

**Ethnic and Racial Self-Definitions of Second-Generation Canadians: An  
Analysis of Discourse**

by

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## ABSTRACT

### **ETHNIC AND RACIAL SELF-DEFINITIONS OF SECOND-GENERATION CANADIANS: AN ANALYSIS OF DISCOURSE**

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The present study was designed to investigate the social construction of racial and ethnic identities and categories among second-generation Canadian youth who identify as, or can be physically identified as Black. A culturally diverse sample of 34 participants aged 13 – 19 years was recruited from communities in the Greater Toronto Area to participate in six discussion groups. Discourse analysis was utilized to demonstrate the fluidity and negotiability of racial and ethnic identity, and the role of the immediate and wider social contexts in the constructions of these identities and the content of their associated social categories. Results are discussed with regards to the implications of the reliance on mainstream social-cognitive approaches that do not adequately address the social construction of these phenomena.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgments.....	iii
INTRODUCTION.....	1
Ethnic Identity.....	4
Ethnic Identity and Acculturation.....	8
Ethnic Identity and Racial Identity.....	11
The Reliance on Cognitive Approaches in the Study of Racial and Ethnic Identity.....	15
Study Explanation and Aims.....	20
Black Canadians: A Brief History.....	21
Black Racial and Ethnic Identity in a Canadian Context.....	24
Discursive Approaches to Racial and Ethnic Identity.....	29
METHODOLOGY.....	32
Participants.....	32
Procedure.....	34
ANALYSIS.....	35
Negotiation and Justification of Identities.....	36
Racial and Ethnic Labels.....	37
National, Ethnic and Racial Labels.....	43
Participants with “mixed” racial-ethnic heritage.....	49
Constructing and Identifying with Categories.....	55
Constructing National and Ethnic Categories	

and identities.....	55
Constructing racial categories and identities.....	60
Other Categories and Identities of Relevance.....	65
Race and Gender.....	66
Race and Social Class.....	68
Gender.....	70
Social Class.....	72
Neighbourhood.....	74
Religion.....	75
DISCUSSION.....	77
Limitations, Future Directions and Practical Implications.....	86
Limitations.....	86
Future Directions.....	87
Practical Implications.....	87
Conclusions.....	88
References.....	90
Appendix A: <i>Participant Flyer</i> .....	111
Appendix B: <i>Participant Sign-up Sheet</i> .....	112
Appendix C: <i>Participant Demographic Sheet</i> .....	113
Appendix D: <i>Focus Group Questions</i> .....	115
Footnotes.....	117

## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. <i>Demographic Characteristics of Participants, CRB1 and CRB2</i> .....	106
2. <i>Demographic Characteristics of Participants, EA1 and EA2</i> .....	107
3. <i>Demographic Characteristics of Participants, WA1 and WA2</i> .....	108
4. <i>Transcription Notation</i> .....	109

## **Ethnic and Racial Self-Definitions of Second-Generation Canadians: An Analysis of Discourse**

This thesis was designed to investigate the ethnic and racial identities, and acculturation experiences of second-generation youth in Toronto who trace their heritage to the Caribbean and Africa. Ethnic identity has been identified as an important component of identity for ethnic minority groups (see Phinney, 1990 for a review), with notable psychological implications. It has also been studied in relation to acculturation, where changes in ethnic identification have been identified in relation to changes in cultural context, with emphasis given to the relationship between heritage cultural identity and “dominant”, “mainstream” or “national” cultural identity within individuals (Berry, Phinney, Sam & Vedder, 2006). Research on racial identity has developed concurrently with ethnic identity research (Phinney, 1990). However issues of race and racial identity have been largely neglected in acculturation research. Additionally, psychological researchers have used racial and ethnic terms interchangeably (Helms & Talleyrand, 1997), and there continues to be disagreement regarding whether racial and ethnic identities are distinct constructs, or whether they are one and the same (Cokley, 2005; Markus, 2008). Much of the research conducted on these concepts has been through mainstream cognitive approaches (Verkuyten, 2005) that emphasize the internal psychological features of these identities (see Phinney & Ong, 2007; Ong, Fuller, & Phinney, 2010; Quintana, 2007). Although there is agreement that these constructs are fairly complex with social, political and historical implications (Phinney, 1996; Cokley, 2007), cognitive approaches do not adequately address the social construction of these identities and the groups with which they are associated (Verkuyten, 2005).

