed 2004). In other words, the more a sign is read—and I would argue the more ways in which it can be read—allows for the amplification of emotions. In the context of Canadian neoliberal multiculturalism, this means that the neoliberalisation of race, particularly its concealment of underpinning racial histories, actually allows for the very exchange and circulation of race. As race becomes submerged, the way Black bodies are read acquires additional meaning through race’s very concealment.

This reading of affect alongside race indicates another territory of common sense that must be engaged with in Black struggles within Canada. On one hand, this might require the presence of a double consciousness, or more precisely, a sense of twoness, to recognize this concealment and these contradictions. On the other hand, this again takes us back to the crucial role that sites

of education, like Camp A, can play in transforming a double consciousness into an actively conscious and integral feature of Black forms of identification that can open up new ways of thinking about oneself, others, and society. In the next chapter, I explore the frameworks of common sense pertaining to Blackness that Camp A disseminates through its service offerings. I link this to the developments of self and identifications that Camp A participants experience. Ultimately, I argue that the stories posited by the racialized frameworks this camp teaches work to produce understandings of the un/governable Black subject within the wider, Canadian landscape of anti-Blackness. My participants, however, learn to identify the contradictions between these normative frameworks of racialization and their own experiences, due to the opportunities they gain through interacting with one another.

## Chapter Four: If Blackness Could Be Taught – Competing Understandings of Blackness in Everyday Life

*“Being a Black person can be a very depressing situation depending on how you look at it [...] Racism and colourism are social constructs. So, to a certain extent, it doesn’t matter how good of a person or how capable of a person you are. A lot of end results end up being determined by the people and that’s largely outside of your control so that can be really frustrating ... and it can be really depressing when people have a bit of a cognitive dissonance to Black people in regards to feeling pain and feeling [...] You always come last in basically any social outcome unless you’re putting yourself first.” (Devaun, 25)*

### Introduction

This quote from an interview with Devaun, a 25 year-old Camp A member who identifies as a man, highlights the complexities of the relationship between Blackness and social structures that emerged throughout discussions with my interview participants. Most importantly, this quote portrays the constraints that such structures present in the lives of each of the Black young people I spoke with as they came of age and attended Camp A during their summers. As my participants came of age and began to interrogate their own experiences of Blackness, camp is a primary space where they learn to understand the nuances associated with their own ways of identifying. Interestingly, it is not the formal pedagogy of Camp A that helps them develop these more nuanced understandings. The camp’s official approach to race is relatively neoliberal, where race, and the way it organizes society and human behavior, are something to be overcome within the individual.<sup>28</sup> Throughout interviews with my participants, these teachings were implicitly

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<sup>28</sup> In one youth session I attended in 2018, a discussion about schooling ensued. Many youth shared stories about how they were often assigned books that used the word “nigger”. While this is a very contentious issue within schooling, this conversation was only ever framed as individual decisions made by teachers. It was never contextualized within a larger framework of schooling as an institution.

contested as my participants shared how they negotiate what it means to be racialized subjects through their various racialized experiences.

Throughout this chapter, I describe the enduring tension between how Camp A teaches Blackness and how Blackness is actually experienced by my participants, both as a form of identification and as a discourse. Within the literature, Blackness is multifaceted and consists of competing narratives that have been reworked over time (Hall 1986a, Hall 1997, Hill-Collins 1990, Itzigsohn and Brown 2015). As I engaged in conversations with my participants, it was evident that their relationship to Blackness reflects the same complexities. A less discussed component to my participants' relationships with their Blackness was the role that adoption played. In this chapter, I offer interpretations of how their experiences as adopted children have informed their identities. I also develop a reading of my participants' experiences of double consciousness as racialized subjects living in Canadian society.

### **The Fixity of Blackness**

At the beginning of my interviews, I asked all of my participants how they would describe camp. When I reviewed my data, it was immediately clear that Camp A has played an integral role in how my participants learned to understand themselves, both actively and retrospectively. However, some of these participants experienced conflicting realities when it came to their understanding of the primary function of camp and how it had evolved over time. When I spoke with Maria, a 24-year-old Camp A participant for over 18 years, she shared her understanding of camp and the reason she felt compelled to attend over the years.

Well if you asked me a couple years ago, I would have described it as a great place to connect, to feel at home [...] cause a lot of us live in a place where there's not a lot of Black people so when we go to camp, it's just something different. There's someone

to relate to, to tell stories, or talk about issues and stuff like that [...] to learn about who we are. (Maria, 24)

Janelle, another long-term camper, shared a similar understanding of camp. She articulated Camp

A as

... a camp for kids of colour who have been adopted ... to just hang out and talk to each other, you know? (Janelle, 19)

While Camp A is a space for my participants to connect, it was also interesting to me that they all grew up in small, rural towns that were comprised of largely white populations (both as a form of identification and as a cultural signifier) that were, as one participant stated, “pretty void of [Black] culture” (Devaun, 25).

Coming from these predominantly white towns played an integral role in how my participants imagined themselves within their worlds. When I asked my participants to tell me more about how coming of age in these spaces informed how they understand themselves today, their responses were patterned along gender lines. My male participants framed whiteness as a component of their identities from a very early age. In fact, they both shared that they had imagined themselves as white, both as an unintentional practice and as an intentional, developed cognitive tool. For Devaun, being located as Black actually propelled him to come into his identification as a Black male.

Because of my parents, I guess, subconsciously ... at least until my early to mid-teens I just kind of associated [myself] as being white [...] I didn't walk around with a mirror and realize 'ah, I'm the only Black person here.' I just kind of assumed that I was basically the same thing. I assumed it didn't make a difference but now that I've gotten older and I've grown wiser to the game, I've realized that's not how the world looks at me [laughs]. (Devaun, 25)

Devaun's understanding of himself as white developed in response to residing in a small, rural, predominantly white town. In his later years, however, he was fixed as the Other by his peers. This

reading altered his own perception of self and mobilized an understanding of himself as this Other, which also allowed him to comprehend the view of others which produced this positioning as Other in the first instance. This is what stimulated his duality in consciousness. My other male participant, Elijah, shared that around the age of 10, he “forgot” he was Black. Instead, he imagined himself as a blonde, white boy. For him, this was motivated by growing up with white parents who did not often speak about racial differences. As a result, he did not know how he was racialized. For Elijah, the presence and recognition of a double consciousness was therefore not as clear at that age.

When I asked another participant, Maria, to describe how camp contributed to her understanding of self, she told me that her time at camp resulted in a heightened awareness of her difference, ultimately shaping how she lived her daily life, down to mundane tasks like booking a hair appointment.

I understand that I’m different. I live in a society that’s mostly dominated by white people. So, I understand that I’m not the same. So, I understand that certain things are going to be different. I can’t go to a white hair salon and ask for braids ... I had to learn that I’m not the same and I’ve accepted it. Mentally, I’ve accepted it. It doesn’t really bother me. It’s not like it ruins my day or stops me from living my dreams. It just means that I have to go a different route or I have to do a different thing but it’s not like ... the end of my world. (Maria, 24)

It was unclear when exactly Maria learned to navigate her life in relationship to her racial category. In fact, when I asked her if she observed race as something that informs human interaction, she was not entirely sure. Distinctively, then, Devaun was explicitly aware of how Canada’s (white dominant) social formation shaped and constrained his world, while Maria only experienced this awareness implicitly. How my participants came to understand their racialized selves may be a function of their gendered experiences: Black women are often required to modify themselves to coincide with others’ expectations (Hill-Collins 1990; Barrie, Langrehr, Jeremie-Brink, Alder,

Hewitt, and Thomas 2015). Perhaps what the self-understandings discussed by Maria, Elijah, and Devaun highlight are these deeply rooted and gendered common sense articulations of Blackness.

I suggest that this is why Devaun also explicitly acknowledged his duality in consciousness while Maria did not. Maria grew to accept herself as different but did not contest the effects of this difference, instead choosing to negotiate her own habits and behaviours – particularly those associated with beauty standards – behind ‘the veil’ of her small town, while Devaun used ‘the game’ as a way to recognize how race is socially and structurally organized. There is an interplay between active and retrospective understandings of my participants’ forms of identification and how they affect their engagement in everyday life. My participants’ experiences of double consciousness, then, were not a priori structures of Black selfhood. Rather, they only came to experience a division in perception through interaction with others, especially when fixed by an Other.

### **Teaching Blackness at Camp A**

‘Youth’ is listed as a strategic plan pillar for Camp A from 2016-2021, aiming for youth to be empowered to understand the world and develop self-confidence.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, the camp states that it hopes to help youth develop leadership skills and community building skills in order to sustain the camp, as well as the happiness of those who attend (*ibid*). Many of these skills are thought to be developed through the camp’s Teen Mentorship Program, which promotes those aged 18-27 acting as mentors to the Black children who attend. This also includes a feeder program for those aged 15-18 to develop skills in similar areas by assisting the elder mentors. At a higher level, this camp’s primary vision is that all of the children who attend feel loved and empowered

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<sup>29</sup> *Citation removed to maintain confidentiality*

to be “resilient” in a flawed world (*ibid*). Camp A’s vision and priority statements seem to be well-focused given the commitment to developing interpersonal skills, the camp itself, and the communities in which its campers live while away from camp. From another level of analysis, however, their key initiatives present limitations inherent to their service delivery models.