It was therefore determined that discourse analysis would be the most appropriate methodology for this study, as this approach is more adept at accounting for the social

construction of social groups and identities. I will argue that without researcher sensitivity to these issues, cognitive approaches to racial and ethnic identity risk further marginalizing already marginalized groups. This is due to assumptions regarding group cognitive processes and issues of categorization that are taken for granted within these studies, and that can result in unwarranted generalizations made between and within groups under study. Although discursive approaches do not account for internal psychological processes, they enable us to account for the social interactive nature of group identities through examining talk within immediate and wider social contexts (Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998; Edwards & Potter, 1992; Verkuyten, 2005)

I chose to investigate these issues within a Black Canadian sample. The word “Black” is used as a descriptive term to designate individuals who may be physically identifiable as members of the African Diaspora, and/or identify themselves through the use of this term. It is intended to add to the small but growing body of Canadian research on this topic within this particular group. Specifically, participants were second-generation Canadian youth of Afro-Caribbean, East and West African heritage. I sought to determine how individuals from these groups constructed and negotiated their identities through talk within a group setting.

I will begin with a discussion of mainstream approaches to ethnic identity, with a specific focus on work done with the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM; Phinney, 1992), as this has been identified as the most widely used generalized ethnic identity scale (Gaines et al., 2010). I will then provide a brief review of acculturation research and its relationship to ethnic identity research, highlighting the role of cultural context on issues of ethnic identity. Then, I will turn my discussion to a review of racial identity research, which has been conducted largely within the United States, and the relationship between this work and the work done with ethnic

identity. Here I will discuss the often overlapping and uncritical uses of racial and ethnic terminology in psychological research.

From there, I will discuss the disadvantages of relying solely on methodologies that emphasize the internal psychological processes associated with racial and ethnic identity. I will argue that the sole and uncritical reliance on these methodologies risks homogenizing and further marginalizing already marginalized groups.

I will then turn to a brief discussion of the history of peoples of African descent in Canada, and highlight studies on racial and ethnic identity conducted with these groups within the Canadian context. Through this discussion I will demonstrate the risks associated with an uncritical approach to ethnic and racial identity when researcher assumptions are not made explicit. I will then make a case for the use of discourse analysis to further build our understanding of these phenomena as they play out in social interaction.

Following this review, I will present my research findings, starting with a discussion of my sample and methodologies. It must be noted that the data collected within this study had a dual purpose. Aside from an investigation of the categories and identities relevant to my sample, I also sought to obtain input for the design of a community program aimed at this demographic.

Through a discussion of my results, I will demonstrate how the participants within my sample negotiated and justified their identity choices within a group setting. I will then demonstrate how these youths constructed the content of relevant social categories in order to justify their identity choices and to perform other social actions through discourse within their discussions. Finally, I will present examples of various other categories and identities that were relevant to the participants within the discussions, in order to provide further context for the lives

of these youths and to shed light on other possible areas of research among young people of these demographics.

This study expands on current research on the acculturation and ethnic and racial identities of youth in the Canadian context, specifically on Canadians who identify and/or are identifiable as Black. It sheds further light on the discourses these young people use with regards to ethnic, racial and national identity that may have implications for policy and social programs designed to address the needs of this demographic within Canada. It also expands on the extant cross-cultural and social psychological literature on acculturation, ethnic and racial identity.