For programming specific to youth, their key activities exist at two levels: cultural arts and therapeutic engagements. This includes hip-hop dancing, African drumming, gospel singing, and other activities deemed to celebrate the African diaspora. The latter often take the shape of workshops on how to properly care for hair, Black masculinities and femininities, romantic and platonic relationships, interracial relationships, education in Canada, and micro-aggressions. While these are all important aspects of Blackness, there did not seem to be any engagement with Blackness outside of interpersonal relations. Blackness was never framed through a structural or historical lens. This same thought was echoed during my conversations with Elijah and Maria:

I think when you ... when we’re at camp, [...] we don’t focus on being Black and the Black history. We’re all a victim, know what I mean? It’s more of how we are gonna battle the whites and micro-aggressions and ‘don’t put your hands in my hair’ and it just becomes distracting to what’s really going on. (Elijah, 22)

I just found that when we learned about our culture, like our backgrounds, [...] we lost track of embracing races and I felt like a lot of times we would just bash other races because ... that’s just what we did. Especially in meetings and stuff like that, people would talk about what happened to them at school or something and then it would just turn into a hating thing. (Maria, 24)

In another interview, a participant framed the camp’s formal lessons, especially those associated with the arts, as “slightly contrived” (Devaun, 25). The ability for these campers to problematize Camp A’s curriculum demonstrated a more sophisticated understanding of Blackness than that promoted by the camp itself. The celebration of Blackness was received as significant, but it was understood as only engaging with a limited component of the actual experiences of Black youth. I

identify this discrepancy as my participants outlining some of the contradictions that emerge between normative Canadian discourses of who and what are considered 'Black' and their actual experiences as Black subjects; this is a motivator for a deeper awareness of one's double consciousness. While my participants were less explicit about Camp A's focus on Blackness as an individual phenomenon to be negotiated through empowerment and therapeutic engagements, I see this focus as being part and parcel of neoliberal responsabilisation rhetoric. In arguing that these emphases on empowerment and therapy can be tied to this rhetoric, I am simultaneously situating the youth themselves as subjects of neoliberal responsabilisation within Canada's wider social formation. My participants' ostensive acceptance of these discourses suggests just how persistent and extensive they are in this temporal period.

The camp's core youth programming concentrations, particularly its foci on self-empowerment, self-realization, and resilience, resonate with the canon of positive psychology. The core foci of this canon are oriented around "the life affirming potentials, energies and vital forces residing within the individual psyche" (Binkley 2011:376). Further, a focus on self-realization idealizes the need to overcome the burden social norms place on the individual through an individual's own intentional practices in everyday life. Happiness, within this framework, is portrayed as harnessing an individual's potential, where the individual "is taught to maximize happy emotions through direct manipulation of [their] own thoughts" (*ibid*). What is key here is the idea that happiness is thought to be attainable through conscious focus *by the individual*. This produces the depoliticized illusion that structural factors do not need to be confronted nor accounted for, but instead, if the individual works hard enough, these factors can be altogether negated. This produces certain kinds of abiding racialized subjects whereby "those who self-govern are suited for their part in the political economy and who understand democratic citizenship

as embodied in the exercise of individual choice (and decidedly not in the collective political movement)” become ideal subjects (Dumas 2016:100). At the same time, this dynamic transforms the problems associated with Black life into being detached from the political realm of society (Spencer 2013).

This is an especially interesting consideration given the camp’s implementation of a formal Discipline Committee in 2017. This was followed by a desire to increase youth programming activities for the 2019 year. This desire was motivated by the discovery that two underage youth had been using drugs while at camp during that year.<sup>30</sup> Camp A’s primary focus on empowerment (unfortunately being disseminated as a mode of individual discipline), the increased number of program offerings, and its addition of a formal discipline team suggest that regulation and governance play a formative role in camp programming. The discipline committee and the additional youth activities in particular were established to prevent young attendees from actions that might threaten or undermine the family focus of the camp.<sup>31</sup> While these will inevitably provide Camp A youth with more opportunities to engage with one another, and in some instances prevent any unnecessary harm, I have to question the underpinning assumptions that situated *all* youth as in need of discipline in the first instance. My interrogation of this focus on discipline became increasingly complicated in my conversation with Maria, during which she expressed

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<sup>30</sup> During the 2019 year, two teenagers were found outside of Camp A grounds, under the influence of marijuana. As a result, new disciplinary policies were developed: any underage youth found to be using drugs (including alcohol) would be removed from the camp, along with the rest of their family. During my time on the Board, other Board members often shared that the presence of drugs would motivate other youth to engage in such activities. This seemed to be a form of ‘moral panic’ that situates youth, especially those racialized as Black, as a danger to the larger collective. This belief is also void of a proper understanding of more chronic drug use. Moreover, it fails to properly understand the reasons Black youth in particular might come into a space where drug use is desired.

<sup>31</sup> *Citation removed to maintain confidentiality*

concerns about the camp. This connected to her earlier statements about the shifting nature in how she understood and described camp.

**Maria:** There's not really a lot to do [at camp] unless you're four or five [years old]. When you're older, there's really not much to do except work ... for free.

**Interviewer:** Work for free?

**Maria:** Yeah, like having to do volunteer work and stuff like that. I'm not going to lie, if I'm taking a week off of work, I'm not going to work – unless I volunteer, then yes – but if I'm not volunteering and I'm getting voluntold to do something then ... that's not fun ... when I'm being forced to do something.

It was around this time that she explained that the camp's board was comprised of predominantly white individuals. She problematized being “voluntold” as she engaged with the board's structure, claiming that some of the youth often felt like “slaves” or joked about the camp as a form of “modern day slavery”. This introduced another dimension to the camp's focus on governance.

This is a common sentiment I have heard expressed by many Black youth at Camp A during my own years as a camper. The camp's mentorship program requires youth to serve a certain number of hours volunteering while at camp; this policy is founded on the idea that the Camp A community can only be sustained through the active engagement of all who choose to be a part of its community. The interviewees expressed eagerness to participate in the mentorship program as a form of relational engagement with younger campers:(Elijah shared his excitement about teaching young people what it means to actually navigate the world as a Black person and contend with Blackness as a structurally determined inequality; Maria shared that she makes an effort to attend camp for even just one day as she sees herself as a role model for younger girls; Devaun shared that because camp has proven to be “slightly contrived”, he now looks to be a role model and mentor in his community in Montreal. Instead, they are instead often asked to clean up the camp site, move equipment, or organize and run activities. While the Board sees their participation as sustaining the camp community, it is apparent that the youth want the camp to be a relational

space as opposed to being focused on the operational side of things. In its earlier iterations, prior to the establishment of the youth mentorship program, the youth could engage in mentorship relationships more autonomously.

This shift may be a result of the Board's changing structure. In 2017, the Board's vice president and founder removed herself from the Board. She was dissatisfied with the camp's changing structure and expressed that it was not serving the purposes that she had originally intended it to. In 2018, the Board's president remained on the Board, but stepped down from their position to take a more general position as a means to succession plan. The new president resides in America, while the past president and vice president had been raising their children in Canada. Rather than exist as a camp for families founded on a desire for connection and belonging, the new president saw the camp as a business that needed to be developed. Camp was to be understood as a service, which shifted the language and dynamic of camp to producer and consumer. The Board wanted to move away from participating in the everyday organizing of camp; this was a job for adult volunteers and youth.

It was also curious that in this time no youth were asked to join the Board. When a former board member and I suggested that more youth be invited onto the Board, especially in light of the need for more Black voices to play a role in decision making, the Board's typical response was that the youth were not ready because they were too young. I want to trouble this position, however. This fundamentally undermines the right of Black youth to self-definition; under Camp A's current model, they are continuously 'taught' what it means to identify as Black individuals coming of age in Canadian society (by predominantly white adults). This model also forfeits an opportunity to engage in youth-adult partnerships. Such partnerships could be collaborations between young people and adults focused on social justice, the strengthening of organizations, and addressing

local, community issues (Zeldin, Christens, Powers 2013). The capacity for youth to share in decision making processes within an organization has been shown to lead to agency, empowerment, and self-development (Krauss, Collura, Zeldin, Ortega, Abdullah, and Sulaiman 2014). Their engagement also allows young people to develop their value systems and forms of identification (Ramey, Rose-Krasnor, and Lawford 2017). Ranging in degree of collaboration, the most significant partnerships between youth and adults are not just when youth are given a voice, but instead when they are allowed to participate across all levels of an organization's structures (*ibid*). Rather than provide youth with meaningful grounds on which to engage with Camp A's programming, the Board instead offered them positions as mentors; this gave youth the opportunity to participate and possibly share opinions, while also undermining their ability to engage in decision making processes. This created the conditions for engagement through discipline and responsabilisation.

My participants took up this responsabilisation in competing ways. Elijah and Devaun both seemed to understand the structural limits to their choices in their own lives, while simultaneously enacting the rhetoric of responsibility in a manner that turned it into self-governance. When I asked Devaun if his participation in Camp A made him more likely to participate in politics, he stated

Not really ... partially because I understand the game of politics is [...] the person who has wealth and resources and finances, they kind of, at the end of the day, come to dictate the majority of the rules. And if you don't have wealth and resources, then the next best thing to have is numbers. And especially in Canada, there's not really that big of a Black population, even as a collective, I wouldn't say it's futile, but I understand there's only so much you can participate within politics that will bring you to a certain amount of results. The best thing you can do as an individual is exude excellence and try to get people on the same kind of page as you and the same ... I guess the same mindset. (Devaun, 25)

Further,

... it's to the better of society as a whole to have a social hierarchy and since they already have Black people pretty much at the bottom, it's to their benefit to keep us there that way they're not actually having to compete with us and no matter how poorly they do, the outcome will still end up being better than us. (Devaun, 25)

It is curious that Devaun framed the relationship between white people and Black people as a competition. On one hand, it would seem this is a result of neoliberal discourses. On the other, however, this does indicate a deep awareness of the historical trajectory of racializations. Devaun's excerpt is especially rational, as his understanding of hierarchies predicated on race seems to be grounded in a sort of cost/benefit analysis where the outcome of racial hierarchies is justified in relation to the perceived desired outcome. This makes me question if this is indicative of a more gendered understanding of racializations. I raise this point not to characterize men as uniquely rational, but to highlight a component of the experiences of Black selfhood that could be elaborated on in future research – this is a point I will return to in my conclusion. During my conversation with Elijah, he offered alternative programming foci as a resolution to the camp's inadequate racial pedagogies that only focussed on the individual:

[Camp should focus on h]ow [Black people] can change ourselves and change the world and the way they view us. Like, oh, I can actually be a doctor. No one ever told me that I can be a doctor. We can actually benefit the world and save lives [...] Like in my community, I've had no other Black people. I haven't met any other really Black people. But the thing is, the only two Black people I've known are way older than me and are adopted and they have kids that are now being adopted because it's just drugs and alcohol. You see what I'm saying? [...] Why ... would a child in the 80s have to suffer as much as I have to suffer, know what I mean? The kid's probably 28 now with a kid and he can't even take care of the kid. What the heck, man. This isn't right. I can't let this happen anymore. I can't ... let alcohol and people just think that we're stupid and we're not worth anything. (Elijah, 22)

Later in the interview, he also stated

... it makes me wonder why there's such a lack of respect for [minorities] ... and this is what I mean, the British had power, obviously right. France had power. If you're not going back to the same thing ... I don't know how to say it ... if you're not supporting

[white authorities], then you're not really worth anything [...] and this is still here today. I have a feeling [white peoples'] ancestors were saying the same thing. (Elijah, 22)

Both of these participants pinpoint structures, hierarchies, and historical social processes as informing and actually mediating the capacity to act. At the same time, however, they adopt mindsets, like the necessity of “exuding excellence” or needing to change oneself in order to change social perceptions of Blackness, as the key to effecting change. This indicates a contradictory awareness of social struggles experienced by racialized subjects. At one level, structures and historical processes play a role, but at the same time, individuals need to govern themselves in particular ways in response to these incorrect structures. This, again, indicates the conditions of Canadian social formation that simultaneously open up spaces for human action, while also dampening this same possibility. As my participants explore the boundaries of their double consciousness, they become increasingly aware of these limitations. Elijah acknowledged that historical processes inform the ability to participate and act within a structure. Devaun was able to more specifically pinpoint how capital affects social hierarchies and access to resources. This suggests the presence of more critical forms of consciousness.

### **The Intersection of Adoption, Class, and Race**

Another underlying theme that emerged throughout conversations with my interview participants was the reasons they could not commit to regularly attending camp, especially for the duration of the full week: they all needed to work. I found this particularly curious because all of my participants seemed to come from relatively middle-class families given the described nature of their family make-ups. Devaun and Janelle's fathers both owned their own businesses, though Devaun's father now works for the federal government. Janelle's mother worked for the school

district in her home town. Devaun and Maria's mothers were stay-at-home moms. Elijah's parents were business people. For a family to attend camp, registration costs approximately \$300. In addition to this registration cost, a family must pay for accommodation. Staying in a tent site for the duration of the week costs approximately \$200. Staying in a site for trailers typically runs a cost of \$300. Staying in a cabin or apartment on site costs anywhere from \$518-\$1000.<sup>32</sup> This does not include the cost of food required to eat throughout the week. While there is an opportunity to stay off site, only 10 families are allowed to do so within a given year.<sup>33</sup> The camp also offers a bursary program for families who cannot afford to attend camp which waives the registration fee. In 2017, the camp implemented a youth-specific bursary policy, which allows youth over the age of 18 to attend camp entirely for free (with the caveat that they must participate in the mentorship program).<sup>34</sup> However, all of my participants still could not afford to regularly attend camp due to the loss in income if they were to spend their week at camp.

For Maria and Elijah, the inability to attend camp suggests a particular relationship between Black subjects who have been adopted into white families and their social class. While they were adopted into middle class families, they themselves were not afforded this same class position. Maria, who no longer lives with her parents, works three different jobs in order to meet her basic needs. She expressed difficulties finding a stable job, leaving her last place of work for being told her hair – African box braids with royal blue streaks – was “unprofessional”. Elijah just finished serving time in prison after assaulting someone for making a racist remark. Thus, Maria and

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<sup>32</sup> This number is contingent upon the size of the cabin, how many rooms are desired, and if a kitchen is required. A one bedroom cabin with no bathroom or kitchen costs \$518, while an apartment, which is classified as such if it has a kitchen, bathroom, and more than one bedroom, costs approximately \$1100.

<sup>33</sup> This policy was implemented in 2018 as campers had stated that camp was becoming too disconnected. As a result, the Board thought that requiring the majority of campers to stay on site would create more of a familial atmosphere.

<sup>34</sup> Since this policy was implemented, only two youth have utilized it.

Elijah's experiences suggest that being adopted into white, middle class families allowed them to experience the benefits of the intersection of whiteness and a middle-class upbringing – this is evident particularly for Elijah who imagined himself as white until he was told otherwise – while their Blackness seems to have interpellated them into another category as they moved out and began to navigate the world on their own. Here, then, contemporary racializations still play a defining role in class formation and reproduction. The operating power afforded to race in both of Maria and Elijah's worlds is moulded by Canada's economic structure, which shapes and constrains their experiences and possibilities as racialized subjects.

The experiences of Janelle and Devaun, however, must be interpreted otherwise (though Devaun did express difficulties getting promotions in his places of work which he attributed to his skin hue). Devaun was attending college at one point, but had to take a break from his studies in order to get a job to meet his basic needs. Unable to live on his own, he moved in with his older brother for a period of time. Janelle is attending university and works during her summers in order to afford to pay tuition not covered by scholarships. Their classed experiences reflect a very pressing reality for young people living not just in Canada, but North America more broadly. Today's youth are often told to expect part-time contracts with no pension, benefits, or employment security (Cairns 2017). Since the 1990s, the cost of living has risen by 67 percent while the actual value of minimum wage has only increased by approximately 21 percent (Gilson 2011). Jennifer Silva (2013) similarly contends that for those of the working class, adulthood can be defined by “low expectations of work, wariness toward romantic commitment, widespread distrust of social institutions [and] profound isolation from others” (10). This is increasingly complicated when accounting for racialization in the Canadian context. It is well documented that

disengagement from academia<sup>35</sup> hinders job opportunities for Black youth, often resulting in job precarity (Gadsen 2017; Block and Galabuzi 2011; Hango and De Broucker 2007).

## **Conclusion**

The classed exclusions experienced by my participants points to the system of alliances that persists across Canadian society – from the Canadian Eurocentric education system to the labour market – that produces constraints and limitations on Black subjects’ participation in Canadian life. This is the context in which Camp A’s youth are coming of age. As they are increasingly responsabilised through the ideologies and rhetoric of neoliberal capitalism, they are also facing a future that significantly constrains their ability to satisfy their basic, fundamental human needs. This is part of what makes Camp A such a crucial site for Black youth. As an educational apparatus, it has the capacity to create the conditions for Black youth to develop the social and cultural capital that can help them succeed in Canada’s neoliberal economy. At the same time, it can also create the conditions to develop alternative ways of organizing politically as they realize the tensions between their experiences as Black adoptees raised in predominantly white households; this can also create a foundation for a larger analysis of how the capitalist formation produces modes of life that undermine not just Black peoples’ ability to meet their basic human needs, but also the numerous young people in Canada who are experiencing the same constraints. For Black young people adopted into white, middle class households, however, it is also worth delving deeper into the ways in which they reconcile learning about white dominance and historical and contemporary white supremacist racism with their own experiences of being deeply cared for and loved by their white parents. In this next chapter, I turn to these questions.

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<sup>35</sup> cf. Dei (1997); Codjoe (2001); Smith, Schneider, and Ruck (2005)



## Chapter Five: Developing Alternative Imaginaries

*“I think, for me, just for example, hearing other peoples’ stories about racism that they’ve dealt with ... it’s just interesting because it’s like ‘oh, I’ve had that, too. I thought I was the only one’ and then someone else is like ‘well I thought I was the only one because no one else has told me’ and I’m like ‘well, no, hey, me too!’ So, you know that you’re not necessarily alone when stuff happens to you and you can literally pick up your phone and call someone ...” (Janelle, 19)*

### Introduction

What all of my conversations with my interview participants revealed to me is that they think of Camp A as a separate community from society itself. The above quotation from Janelle specifies one of the primary reasons that my interview participants referred to Camp A as a community: it brought together people from all over the continent who shared some series of interrelated subaltern experiences in one place. The original purpose of this camp was to mitigate the challenges experienced by Black children adopted into predominantly white, North American families;<sup>36</sup> this includes the capacity for Black young people to understand their identities, their worlds, and their racialized experiences (*ibid*).

While Camp A did not formally teach Blackness in a nuanced way, it did establish a space for Black people to engage with one another, which allowed my participants to understand Blackness on a more critical level. This includes the understanding of existing in a white dominant society and its coinciding racisms, while also being in intimate relationship with their white parents and siblings. In this chapter, I suggest that this community, through its very existence, created the possibilities for its campers to think differently about what it means to live together in acknowledgement of difference. Their insights challenge the Canadian neoliberal multicultural

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<sup>36</sup> *Citation removed to maintain confidentiality*

narrative that claims Canada has purportedly achieved this level of integration. I suggest that such an understanding of Black forms of identification and engagement can offer many insights for those concerned with social change and structurally determined inequalities in the Canadian context.

### **Teaching Through Engagement**

Consistent within the literature on portrayals of Black life and media representations of Black people (Gordon 2015; Barrie, Langrehr, Jeremie-Brink, Alder, Hewitt, and Thomas 2015; Gordon 2016), all of my participants acknowledged the media as a key apparatus responsible for portraying Blackness.