### **Ethnic Identity**

Phinney and Rotheram (1987) presented an early definition of ethnic identity as “one’s sense of belonging to an ethnic group and the part of one’s thinking, perceptions, feelings, and behavior that is due to ethnic group membership,” (p. 13). In this publication, ethnic identity was contrasted with ethnicity, which referred to group patterns of thinking, feeling and behaving, whereas ethnic identity referred to an individual’s acquisition of these patterns (Phinney & Rotheram, 1987). This conceptualization of ethnic identity is largely based on Tajfel’s (1981) theory of social identity, in addition to Erikson’s (1968) model of identity development (Phinney, 1989; 1992). Phinney (1992) outlines four major components of ethnic identity: (a) one’s self-identification with an ethnic group (i.e. one’s self-label, as measured by both open ended and multiple choice questions); (b) the ethnic behaviours and practices that one participates in; (c) the sense of belonging that one feels to an ethnic group and one’s attitudes towards that group, also called affirmation and belonging; and (d) ethnic identity achievement, the developmental component of ethnic identity which is assessed via the Eriksonian identity processes of exploration and commitment. The Multi-group Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM;

Phinney, 1992) was created to measure these components of ethnic identity, and is the most widely used scale both within and outside of the United States (Gaines et al., 2010). Ethnic behaviours, affirmation and belonging, and ethnic identity achievement (exploration and commitment) represent the three subscales of the measure. A total score representing ethnic identity achievement is obtained by summing across these subscales. High scores indicate identity achievement – a “clear understanding of the role of ethnicity for oneself” (Phinney, 1992, p. 161) – and low scores indicate identity diffusion, or lack of clarity regarding one’s ethnicity. It is meant to have general applicability across various ethnic groups, as compared with previous measures that were designed for use within specific groups (Phinney, 1992).

Much psychological research has been conducted around ethnic identity over the past two decades (see Ong et al., 2010; Phinney 1990; Phinney & Ong, 2007; Quintana, 2007; Verkeyten, 2005 for reviews). For example ethnic identity, as measured by the MEIM, has been demonstrated to be related to several psychological outcomes. Among ethnically diverse samples of youth, it has positively predicted satisfaction with life (Ghavami, Fingerhut, Pelau, Grant & Wittig, 2011), non-fighting attitudes, (Arbona, Jackson, McCoy & Blakely, 1999), and mathematics self-efficacy, (O’Brien, Kopala & Matinez-Pons, 1999). However this measure has not gone without criticism. Cokley (2007) points out that the method of summing a total ethnic identity score on the MEIM implies that ethnic identity is one unified construct, when there are actually clear subscales identified within the measure. In line with this criticism, Umana-Taylor, Yazedjian and Bamaca-Gomez (2004) have also indicated that ethnic identity achievement is confounded with positive group identification within the measure. In other words according to the MEIM, one has to identify positively with one’s ethnic group in order to be considered identity achieved (Umana-Taylor et al., 2004). These researchers attempted to address this issue

through the development of the Ethnic Identity Scale (EIS). Unlike the MEIM, the EIS explicitly addresses a) exploration; b) resolution – the extent to which an individual has resolved what their ethnicity means to them – and c) affirmation, as separate components of ethnic identity development. This scale also groups participants according to the identity statuses of Diffusion, Foreclosure, Moratorium and Achieved identity, in accordance with Marcia's (1993) operationalization of Erikson's theory of identity development. However most researchers measure ethnic identity along a single continuum (Phinney & Ong, 2007) and research on the variability of ethnic identity within individuals across contexts and time suggests that discrete categorization into identity statuses may not be the best approach for measuring this construct (e.g. Yi & Shorter Gooden, 1999).

A revised version of the MEIM, the MEIM-R (Phinney & Ong, 2007) addresses the previous critiques by assessing only the exploration and commitment components of ethnic identity. The researchers suggest that this scale can be attached to measures that assess other components of ethnic identity, such as ethnic behaviours, or regard. There does however continue to be a lack of consensus regarding the dimensionality of ethnic identity and how it should be measured (Gaines et al., 2010; Juang & Nguyen, 2010; Ong et al., 2010).

In addition to psychometric difficulties, there are also a number of theoretical implications for use of ethnic identity measures similar to the MEIM. Phinney (1996) acknowledges that the concepts of ethnicity and ethnic identity are, in and of themselves, fairly complex. She asserts that ethnicity is psychologically important due to the aspects of culture, identity, and minority status that it involves. These three aspects have far reaching social, historical, political and personal influences and implications. However, generalized ethnic identity scales do not capture these features (Cokley, 2007). Phinney also stresses that ethnic

labels should not be regarded as discrete categories, and that much heterogeneity exists within ethnic groups. She points out that despite these complexities, due to the nature of psychological research, many psychologists do treat ethnic labels as discrete categorical variables. In addition, it has been widely acknowledged that ethnic identity is not static and is context dependent (e.g. Phinney, 2003; Sam & Berry, 2006; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher & Wetherell, 1987). However these features are often overlooked in cross-sectional studies on this topic.

Notably, researchers have attempted to address the theoretical issues of within-group heterogeneity, social context, and the dynamic nature of ethnic identity. For example French, Seidman, Allen and Aber (2006) considered the cultural heterogeneity of their sampled ethnic groups, while taking a longitudinal approach to the study of ethnic identity development. Using a sample of African-Americans, Latino-Americans, and European-Americans, they investigated ethnic identity development over a two-year period with students in grades 5 and 6 (early adolescents) and grades 8 and 9 (middle adolescents). These researchers not only assessed changes in ethnic identity development across ethnic groups, but within these ethnic groups as well. For example, the broad Latino-American ethnic group consisted of Puerto Ricans, Dominicans and “other” Latinos. Ethier and Dieux (1994) addressed the role of long-term contextual changes in ethnic identity. By also utilizing a longitudinal approach, they found that although there were no changes in the importance of ethnic identity and self-esteem associated with ethnic identity among Hispanic students in the U.S. over a one-year period, the means by which they supported their ethnic identity changed in accordance with long-term changes in their environmental context. Whereas family background was the main reason for identifying with the Hispanic ethnic group before entering post-secondary education, after attending college for one

year, these students identified involvement in Hispanic activities as their main reason for adherence to Hispanic culture.

Short term, day-to-day changes in ethnic identity have also been assessed (Yip, 2005; Yip & Fuligni, 2002). For example, using an experience sampling methodology, Yip (2005) found differences in ethnic salience within Chinese participants based on contextual features, such as presence of family members, and language predominantly used within the setting. Similar research has also been conducted on racial identity using experimental approaches (e.g. Shelton & Sellers, 2000).

These studies used diverse methodologies to uncover contextual variables that are implicated in ethnic identity. However the variables investigated were, by design and perhaps necessity, solely those deemed important by the researcher. This may in turn limit our understanding of group identities. As will be outlined further in this thesis, studying social interaction and how identities play out within these contexts can build further understanding of these phenomena by turning more of our attention towards the social features of these identities, as compared to the internal cognitive features that are traditionally emphasized.

### **Ethnic Identity and Acculturation**

One contextual feature that has been given much attention in the study of ethnic identity is that of culture. The area of acculturation research best addresses the association between cultural context and this form of identity. Acculturation is the process by which continuous contact between individuals of different cultural groups results in changes in the cultural patterns of these groups (Redfield, Linton & Herskovits, 1936). These processes have received considerable attention in the field of cross-cultural psychology over the past few decades, particularly in North America and Europe (Sam & Berry, 2006). Much of this research has been

concerned with the development and testing of measures to assess the acculturation experiences of groups of people living outside of the countries in which they were born (e.g. Gim Chung, Kim & Abreu, 2004; Kim, Laroche & Tomiuk, 2001; Safdar, Calvez & Lewis, 2012). The experiences of people who may be born within a particular country, but who are considered to be cultural minorities have also been investigated (e.g. Abouguendia & Noels, 2001; Obasi & Leong, 2010; Berry et al., 2006). The overarching goal within this tradition has been to uncover general processes that individuals and groups undergo when living in plural societies (Berry, Kim, Power, Young & Bujaki, 1989). Through the development of this research, there has been considerable evidence supporting a bi-dimensional model of acculturation. In other words, it has been demonstrated that across various ethnic groups, being competent in, or adapting to a new culture does not necessarily represent or result in loss of heritage culture (e.g. Berry et al., 1989; Dere, Ryder & Kirmayer, 2010; Ryder, Alden & Paulhus, 2000).