The way that they try to portray [Black people] in the media is a very, very, very narrow ... way that they ... they kind of try to program you as a Black person to think that's how you're supposed to be and then they try to portray to the rest of the world that this is what Black people are like or whatever. [...] Whenever I went to camp, I was like 'hm ... that's interesting because nobody here really seems to fit all of those'. In fact, most of these people fit none of them and if they do, it's like one or two things. (Devaun, 25)

This quote from my interview with Devaun describes an aspect of how all of my participants came to understand themselves, as well as how Camp A established a space for an alternative understanding of Blackness. In contrast to my participants' relatively all-white communities, having a community of majority-Black individuals afforded them a space of recognition that was an alternative to that of everyday life. Here, they did not just exist as racialized subjects, but instead as a myriad of individuals who shared experiences that brought them together because they were racialized.

When I spoke with Janelle, she stated that camp actually produced a certain kind of Blackness that played an integral role in forming her own identification with this racial category.

Here [in my home town], other than George,<sup>37</sup> my other Black friends haven't been to Camp A so even though they're Black, they haven't been there and they don't know the stuff that goes on there so I think it's interesting because yeah, we're still Black but I have a different part of what's helped me get to where I am versus what they maybe have gone through ... just like they've had Black friends around them so they've never had or wanted to go to a camp that is all about being Black and adopted and stuff so they didn't really need that but for other people from small towns, it's really nice to have that and have that opportunity cause it's just different. (Janelle, 19)

Taking this further, Devaun shared that camp taught him to understand the complexities of Blackness more broadly.

**Devaun:** Yeah, just experience and meeting and talking to people. I learned more from that than I did than things that were set up and structured.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Interesting. What's something that you learned or things that you learned through interaction as opposed to through sessions?

**Devaun:** [laughs] I mean I kind of already said some of it before, but I'll try to elaborate. Just the diaspora and the personalities that people have are very wide. People are very unique. There's not one way to be Black and there's no cookie cutter examples that you can look for and just apply to everybody.

These quotes from Janelle and Devaun indicate that camp exists as a space that allows them to understand the variance of Black forms of identification, both at camp and back in their respective communities where Black identities are commonly essentialized. These essentialized portrayals insinuate that there is some 'inherent' component to Blackness that can be taught and exchanged. This same comprehensive understanding was extended into other racial categories, with my participants sharing that camp demonstrated how difference can exist together on a more meaningful front.

I remember when I was younger, too, I would always think that little kids that were white were looking at me weird and stuff so then at camp when you see little kids that are white, they literally don't ... it's like they don't even see difference. There, you're anything 'cause it's like 'oh, you're the same colour as my brother or sister. Whatever. Let's go ...' (Janelle, 19)

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<sup>37</sup> *Name changed to maintain confidentiality*

**Maria:** So, once you go to camp, you're like 'you know what, I understand that once camp's over, I'm going back to what I'm used to'. And I understand that I've accepted my differences and I'm in a place where I'm not attacking [white] people for saying something. It's like 'you know what' ... and especially when people ask me about my hair, I've learned that it's like 'I know you're just asking because you're curious so I'll explain it to you' instead of just feeling attacked.

**Interviewer:** So, it's taught you how to connect more?

**Maria:** Yeah! Instead of just thinking 'you're a dick'.

For both Janelle and Maria, Camp A, again, brings numerous people of different skin hues together into one space. This requires an analysis on two levels.

On one hand, it seems to be the case that my participants' status as adoptees into mixed-race families produced alternative ways of understanding racializations. For example, when being asked questions about her hair, Maria assumes white people are only curious. This suggests the mechanisms of responsabilisation experienced by racialized subjects. In this situation, Maria is forced to negotiate her subject position in order to reconcile the boundaries imposed by Canada's capitalist formation. In other words, questions posed about Maria's hair are rooted in white supremacy. Discourses of whiteness create the conditions where these questions (akin to asking 'where are you from?')<sup>38</sup> can be read as innocuous at one level, but when further interrogated, are motivated by underlying racist ideologies. Because Black hair and the Black body are so visible, these questions make sense. However, what they truly indicate is who is conceptualized as 'normal' in everyday life. This resonates with neoliberal multiculturalism and the concurrent discourse of 'tolerance' that is associated with it, as Maria's assumption of curiosity respectively requires her to engage in self-governance as a means of managing her racialization. Black subjects,

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<sup>38</sup> cf. Mahtani (2002)

then, are often left to teach white people about race and racisms, ultimately re-stabilizing forms of white supremacy as it is Black people who must accommodate themselves within a white system.

This cannot be separated from the wider, Canadian social formation. As a socially reproductive institution, Camp A produces the conditions under which Black subjects come to understand their subject position within Canada. The integration of Black and white people – which I consider integral for my participants as they come into different understandings of their racialized identifications while at Camp A – might, for its white participants, reinforce an unacknowledged dynamic of privilege and power as they come to perceive Blackness as an essentialized object to be studied. I say this not to deny or undermine the incomprehensible amount of love these white parents have for their children, and the appreciation they may express toward their child’s racial identification, but to pinpoint the implications this has for my participants as they struggle over their own forms of self-definition within Canada. More specifically, for my participants, it would appear that they must reconcile their identifications in accordance with white understandings in the space afforded to them through camp. Thus, they are never just human subjects; they are always working to reconcile their identifications through readings co-constituted by whiteness. I propose that being adopted into mixed-race families as a Black (or other minority) child requires them to play a mediating role between knowledge and culture. The relationship between Blackness and whiteness, through being adopted into a mixed-race family, has dimensions that can both depoliticize and subordinate Black forms of identification, sustaining white dominance within Canada’s social formation.<sup>39</sup>

On the other hand, however, this same space allowed both Janelle and Maria to imagine what it might mean for different races to live together amidst this difference in contradistinction

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<sup>39</sup> see Chen (2015)

to Canada's current neoliberal multicultural model. Further, their comments seem to suggest that living amongst many different people during their week at camp heightened their awareness of the gaze of others. But, rather than feeling fixed in their forms of identification, this awareness ultimately facilitated feelings of belonging. Maria's comments in particular suggest a newfound ability to engage across difference. Rather than experience her world as a series of dichotomies that divide interactions informed by race into hate and love, she developed more critical capacities to think about what might exist outside of the immediate interactional space.

This ability signifies the affective modalities through which race is lived. At Camp A, rather than the surface of the Black body signifying hate to in turn bind white subjects with other white subjects and Black subjects with other Black subjects, Maria's excerpt indicates that the affect produced in these racially charged moments allowed her to facilitate connection, altogether reframing the 'stickiness' of affect to bind subjects *through* difference. Thus, the transformative capacities of Camp A's informal teachings actually developed new forms of engagement. Within the literature, social collectives "derive strength [...] from [their] collective ability to plan, communicate, and work together" (Brown 2017: 53). This same desire for connection emerged during my conversation with Elijah.

**Elijah:** You know the mentor thing?

**Interviewer:** At camp?

**Elijah:** If I was to go back to camp, I'd totally do that again.

**Interviewer:** Okay, how come?

**Elijah:** Because it's more important than just keeping peace and partying all the time. Because if you're gonna show these kids that they are Black, you know what I mean, and that the world is not really in ... acceptance hasn't found a place for Black people yet.

Again, the capacity for connection and dialogue was a key function of camp. Contrary to neoliberal modes of thought that promote individualization and competition that seem to be key features of Camp A's curriculum, this camp also created the conditions for my participants to develop a sense

of the possibilities of living together in communities founded upon the values of connection, compassion, understanding, and a genuine respecting of difference.

### **Affect as a Fundamental Human Need**

In *Profit and Pleasure: Sexual Identities in Late Capitalism*, Rosemary Hennessy (2008) argues that the development of alternative forms of consciousness and forms of identification must take into consideration “how political agency, practice, and commitment are motivated, complicated, and undermined by our human capacity for affect” (Hennessy 2008: 208). Further, she contends that the human capacity for affect must be understood as a vital human need because affect has the capacity to “mediate the social relations through which these needs are provided” (*ibid*:210). Social interaction is itself a human need because the meeting of one’s basic needs – what is required to keep the body alive – occurs through this very means (*ibid*). For racialized subjects, affect is a modality through which race is lived. What can be taken from Hennessy’s argument is an understanding of how the human capacity for affect can mediate racialized subjects’ ability to *develop a sense of their own agency* as their ability to meet their fundamental human needs are undermined through the exclusions required to maintain white supremacy, which works to sustain the capitalist system. The human capacity for, and the satisfaction of, human emotion and affect must therefore be key considerations when looking to develop forms of collective agency as affect and emotions are historically produced, taking on different forms in different social formations. This is how I engage with the data throughout the remainder of this chapter.

Throughout my interviews, my participants consistently talked about how Camp A allowed them to share their lived experiences with one another. Even further, these lived experiences were not just their own, but were actually similar to those of other campers.

You kind of ... learn about other peoples' experiences and get to know them when they talk about what their life is like when they're not at camp. And so, an experience that happened to you that might've seemed just random, you kind of start to hear and see certain kinds of patterns. That kind of opened up my world in a sense by having that experience. (Devaun, 25)

The biggest thing that I've learned going to camp was ... the people that I met, we're all the same. We live in a place where we think 'there's no one who understands me', but we all have the same struggles. We all have ... things we need to talk about that we can't talk about where we live so I learned that I can be open at camp and express myself and not have ... it's just a special bond ... (Maria, 25)

Camp is like an open conversation ... a lot of 'you've gone through the same stuff I've gone through'. (Elijah, 22)

You can always text a [camp] friend and be like 'hey, this happened to me today. I wasn't sure how to feel about it or what to do. I kind of need some advice' ... that kind of thing. Me and my one friend do that all the time. She's in [city name] and we always talk about it. She's like 'ugh, this happened to me. I'm so mad' and I'm like 'k, well ... maybe try this'. It's just nice to hear you're not alone. Because no one ever wants to feel alone obviously. (Janelle, 19).

Each of these participants shared separate stories about how their interactions at camp allowed them to recognize the common lived experiences of Black people that they previously did not know anyone else had ever experienced. In discovering these shared lived experiences, my participants were implicitly learning how forms of identification are always underpinned by unnamed historical and social processes. This is because of the discursive power that Blackness has been granted through time. While they all experienced their exclusions autonomously (and in relationship with their gender, class, and other identity categories), the foundation on which these exclusions are premised makes them, along with other, Camp A youth, a heterogeneous collective. Further, the affective means by which these exclusions are experienced – the feeling of not belonging – can be identified through these collective experiences as well. What was most

significant about this is that these common experiences were what led my participants to identify Camp A as a community in and of itself.

As my participants shared their reasons for thinking of Camp A as a community, the theme of common struggles emerged. When speaking with Maria, she shared that

**Maria:** Community means to me ... a sense of trust, non-judgement, almost like freedom, to be honest with you. Just free to ... go to Chapters. Or ... crack a joke.

**Interviewer:** At camp is community something that is talked about or ... how is community displayed at camp, if it is?

**Maria:** Community is displayed at camp in the sense that we're all alike. So, we are all closer together *because* we're alike. So, I find that the community at camp would be like something that we can all relate to, something we can all talk about and understand. If I were to go to a community here [where I live] and talk about the things we talk about at camp, it wouldn't be the same [...] not in a bad way. It's just a different conversation. There's just different ideas.

This relationship between freedom to act and community was a significant theme that emerged throughout my interview data. During my conversation with Elijah, he shared that camp was a space for him to be himself, but that that feeling quickly diminished when he returned to his home neighborhood. Janelle elaborated the most about what camp being a community meant for her as she understood herself as an agent.

**Interviewer:** What's one of the biggest things you learned while at camp?

**Janelle:** I think just be you and it's okay to stick up for yourself. For example, if you're going through something to do with racism, know that people at camp, like your friends who you talk to, do you think they would put up with that? So, you shouldn't just because, say, it's like a small town, like 'oh, I don't want to cause any trouble.' It's like no, my friends in [city name], when they've had stuff happen to them, even if it's a stranger, it's like 'hey, no, don't say that'.

**Interviewer:** So, it's kind of like a metric? If this is how I behave in this community where I'm loved, then that's what I can bring here?

**Janelle:** Exactly! Yeah.

As this conversation continued, she told me that she privileges how camp allows her to act as an individual who is a respected member of a collective of people. In her life away from camp, she

was then able to gauge how her friends from camp would prioritize her needs in a given situation which allowed her to ensure that these needs were never undermined. This then translated into a heightened awareness when she engaged with people in her hometown.

### **Between Liberal Multiculturalism and Counter-Knowledges**

My interviews with Maria, Janelle, and Elijah all point toward the existence of a fine line between liberal multiculturalism and more radical forms of consciousness. I argue that it is the experiences offered through attendance at Camp A that can be the determining factor in developing these more radical forms. I argue that this fine line between liberal multiculturalism and a more informed consciousness must be understood relationally. This leads me back to Brené Brown's work, which I presented in the third chapter in terms of the feelings of connection and belonging constituting one site on which capitalism can be struggled over. The understanding of my participants' and other campers' lived experiences produced the conditions for them to more deeply understand their own experiences of subordination and exclusion within a wider nexus of white dominance. Their lived experiences actually became the sources of their ways of considering intersecting forms of identification in the Canadian context. It was the connectedness of their experiences that became their primary way of knowing. This connectedness, as Janelle pointed out, was also informed by a respect for her as an individual within a collective.

It was also through engagement across difference that the Black youth I spoke with came to develop alternative ways of knowing Blackness. This seemed to extend into other forms of identification as my participants were able to make connections between how they were positioned socially as racialized as subjects, and how those of other minority statuses were similarly positioned. As I spoke with Elijah, he continuously referred to those racialized as Brown and

Indigenous people to talk about the arrangement of social structures that placed people of colour at the bottom.

**Elijah:** [white people] don't want to see Black people in society, it's starting to become very clear.

**Interviewer:** Why is that? Where do you get that from?

**Elijah:** Because ... they don't. Look at what they did to the Native people. I mean ... every road around [my town] is on Native land. And it is the name of a white settler. Native people have no say in anything that goes on here. [...] And the Native reserves are violent and really ghetto. And we just happen to be adopted into these families that like ... Black people and Native people ... the colonial thing is just really ... they tried to destroy anything that's not European. And that's the world we live in. Across the board.

My conversation with Elijah was full of disjunctures and breaks in his line of thinking, but it was very clear that he had developed a form of consciousness that was able to recognize the inextricable connection between Indigenous people and those racialized as Black that is underpinned by the preservation of a white-dominant nation-state. While speaking to different populations, other participants made similar connections. When speaking to Maria about the significance of emotions in everyday life, she shared that women's issues motivated her to engage in some form of social activism.

I actually noticed myself having a lot more emotions about things, especially, [...] with women. When someone disrespects a woman, or says something vulgar or something like that, I get so angry. And I'll stand up for them. And I'll be like, 'you know what, k. That's not cool. Why would you call her that? You have no right to do that'. (Maria, 25)

As Maria continued to talk about her commitment to standing up for women, she shared that it stemmed from her own experiences of racism when nobody stood up for her. As a result, she is

committed to never letting someone else experience similar emotions that emerge when having to confront social problems on their own. This also extended to activist participation.<sup>40</sup>

My conversations with Maria and Elijah point to the possibility of more critical forms of consciousness, rooted in connection, belonging, and collective agency. Their excerpts suggest that Camp A produces the conditions for its young campers to think critically about the different exclusions produced by and within Canada's social formation. As I close out this chapter, I now turn to a focus on developing some of these components.

### **From Identification to *Disidentification***

Taken together, my conversations with my participants all illustrate the complexities (and contradictory nature) of their time at Camp A. My participants all implicitly identified emotions as key in facilitating a community formed through connection. These emotions are tied to similar lived experiences. I propose that this notion of similar 'lived experiences' can be further expanded to mobilize a practice of what Rosemary Hennessy refers to as "disidentification" (2018:229).

Disidentification refers to

a practice of working on existing ways of identifying that we embrace and live by. This "work" is a process of unlearning that opens up the identities we take for granted to the historical conditions that make them possible. It involves uprooting these identities not just from ways of thinking that invite us to construe them as natural but also from a history of suffering – the fertile ground for resentment to grow – and resituating how we know them in a different historical frame, a frame that allows us to see how this suffering is the product of a mode of production that outlaws a whole array of human needs. (Hennessy 2008:229)

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<sup>40</sup> While this is so, Maria did say she felt nervous to attend things like "slut walks".

This practice requires subjects to understand how their “outlawed” needs are mediated by culture-ideology (*ibid*). It also allows us to recognize how capitalism produces notions of the normative and deserving citizen.

Throughout my interviews, my participants implicitly employed counter-knowledges that allowed them to think differently about Blackness and the ways that it has been situated within different social formations. Sometimes this was referenced specifically within the Canadian context, while at other times this was engaged with on a broader, global (and sometimes abstract) level. Their camp engagements allowed them to recognize how their experiences were not just individual experiences, but those of Black subjects more generally. However, they struggled to realize how their inequalities were not just a result of individual human action, but also structurally determined. This is often the case for Black youth as they are unable to understand the narrative of their lives within larger structural contexts (Taylor 2016); this is often linked to a Eurocentric education system that has historically failed to properly educate Black students (Dei, Mazzuca, McIsaac, and Zine 1997; Codjoe 2001; Smith, Schneider, and Ruck 2005; Hampton 2010). Though Camp A did not formally assist my participants as they struggled to understand their dualities in consciousness, it created the conditions required for them to do so.

This suggests that an integral feature of understanding Black forms of identification might require the bringing of young Black people together to form ties and build community – this was the initial purpose of the camp. As they came together, they also employed new methods of engaging across difference, which allowed them to learn of their shared experiences of oppression, as well as oppressions experienced by other racialized, gendered, and sexed subjects. I argue that this can cater to practices of disidentification which can open up forms of identification – Blackness in this particular context – to an even broader analysis of history. The various

experiences of exclusion and not belonging that are characteristic of Othered subjects, as Elijah noted, do not occur a-historically or inevitably. They are the approximation of Canada's social formation, which requires these un/governable subjects in order to sustain itself. Locating the work that these excluded identity categories have been made to do over time places them in relationship with capital, and one another, which can lead Black young people to reorient the common sense notions associated with their own identifications. This can allow for the formation of heterogeneous collectives.

Identifying what (and who) is left out of these broader narratives, typically concealed by identity categories, necessarily brings affect into the realm of awareness. Affect here is experienced as not belonging or not quite fitting in (Hennessy 2008). These forms of affect mobilized by (mis)recognition – identified for the moment as resentment, denial, and shame – can then be named (*ibid*). The purpose of identifying these emotions is to consider how they sustain existing identity categories, through their naturalization, which inevitably risks sustaining the capitalist formation (*ibid*). The naming and ‘teasing-apart’ of these affective experiences is a site of political struggle. This is the fundamental task in developing counter-knowledges: understanding how Canada's neoliberal context does not just exclude Black individuals so they feel they do not have a place to stand within its social structure, but also numerous others. Perhaps more clearly, “the common experience of oppression and exploitation creates the potential for a united struggle to better the conditions of all” (Taylor 2016: 383-384). This also advances the capacity for what Hennessy (2008) calls “revolutionary love” (208).