John Berry's bi-dimensional model of acculturation strategies is one such notable model. This model looks at the acculturation attitudes or strategies of integration, assimilation, separation and marginalization (Berry et al., 1989). These are strategies by which groups choose to relate to their own heritage cultures, and the mainstream culture. With respect to immigrant groups, integration occurs when the group maintains its heritage culture while at the same time becomes a part of the larger societal framework. Assimilation occurs when an immigrant group rejects its cultural heritage and immerses itself in the mainstream or national culture. The term "mainstream" culture is used with recognition that there are power differences between the various cultural groups within a particular society (Berry, 1997). When an immigrant group chooses to maintain their heritage culture, and there is a lack of positive relations with the larger society, this is called separation. If this is imposed by the larger society, it is called segregation.

Finally, marginalization occurs when the immigrant group experiences a loss of heritage-cultural identity while at the same time is not involved with the larger society. If this is imposed by the larger society, it is equivalent to ethnocide (Berry et al., 1989). These processes can occur on both the group and individual level (Berry, 1997).

As mentioned earlier, ethnic identity has been given much attention in acculturation research. It is conceptualized as a specific aspect of the acculturation process, where the focus is on changes in one's subjective feelings about one's ethnicity due to contact with cultures outside of one's own (Phinney, 2003). Given that the concept of ethnicity is unlikely to hold meaning for individuals in societies where there is little diversity or cross-cultural contact (Phinney, 1990), it is appropriate that the study of ethnic identity has been tied to the study of acculturation. For example the concept of integration is similar to that of having a bicultural identity, where an individual identifies with both the national culture and their heritage culture (Berry et al., 2006; Phinney, 2003). Ethnic identity has also been shown to be related to acculturation strategies and socio-cultural adaptation (see Safdar, Lay, & Struthers, 2003; Safdar, Struthers & van Oudenhoven, 2009).

The contribution of acculturation research to the concept of ethnic identity is that it recognizes the impact of one or more cultures on an individual's perception of their identity. The term bicultural is often used to describe individuals who identify with the national and their heritage culture; however, it is also recognized that an individual can be influenced by multiple cultures within a particular context (Phinney, 2003). In addition, the term bicultural gives the impression of a balance between two cultures and stability of identity, but this is also not a straightforward concept. Several studies have demonstrated that individual perception and expression of various cultural identities can be fairly complex and, at the very least, dependent

on the individual and the situation (Benet-Martinez & Haritatos, 2005; Sirin et al., 2008; Zine, 2001). Using both qualitative and quantitative methods, Phinney and Devich-Navarro (1997) identified two separate types of bicultural identity. The first was “blended biculturalism”, where individuals indicated that they identified somewhat equally with both their ethnic culture and the mainstream or national American culture, and that they either blended the two cultures that they identified with or deemphasized cultural issues. The second was “alternating biculturalism”, where participants emphasized their ethnic identity but alternated between ethnic and American identities depending on the context. Interestingly, Belanger and Verkuyten (2010) found that there was low correspondence between bicultural identification (e.g. Chinese-Canadian), and the integration acculturation strategy among second-generation Chinese in the Netherlands. The correlation between the two was however higher in the Canadian sample. These researchers indicated that this difference is likely due to the wider Canadian and Netherlands contexts, where differences exist in how individuals view the relationship between ethnic and national cultures. Additionally, they employed discursive approaches, which revealed the complexities of hyphenated identities within social interaction. Overall, these examples once again illustrate that ethnic identity expression is not necessarily a straightforward phenomenon. However traditional acculturation research does not adequately address these complexities (Belanger & Verkuyten; Chirkov, 2009).

### **Ethnic Identity and Racial Identity**

To the author’s knowledge, there has been little explicit attention given to racial identity within acculturation research. In fact, ethnic identity and racial identity have largely been used interchangeably within psychological research in general (Helms & Talleyrand, 1997; Markus, 2008; Phinney, 1996, Qunitana et al., 2006). Phinney argues that although the term race is used

to distinguish people with origins in different areas of the world (e.g. European, African or Asian), there is disagreement on its meanings and usage within psychology. Therefore the term ethnicity is used to encompass both the visible racial characteristics of a group (such as skin color and facial features), and culture of origin (Phinney, 1996). However Helms and Talleyrand (1997) argue that the term ethnicity in American society essentially has no real meaning aside from its use as a replacement term for race or immigrant status. They argue that race, on the other hand, does have a clear meaning because individuals receive differential treatment due to “phenotypic characteristics, regardless of the culture in which one is socialized,” and that “the role that race plays in society is salient, whereas the role that culture plays is virtually invisible (p. 1247). Although it is problematic to argue that individuals do not receive differential treatment in society due to culture, Helms and Talleyrand’s statement that individuals are treated differently due to physical characteristics is embedded within contemporary definitions of race in the field of psychology. Cokley (2007) defines race as “a characterization of a group of people believed to share certain physical characteristics such as skin colour and facial features,” and ethnicity as “a characterization of a group of people who see themselves and are seen by others as having a common ancestry, shared history, shared traditions and shared cultural traits such as language, beliefs, values, music, dress and food,” (p. 225).

In addition, being socialized into a racial group or ethnic group has psychological, political and educational consequences. Cokley further distinguishes between racial and ethnic identity, and suggests that racial identity should be used when studying how individuals build their identities with regards to power and oppression in highly racialized societies. Ethnic identity on the other hand, is more appropriate when determining how individuals construct their identities based on cultural beliefs, values and behaviours (Cokley, 2007). It is important to note

here that both definitions highlight the highly social and malleable nature of the terms race and ethnicity. However there is an enduring societal belief that these categorizations are self-evident and grounded in biology, rather than being regarded as social constructs (Markus, 2008). This belief is reflected in the ambivalence and ambiguity with which the discipline of psychology has approached the study of these topics (Markus, 2008). Also notable is that the preceding discussion is based on research developed entirely in the United States of America. Given the social nature of these constructs, it is highly likely that understandings of these concepts may be relevant in the American context, but will be qualitatively different and have varying levels of applicability in other parts of the world.

Even with a distinction made between these concepts in the literature, it is questionable as to whether a distinction can be made when studying the actual people and populations to which these categorizations may or may not apply. Cross and Cross (2008) argue that there is little reason to separate the study of racial and ethnic identity, as the concepts overlap at the level of the lived experience of individuals. They argue that the psychological study of racial and ethnic identity has in fact been a fusion of racial, ethnic, and cultural components of identity (REC), as operationalized in the various models and scales that have been developed to assess these constructs. For example many of the models of Black racial identity for African Americans in the United States were formulated within the time of the Black Social Movement of the 1970's and 1980's, and are likely to be more representative of racial-cultural identity, as they involve both racial and cultural aspects of the African American experience (Cross & Cross, 2008). Phinney's (1992) model of ethnic identity development also encompasses racial and cultural components (Cross & Cross, 2008).

On the other hand, researchers have called for further disentanglement of these concepts (Chao & Otsuki-Clutter, 2011; Cokley, 2005; Quintana et al., 2006) and empirical studies have demonstrated that race and ethnicity do manifest as distinct constructs within various populations. For example, McHale et al. (2006) distinguish between cultural socialization – where the focus is on cultural values – and preparation for bias – where the focus is on adverse experiences due to race – in African American child rearing practices. This distinction is similar to the definitions of racial identity and ethnic identity by Cokely (2007), which differentiate between identity development in the face of inequalities based race, or identity development based on cultural values and beliefs. A distinction between a racial(ized) identity (one based on stereotypes and internalized racism) and ethnic identity has also been found (Cokley, 2005).

Despite this empirical separation, the fluidity and overlap of these constructs in real world settings must continue to be recognized. For example Quintana (1998) gives the example of how Irish Americans, once considered a distinct ethnic group from White Americans in the United States, are now included in the racial category of White according to federal guidelines, clearly demonstrating how societal factors dictate how groups are viewed. Similarly, Philogene (1994) documents the efforts of influential African-American leaders over the decades to de-emphasize racial labels such as “Coloured” and “Negro” and more recently “Black”, in favour of terms that have more cultural connotations, i.e. “African-American”. These efforts were made in order to address the social inequalities and institutional racism that affect individuals of African descent within the US. It demonstrates how racial and ethnic categorizations can be socially and politically motivated, and again emphasizes the role of social context. These real-world historical examples illustrate the fluidity of racial and ethnic terms, and that their meanings and categorical implications are far from self-evident. It emphasizes the need for researchers to attend to how

these categories are socially constructed, in addition to explicitly providing clear definitions, when these terms are applied and studied in psychological research.