## **Revolutionary Love**

The notion of revolutionary love situates “love as a compelling political force that has transformative potential in struggles against social injustice and towards social change” (Lanas and Zembylas 2015:32). Importantly, however, bell hooks (2000) writes that love is not instinctive, though it is often assumed as such. It must be taught and always struggled over. It is only when it is performed and chosen that it becomes transformative. Acknowledging that love is not an innate practice or emotion thus requires bringing into awareness how love is allowed to flourish in some contexts, but diminished in others (Lanas and Zembylas 2015). Inviting an analysis of love on this front – as a potential mobilizer for political struggles – offers insights into “how we deal with the disjuncture between our efforts to forge collective political agency and everyday lives that are propelled by other kinds of attachments and identifications” (Hennessy 2008: 207). It is disidentification, or the “working on” of identity categories that can allow for these collective attachments.

This then raises the question: how might love and other emotions produced in spaces like Camp A, by virtue of feeling ‘at-home’, be understood as the origin point for these collective struggles? My participants displayed the transformative power of love in many ways. Maria, for example, performed love as she chose engagement over assumptions of ignorance. The way in which she reframed engagements with Others actually transformed the community in which she lived. Though on a smaller scale, this advances the power of revolutionary love. I suggest that the experience of adoption itself might cater to a practice of disidentification and revolutionary love. None of my participants shared feeling overly affected by being adopted, however they all shared that the experience did allow them to recognize the complexities of personhood and the inextricable connection they could feel between different kinds of people. Within the literature,

adoptees experience a form of ‘otherness’ or an awareness of two fixities (Compton 2016). For the Black youth who participated in my study, this can be conceptualized as an awareness of being Black within a predominantly white, Canadian society. Earlier I detailed how Devaun did not recognize he was not white until he was much older; the meaning making processes associated with this discovery were made possible through his time spent at Camp A. This suggests that there exists a disassociation between one’s understanding of self and their racialized self which allows them to perceive themselves on various terms. This awareness of two fixities, of not quite belonging, can allow for more conscious and deliberate disidentification and community building projects.

I recognize the re-imagining of alternative communities through an understanding of the relationship between structurally determined exclusions and affect is no small task. As I closed out my interviews, I asked my participants if they could imagine a world where people could exist together across differences, without being constrained by these differences. Given their different expressions of Camp A as a community that had learned how to establish a space that does exactly this, I was surprised by my participants’ responses. In the last chapter I wrote about how Devaun thought that “people with wealth and resources” maintain power over a society, which resulted in a lack of hope in political participation and, instead, practices of self-governance as he navigated his world. Elijah could only imagine Black people existing in their own, separate, self-governed community. This imaginary did not include anyone who could be racialized in another way. This is perhaps because, as he shared, he did not think it was possible for a Black person and a white person to meaningfully engage in a conversation about race. This was similar to a comment Janelle made, when she stated camp was an important space because she did not think all racialized experiences could be understood by white people. At the same time, however, she still expressed

hope for possibilities for the future, despite not being able to pinpoint exactly what this future looked like. I posit that this is a result of the subsuming of race under the categories of culture and ethnicity which has nearly evacuated the public sphere of conversations about race.

I'm sure there is [a way to develop alternative communities outside of camp] ... I don't know how to do that. I'm sure we could if we tried but I think everyone needs to want to do that. Everyone needs to be a part of the community and want to involve everybody but if you don't want to then it's not going to work out [...] just because I want to doesn't mean other people want to. If somebody *really* hates somebody, I don't know how they'd want to. (Janelle, 19)

What was interesting during this conversation is that Janelle was able to implicitly identify that the human capacity for affect must be contended with in developing alternative communities. Janelle unknowingly highlighted the “stickiness of emotions” (Ahmed 2004) that often works to align certain subjects with others, but not all. This awareness of emotions as central to forming collectives does indicate the potential presence of a critical consciousness as she addressed how oppressions are sustained through affective modalities.

Both excerpts from Elijah and Janelle indicate key considerations for those concerned with structurally determined racial inequalities, particularly along the axis of gender as Janelle saw the possibility for connectedness and Elijah did not; feminist scholars have theorized this is due to how men and women are socialized to think about autonomy, where women seek connectedness and men prefer separation (Hill-Collins 1990; see also Chodorow 1978; Keller 1985; Belenky et al. 1986). These two excerpts also denote another challenge in developing counter-knowledges: a “politics of disimagination”, which serves to “undermine the ability of individuals to think critically, imagine the unimaginable, and engage in thoughtful and critical dialogue” (Giroux 2013: para 9). While capitalism is a political economic practice, it is also a pedagogical force that mobilizes common sense ways of understanding the world. To be able to understand Canada from

this lens can lead to an analysis of the different ways that the effects of neoliberalism present themselves in the lives of young people who are a part of structurally disadvantaged groups.

This means taking into account the often obscured structurally determined reasons young people are left without jobs, why higher-education is no longer understood as a public good, and, fundamentally, why young people are being made to exist in a world where there is very little hope for the future. This requires confronting these issues in a language that engages with people at the level of everyday life where they can situate themselves and their personal struggles within the context of their own lives. Central to my argument is that feeling like one belongs is never just a private struggle. Emotions are not private issues. The inability or ability to feel like one belongs and has the freedom to think critically and act on this same front are inextricably tied to public, social problems. This necessitates understanding how the desire for belonging manifests itself in different ways and therefore must be addressed on economic, political, and ideological grounds.

## **Conclusion**

Through my interviews with my participants, I was able to consider how their experiences of coming together offer hope and contours to an understanding of counter-hegemonic community formations. For them, they learned new ways to talk with people they might not agree with. Their understandings of self and the Camp A community helped them develop alternative ways of thinking and talking about oppressions. They understood the complexity of individuals and how mainstream representations work to obscure these complexities. They developed a sense of what it means to establish a community of dispersed power (though perhaps not formally). They learned to struggle over their individual desires and needs as members of a collective in a way that did not foreclose the meeting of these needs for others. Their experiences at Camp A therefore challenge

the dominant narratives of neoliberal multiculturalism which sustain power through the exploitation of difference. Yet, the structure of Camp A still did rely on these same narratives. At times, my participants were made to negotiate themselves in order to educate other white campers. While at camp, their relationships with these white campers might distinguish the degree of responsabilisation assumed by my participants in these moments. It is while away from camp, however, that this individual educative role takes on a different meaning, demanding that Black subjects make themselves governable.

These are just the seeds of a more critical consciousness, however. Institutions that task themselves with teaching Black young people how to better understand their racialized experiences in Canada must include curriculum that addresses the ways in which neoliberal multiculturalism undermines Black subjects' basic, fundamental rights *outside* of camp. The interactional space allowed for by Camp A maintains transformative power, but this power often dissipated when my participants returned home to their respective communities. Curriculum that can link collectively experienced anti-Blackness to broader experiences of oppression sustained under Canada's current iteration of capitalism can create the conditions for the development of affective attachments that can be rerouted for the purpose of political struggles. For Camp A in particular, this might look like taking seriously the fact that it operates on stolen Indigenous land. How might this camp develop a language and understanding of how the very reason they engage with one another on this land is deeply connected to the Indigenous people who have been displaced and made disposable? To answer these questions is to give operating power to the seeds of the awaiting critical consciousness developed at Camp A. This, I argue, can develop forms of collective agency capable of challenging the structurally determined inequalities organized under capitalism.

## Chapter Six: Conclusion

I began my research process seeking to answer the question: does Camp A facilitate the development of a critical consciousness in Black young adults? Even further, I wanted to know if this consciousness was recognizable as a form of “revolutionary love” (Hennessy 2008: 208). Through four discussions with Black young people and an analysis of the Camp A youth-focused strategic planning initiative, it is clear that this camp mobilizes contradictory understandings of Blackness and society. I had hoped to discover that Camp A itself was, indeed, a facilitator of the development of a critical consciousness. Moreover, I had hoped that the camp played (or could play) a role in my participants’ desire to participate politically, despite the fact that the camp itself does not seek to engage in activism within the public sphere related to issues that its Black youth are facing. But, establishing this relationship through my interviews proved difficult; I could not determine a clear link between the camp’s activities and political participation.

What I was able to conclude, however, was that the community space at Camp A created the conditions for critical reflection, while the camp’s more explicit pedagogical practices did not afford the same possibilities. Rather, its programming presented Blackness in ways that undermined a more critical account of Black forms of identification, often relegating Blackness to the level of individual human interaction. They often negate an analysis that incorporates the structural and systemic forces that constitute these very forms of identification and the ways in which they are engaged. Despite these limitations, my participants were able to develop their own understanding of these forms through engagement with one another, which simultaneously facilitated social solidarities amongst the Black youth. As they struggled to navigate the shifting nature of their own dualities in consciousness, these alternative ways of knowing Blackness highlighted the complexity of identifications while also implicitly recognizing the historical

processes that underpin these very forms. This happened as my interview subjects came to recognize the shared experiences that inform the lived realities of the majority of Camp A youth.

This notion of “shared experience” was continually raised throughout my interviews. This developed what my participants referred to as a community separate from society itself. Moreover, this community was predicated on difference and connection, which enabled feelings of belonging. One participant explicitly shared that this sense of belonging helped her feel like an individual member of a collective that valued her fundamental affective human needs. Drawing on these insights allowed me to more tentatively conclude that Camp A provides an imaginary for alternative forms of social organization. Camp A created the conditions for Black young people to come together and understand how the shared experience of not quite belonging within their respective communities was collectively experienced. I have identified these affective experiences as being produced as an effect of Canadian neoliberal multiculturalism. Within Canada’s current capitalist structure, racialized subjects are deemed un/governable through multicultural rhetoric and policy which subsumes race under culture, while also determining the struggles experienced by these subjects a result of their own insufficiencies (Thobani 2007; Thobani 2018).