One notable measure of racial identity that was developed within the United States, is the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI; Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley & Chavous, 1998). This model was developed specifically for work with African-American populations. The developers argue that the measure takes into account the unique history of oppression experienced by this group within the U.S., as well as cultural experience of being African-American. It consists of three dimensions: centrality, regard and ideology. Centrality is the extent to which a person normatively defines her/himself with regards to race. This is similar to Phinney's affirmation and belonging subscale but is specific to African-Americans. The regard subscale measures the feelings of positivity and negativity that one has towards being Black in private and public domains. Finally, the ideology domain measures how an individual feels that members of the race should act, and consists of four subscales: nationalist, oppressed minority, assimilationist and humanist. The creators of this scale emphasize that it captures the unique experience of being African American, unlike generalized ethnic and racial identity models. However the specificity of this scale runs the risk of essentializing the African-American experience, and does not necessarily account for the experiences of more recent immigrants to the US who may be also classified as Black or African-American. It also does not capture the situational and context dependent nature of identity discussed earlier in this review.

### **The Reliance on Cognitive Approaches in the Study of Racial and Ethnic Identity**

The preceding discussion has highlighted more mainstream research on racial and ethnic identity (Verkuyten, 2005) that has focused mainly on the cognitive components of these constructs. This research has been conducted largely through quantitative methodologies that

employ the use of measurement scales, with an overreliance on cross-sectional approaches (Quintana et al., 2006). I argue that the inclusion of more qualitative methodologies, specifically work that employs discourse analysis, can assist in building an even broader picture of not only the cognitive features of racial and ethnic identity, but also give an understanding as to how these identities are actively constructed and used within particular contexts and interactions on a day-to-day basis. I will also argue that the sole reliance on social-cognitive approaches risks homogenising and essentializing already marginalized groups, by not explicitly addressing the socially constructed nature of social groups and group identities.

Verkuyten (2005) maintains that the study of ethnic identity (and for the purposes of this thesis, racial identity) can, at the very least, be approached from two different, yet complimentary perspectives: perceptual – or cognitive – and discursive. More mainstream cognitive approaches emphasize the inner world of individuals (Edwards, 1998; Verkuyten, 2005). Although the influence of the social world is acknowledged, the emphasis of this approach is on how these social influences are internalized and on how these internalizations affect other psychological processes and external behaviour. Therefore in studies of ethnic identity, focus is placed on its development within individuals, and how, for example, negative social circumstances impact a person's understanding of self (Verkuyten, 2005). This is clearly demonstrated in the research on racial and ethnic identity previously highlighted in this paper, where the emphasis has been specifically on what these identities are comprised of, and how the components of these identities relate to other psychological functions.

On the other hand, discursive approaches emphasize the role of the social world. The focus of analysis here is social interaction, and identity is viewed as constructed within particular

contexts. The implications of these constructions are consequently examined using evidence from the particular interactions that occur within these social contexts (Verkuyten, 2005).

Verkuyten argues that both methods have their advantages and their drawbacks, as both are aimed at fundamentally different types of research questions. Specifically, the cognitive approach does not explicitly account for the social construction of groups, and the negotiability of racial and ethnic identity within social context (Augoustinos, 2001; Verkuyten, 2005). Therefore although these approaches acknowledge that racial and ethnic groups are not grounded in biology (Phinney, 1996), the ongoing day-to-day constructions that occur in everyday interaction are difficult to assess within these studies. This difficulty does have implications for existing research in this field, as the emphasis on internal processes can lead to a lack of consideration of particular assumptions embedded within these studies. For example, Reicher (2004) argues that “there is no identity that will determine our behavior irrespective of context,” (p. 934). However, there is an assumption within cross-sectional studies of ethnic and racial identity that a participant’s self-categorization and sense of identity within the present context of research is potentially applicable across other contexts deemed relevant by the researcher. To use a perhaps oversimplified example, in studies where the relationship between ethnic or racial identity and, say, academic achievement is measured, there is an underlying assumption that the participant’s identification with a particular ethnic group within the research study is relevant to their performance within the classroom. It may instead be the case that, in practice, this identification has little or no relevance to the individual’s academic performance due to other contextual features – including other more relevant identities within that context – that outweigh any potential impact of an individual’s internal feelings about the ethnic group with which they identified in the research study. Of course the identity of interest may be shown within the study

to be unrelated to the selected outcome variable. However, the point of concern here is the assumption of the relationship between the cognition of ethnic identity and a particular outcome of interest, without consideration for the roles of other reasonable contextual features.