In positing this argument, I am simultaneously asserting that Canadian capitalism (though the same can be said for capitalism in all of its iterations) is fundamentally undemocratic. The function of substantive democracy within the Global North ought to be to ensure everyone who exists within that society has a suitable standard of living, can fully participate in decision-making, and can “speak, act, and organize freely within conditions of relative equality” (Cairns 2017: 21). This includes full access to a society’s resources (Laxer 2009). Neoliberal multiculturalism, however, directly undermines these struggles through the proliferation of practices, rhetoric, and ideologies that mobilize a form of hyper-individualism that is always rational and self-governing

(Lemke 2001; Brown 2005; Harvey 2005; Hall 2017b). It also works to erode any notion of social responsibility (Hall 2017b). This has resulted in colossal cuts to the funding of public goods, mass economic deregulation, and an array of people unable to meet their basic needs. For Black people living in Canada in particular, they have never had equal accesses to resources (see Saney 1998; Backhouse 1999; Maynard 2017; Walcott 2018), which points to the effects of multicultural rhetoric as an apparatus of governance. Black youths' needs are often disregarded within the Canadian education system (Dei 1994), which has produced unstable involvement within the Canadian labour market, and an inability to properly understand their racialized experiences within the Canadian context, which ultimately places constraints on their participation in Canadian life (Gadsen 2017). For the youth within my study, this framework often left them with little hope for an alternative way of living together.

As my participants shared their experiences with me, they connected the lived realities of Black individuals in Canada to others who are often left out of Canada's narrative. They acknowledged Indigenous peoples, women, and those racialized as Brown. This ability to connect this myriad of experiences can be rerouted to serve as the foundation for practices of disidentification where subjects are able to locate themselves and others within a social formation through a structural understanding of exclusions and subordination. This further caters to an understanding of how capitalism undermines a whole array of people from meeting their basic needs (Hennessy 2008). Within the scope of this project, I have identified these basic needs as emotional or affective needs (*ibid*). These affective needs are inherently social. For my participants, the constrained ability to meet their affective needs was highlighted when they could not attend camp due to financial restraints. What this simultaneously brought forth is the complex

relationship between class and race, through which some of their classed positions are experienced through race. Their experiences also highlighted the economic reality of young people today.

Thus, I have concluded that the camp prepares Black young people for life in a neoliberal multicultural Canada, but their experiences of solidarity with each other, their affective attachments, and disidentifications point toward the possibility of advancing beyond this narrow pedagogical framework. Because consciousness is grounded in experience, Camp A provides its young people with the experiences necessary to make a better world possible. At the same time, however, it was apparent within my research data that the camp walks a fine line between this better world and liberal multiculturalism.

What, then, is required to mature these nascent counter-knowledges? My participants were all able to locate the contradictory nature of the central Canadian narrative of equal opportunity in comparison to their own experiences at some level. To push this further, there need to be pedagogical developments in direct relationship with the experiences of the campers themselves. For example, asking questions like *why* do these contradictions between everyday life and broader dominant ideologies present themselves? Further, how might external forces mediate one's ability to act in the world? My interview subjects noted needing to learn how to 'do things differently' than what is considered the norm. While they have adapted to these needs, what does it mean that the ability to meet these needs has to be consciously negotiated? It is one step to acknowledge contradictions, but another, expanded step to understand the context in which they have emerged and continue to persist. And yet another to know how to act on this knowledge.

For camps such as Camp A, I suggest rooting the experiences of both adoption and Blackness in a system of structurally determined oppressions. While Black people living in Canada experience extreme disadvantages in Canadian society, their experiences also uniquely position

them to understand and imagine the world through difference, beyond simple symbolic cultural gestures. It is “[s]eeing ‘the entire world as foreign land’ [that] makes possible originality of vision” (Said 2000:148). Being aware of more than one home, setting, or culture gives rise to the multiplicity of vision which produces “life led outside habitual order” (Said 2000:149). I recommend that developing this relationship between Blackness and adoption beyond just a therapeutic necessity can actually allow for the development of disidentifications and counter-knowledges. The effects of not quite belonging, both as Black subjects and adoptees, is the starting point for these counter-knowledges.

The transition from common sense to counter-knowledges can occur through an engagement with the various realms of popular culture. Many of my participants referred to the media as a dominant apparatus that produces frameworks for understanding Blackness. Thus, it is useful to take seriously the media as an oppressive force (though it can also be an especially fruitful site for the development of alternative knowledges) and the ways that it mediates or undermines human agency. At another level, it is necessary to produce alternative apparatuses that develop different understandings of Black life: podcasts, radio shows, a social media presence, and academic journals, for instance. These alternative platforms can become pedagogical forces of their own. Education is always central to politics. Thus, developing educative frameworks that directly engage with this role are crucial sites that can aid in the establishment of counter-hegemonic social formations.

What I have learned through my interviews with Camp A youth also presents opportunities for those concerned with social movements. Social movements perform the work that makes alternative social formations possible. However, they can only be successful if they are able to understand and underscore the relationships between a diverse array of social movements (Davis

2016; Giroux 2018). Thus, it is not enough to solely struggle for the rights of Black peoples, though that struggle is significant. Because structures of dominance are sustained through multiple levels of a given social formation – economic, political, and ideological – connections between structurally determined inequalities must always be made visible where possible. More importantly, the relationships that persist between these different moments must “be made in the context of the struggles themselves” (Davis 2016:20). The ability to make these connections then produces the affective grounds on which collective attachments can be formed. If we cannot make these connections – between similar lived experiences – then the struggle against capitalism is always reduced to one oppression or another. It is in the context of struggles that “new ideas, new issues, and new terrains on which we engage in the quest for freedom” emerge (Davis 2016:11).

### **Looking Forward**

I write this conclusion not as a means to conclude this thesis, but to ‘open up’ what I have developed thus far. First and foremost, this research should be conducted with a larger number of participants. Though my findings are significant, the inclusion of more interviews would allow for more robust conclusions to be drawn. This is particularly important as it relates to the gendered experiences of Blackness. Similarly, I attempted to decipher the complex relationship between race and class that persists under neoliberalism, but struggled to develop this very active connection. Questions centred around this specific articulation will develop a stronger understanding of the operating power that rests at the intersection between the economic and racial dimensions of neoliberalism.

Affect or, perhaps more specifically, revolutionary love, is another component of this thesis that requires additional work. My questions regarding community, emotions, and the relational

dimensions of camp were less answerable than I had hoped. The questions were broadly posed in order to provide my participants with optimal room to discuss their experiences, but only having four responses did not yield as many themes as I desired. While I was able to draw some tentative conclusions, these conclusions would be strengthened if they were more pointed. For instance, linking emotions more explicitly to their experiences as racialized subjects might be a starting point, especially within the context of Camp A. The same remarks can be made about more explicitly posing questions regarding their communities and their affective experiences of feeling ‘at home’ or ‘not belonging’.

I have also offered insights into the complex experience of being a Black adoptee into a mixed race family of white parentage. My participants, as I have stated, did not feel explicitly affected by their experiences as internationally adopted children. Yet, it is evident that this subject position offers possibilities for reconsidering social spaces. While not extensively developed within this thesis, future research might consider, as a starting point, how adopted children’s unique ‘in between-ness’ can allow us to rethink practices of disidentification, collective attachments, and community building projects. The in between-ness of their lived realities can offer much more to a reading of the constitutive outside of capitalist formations.

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## Appendix A: CORE Certificate

<b>PANEL ON RESEARCH ETHICS</b> <i>Navigating the ethics of human research</i>	<b>TCPS 2: CORE</b>	
<h2><i>Certificate of Completion</i></h2>		
<p><i>This document certifies that</i></p>		
<p><b>Mikayla Sherry</b></p>		
<p><i>has completed the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans Course on Research Ethics (TCPS 2: CORE)</i></p>		
Date of Issue:	<b>19 May, 2016</b>	

## Appendix B: CUREB Ethics Approval Letter



Office of Research Ethics  
503 Robertson Hall | 1125 Colonel By Drive  
Ottawa, Ontario K1S 5B6  
613-520-2600 Ext: 2517  
[ethics@carleton.ca](mailto:ethics@carleton.ca)

### CERTIFICATION OF INSTITUTIONAL ETHICS CLEARANCE

The Carleton University Research Ethics Board-A (CUREB-A) has granted ethics clearance for the research project described below and research may now proceed. CUREB-A is constituted and operates in compliance with the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* (TCPS2).

**Ethics Protocol Clearance ID:** Project # 109909

**Project Team Members:** Ms. Mikayla Sherry (Primary Investigator)  
Justin Paulson (Research Supervisor)

**Project Title:** Developing a Critical Consciousness in Racialized Youth

**Funding Source** (If applicable):

Effective: **December 13, 2018**

Expires: **December 31, 2019.**

**Please ensure the study clearance number is prominently placed in all recruitment and consent materials: CUREB-A Clearance # 109909.**

#### **Restrictions:**

This certification is subject to the following conditions:

1. Clearance is granted only for the research and purposes described in the application.
2. Any modification to the approved research must be submitted to CUREB-A via a Change to Protocol Form. All changes must be cleared prior to the continuance of the research.
3. An Annual Status Report for the renewal of ethics clearance must be submitted and cleared by the renewal date listed above. Failure to submit the Annual Status Report will result in the closure of the file. If funding is associated, funds will be frozen.
4. A closure request must be sent to CUREB-A when the research is complete or terminated.
5. During the course of the study, if you encounter an adverse event, material incidental finding, protocol deviation or other unanticipated problem, you must complete and submit a Report of Adverse Events and Unanticipated Problems Form, found here:  
<https://carleton.ca/researchethics/forms-and-templates/>

Failure to conduct the research in accordance with the principles of the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans 2nd edition* and the *Carleton University Policies and*

*Procedures for the Ethical Conduct of Research* may result in the suspension or termination of the research project.

Upon reasonable request, it is the policy of CUREB, for cleared protocols, to release the name of the PI, the title of the project, and the date of clearance and any renewal(s).

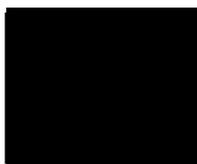
Please contact the Research Compliance Coordinators, at [ethics@carleton.ca](mailto:ethics@carleton.ca), if you have any questions.

**CLEARED BY:**

**Date: December 13, 2018**



Bernadette Campbell, PhD, Chair, CUREB-A



Natasha Artemeva, PhD, Vice-Chair, CUREB-A

## Appendix C: Letter of Informed Consent



### Research Consent Form

#### Name and Contact Information of Researchers:

**Primary Researcher:** Mikayla Sherry, Carleton University, Department of Sociology and Anthropology

Email: mikaylasherry@cmail.carleton.ca

**Supervisor and Contact Information:** Justin Paulson, Carleton University, Department of Sociology and Anthropology/Political Economy,

Email: justinpaulson@carleton.ca

#### Project Title

Developing a Critical Consciousness in Racialized Youth

#### Project Sponsor and Funder (if any)

n/a

#### Carleton University Project Clearance

Clearance #: 109909      Date of Clearance: December 13, 2019

#### Invitation

You are invited to take part in a research project because you are aged 18-25, have attended Harambee Summer Festival for at least five years, and identify as Black and/or with the African diaspora. The information in this form is intended to help you understand what we are asking of you so that you can decide whether you agree to participate in this study. Your participation in this study is voluntary, and a decision not to participate will not be used against you in any way. As you read this form, and decide whether to participate, please ask all the questions you might have, take whatever time you need, and consult with others as you wish.

#### What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of this study is to interrogate if and how Harambee Summer Festival facilitates the development of a critical consciousness in racialized and African youth. More precisely, this means understanding how this camp contributes to the identity development of Black youth and young adults. As well, does this identity development contribute to new frameworks and philosophies for understanding the broader social world in a way that enhances community and political participation in order to produce a more just and democratic society?

#### What will I be asked to do?

If you agree to take part in the study, we will ask you to:

- Participate in a semi-structured interview, lasting approximately 60-120 minutes. These interviews can occur anywhere that is to the participant's schedule (this includes interviews over

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skype). The information posed will regard Blackness in Canada, the nature of Harambee Summer Festival, and community and political participation. **The interview will be audiotaped.** However, as a participant, you have the option to choose not to be recorded.

**Risks and Inconveniences**

There are no foreseeable risks associated with participation in this research project. However, the discussion of race and identity may lead to a discussion of past, sensitive information.

**Emotional Support**

Is there anything I can do if I found this experiment to be emotionally upsetting? Yes.

If you feel any distress or anxiety after participating in this study, please feel free to contact the British Columbia Mental Health Support Line at: 604-872-3311 or visit the British Columbia Crisis Website at <https://crisiscentre.bc.ca/get-help/>. There are also online chat spaces available for the British Columbia Crisis Centre at: [www.youthinBC.com](http://www.youthinBC.com) from 12PM – 1AM or [www.crisiscentreachat.ca](http://www.crisiscentreachat.ca) from 12PM – 1AM.

If you do not live in BC, this is the Canadian Mental Health Association phone line: 416-646-5557.

**Possible Benefits**

You may not receive any direct benefit from your participation in this study. However, your participation may allow researchers to better understand Blackness in Canada and what it means to develop a critical consciousness, oriented around understandings of love and compassion.

**Compensation/Incentives**

You will not be paid or compensated for your participation in this study.

**No waiver of your rights**

By signing this form, you are not waiving any rights or releasing the researchers from any liability.

**Withdrawing from the study**

If you withdraw your consent during the course of the study, all information collected from you before your withdrawal will be discarded immediately.

After the study, you may request that your data be removed from the study and deleted by notice given to the Principal Investigator (named above) four weeks after your scheduled interview. After this four week period, no withdrawal will be possible as data analysis will begin at this time.

**Confidentiality**

We will remove all identifying information from the study data as soon as possible, which will immediately follow your interview. All information will be coded using pseudonyms.

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We will treat your personal information as confidential, although absolute privacy cannot be guaranteed. No information that discloses your identity will be released or published without your specific consent. Research records may be accessed by the Carleton University Research Ethics Board in order to ensure continuing ethics compliance.

All data will be kept confidential, unless release is required by law (e.g. child abuse, harm to self or others).

The results of this study may be published or presented at an academic conference or meeting, but the data will be presented so that it will not be possible to identify any participants unless you give your consent.

You will be assigned a code [or pseudonym] so that your identity will not be directly associated with the data you have provided. All data, including coded information, will be kept in a password-protected file on a secure computer.

We will password protect any research data that we store or transfer.

For interviews that occur via Skype, it is important to note that this application's servers are located in the United States. As such, this interview will be subject to US laws on data privacy.

A data breach is unlikely. If one does occur, you will be notified immediately.

#### **Data Retention**

Your de-identified data will be retained. This project may be presented at an academic conference following the project's completion. Only de-identified data will be presented. Data will be stored on the password protected computer of the primary researcher. If data is to be retained, only transcripts will be stored. All audio recordings will be destroyed following transcription.

#### **New information during the study**

In the event that any changes could affect your decision to continue participating in this study, you will be promptly informed.

#### **Ethics review**

This project was reviewed and cleared by the Carleton University Research Ethics Board A. If you have any ethical concerns with the study, please contact Dr. Bernadette Campbell, Chair, Carleton University Research Ethics Board (by phone at 613-520-2600 ext. 2517 or by email at [ethics@carleton.ca](mailto:ethics@carleton.ca)).

#### **Statement of consent – print and sign name**

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.  Yes  No

I agree to be (audio/video recorded/photographed ...)  Yes  No

(Note: Please explain if recordings are optional to participation)

**(If applicable) I agree to be contacted for follow up research**  Yes  No

Version 2018-09-12

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Signature of participant

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Date

**Research team member who interacted with the subject**

I have explained the study to the participant and answered any and all of their questions. The participant appeared to understand and agree. I provided a copy of the consent form to the participant for their reference.

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Signature of researcher

---

Date

## Appendix D: Online Letter of Invitation



### **Online Invitation: Developing a Critical Consciousness in Racialized Youth**

To be posted on Harambee Young Adults Facebook Page:

#### **Volunteers needed for study relating to Black and African Youth Living in British Columbia**

We are looking for volunteers for a study regarding the development identity and consciousness in young adults who have attended Harambee Summer Festival.

The study aims to understand if this camp is a facilitator of the development of a particular form of critical consciousness. You will be asked to participate in one semi-structured interview.

To be eligible, you must be between the ages of 18-25, identify as Black or with the African diaspora, and have attended Harambee Summer Festival for at least 5 years.

The study will take place via Skype, or in person at the participant's discretion.

For interviews that occur via Skype, it is important to note that this application's server is located in the United States. As such, this interview will be subject to US laws on data privacy. A data breach is unlikely. If one does occur, you will be notified immediately.

If you are interested, please email Mikayla Sherry at [mikaylsherry@cmail.carleton.ca](mailto:mikaylsherry@cmail.carleton.ca) for more details on participating. Alternatively, you may contact my academic supervisor, Justin Paulson, at [justinpaulson@carleton.ca](mailto:justinpaulson@carleton.ca).



The ethics protocol for this research has been reviewed and approved by the Carleton University Research Ethics Board.

CUREB-A:

If you have any ethical concerns with the study, please contact Dr. Bernadette Campbell, Chair, Carleton University Research Ethics Board-A (by phone at 613-520-2600 ext. 2517 or via email at [ethics@carleton.ca](mailto:ethics@carleton.ca)).

## Appendix E: Interview Questions

### RESEARCH QUESTION

1. Does Harambee Summer Festival facilitate the development of a critical consciousness in Black young adults, predicated on the 'transformative power of love', or 'revolutionary love'?

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

2. Describe the place you grew up.
3. What is your family make-up like? What do your parents do?
4. How long have you been attending Harambee Summer Festival?
5. Do you still attend this camp?
  - a. Why or not?
6. How would you describe camp?
7. What do you think the purpose of this camp is?
  - a. Has this shifted over time?
8. What is one of the biggest things you have learned while attending this camp?
9. Do you think this camp has contributed to the way in which you understand yourself?
10. How has this camp contributed to your understandings of 'Blackness'?
11. Do you identify as Black? African?
12. Do you identify with a particular ethnicity?
13. Do you think there is a relationship between race and society?
14. How do you understand your world?
  - a. Do you have a particular 'framework', per se?
  - b. How have you come to develop such a framework?
15. Has this camp contributed to your understanding of your world outside of camp? How so?
16. How do you understand the community you live in while away from camp?
17. How would you say understandings of community are presented at camp?
18. How would you describe your political participation?
  - a. Do you feel this is important?
  - b. Is this something you ever discuss while at camp – or politics in general?
  - c. Does camp affect your desire to participate in the political world, regardless of whether or not you do talk about it at camp?
19. Are emotions ever talked about at camp?
  - a. In what way?
  - b. Do you think emotions are important to consider in everyday life?
  - c. Do you think emotions have an impact on who you are?
20. How would you describe the relational aspect of camp?
  - a. What kind of bonds are typically cultivated or spoken of?
  - b. Do these relationships affect how you build relationships outside of camp?
21. Do you visualize yourself as an actor in the world? In what way?
22. Would you say Harambee is its own community? Why or why not?
23. Has being adopted affected the way you think about the world?