Reicher (2004) also argues that researchers have a tendency of projecting their categorizations of the social world unto their research participants, and that participants are included in research studies only to the extent that they accept these categorizations. This is evidenced by the observation that much of the research on race and racial identity in psychology has been conducted among African Americans and European Americans (Blacks and Whites) within the United States (Cokley, 2002; 2007; Quintana, 2007). On the other hand, ethnic identity studies within the US have been largely conducted among Asian and Latino Americans (Cokley, 2007; Quintana, 2007). The underlying assumption within this research is that experiences related to race are more relevant to Blacks and Whites within the US, than to groups that are culturally as opposed to racially defined, and that issues of cultural significance are more relevant to these culturally defined groups than to Black and White Americans.

In a related argument, Zagefka (2008) states that:

The frequent silence on the matter of ethnic categorisation reveals an underlying assumption that ethnic categories are unproblematic and that judgments about category relevance and category assignment are consensually shared between researcher, participants, and readers of research outputs. It is assumed that everyone will derive the same meaning from ethnic labels and stimuli, and that everyone will identify the same categories as relevant. The perception of ethnicity is treated as if it is unambiguous, and as if it does not have a subjective component. The fact that the perception of ethnicity is treated as obvious and inevitable suggests that ethnic

categories in these works might be seen to be part of an obvious and objectively given empirical reality. Although this assumption is typically not made explicit, it is difficult to conceive how different actors' perceptions could be expected to necessarily and consistently converge unless they were all grounded in the same objective facts (Zagefka, 2008, p. 236).

Here, Zagefka brings further attention to practices of social categorization that are approached uncritically by individuals who research these phenomena. Ideas that ethnic and racial groups are “discrete, sharply differentiated, internally homogeneous and externally bounded” (Brubaker, 2002, p. 164), and are unproblematically and directly perceivable through social and physical markers (Augoustinos, 2005) underlie cognitive approaches in this area. If understandings of ethnic groups and categorization are not straightforward, it stands to reason that research surrounding ethnic identity, and by extension racial identity, should consistently attempt to account for the complexity of these phenomena. Explicitly accounting for the social construction of racial and ethnic groups within research can assist in addressing the researcher assumptions highlighted above. Failure to do so can result in research that homogenises and essentializes the experiences of ethnic and racial group members, due to overemphasis on the cognitive as opposed to social features of group identity. Examples of these issues will be highlighted in the below section concerning research on Black Canadians.

In a recent review of research on the development of racial and ethnic identities in minority populations, Quintana (2007) argues that,

The strategy of attempting to validate a model of racial-ethnic identity development using a single instrument seems to rely on positivistic notions of philosophy of science in which the validity of the psychometric properties of an instrument may

be confused with the validity of the theory on which the instrument is based.

Instead, multiple representations, ideally using different methodologies, need to be used to more fully investigate the developmental aspects of racial-ethnic identity (p. 267).

This argument was made in support of using multiple instruments and instrumentation methods (e.g. peer nominations to assess an individual's affiliation with a particular racial or ethnic group, as opposed to sole reliance on self-report measures) – to assess the development of racial and ethnic identity. To support this point, Quintana points to historical research on parenting styles that may have had misleading conclusions due to a confound in the dominant measurement instrument used (Quintana, 2007). I extend this argument in support of greater utilization of methods that go beyond assessing the cognitive features of ethnic and racial identity. The use of discourse analysis in the study of racial and ethnic identity will be outlined in the following section, where I present the details of my research study.

### **Study Explanation and Aims**

This study had three main purposes: a) To determine how second-generation Canadian youth who can be identified as Black talk about racial and ethnic identity in a community setting; b) to examine the immediate and wider social contexts of these interactions and c) to determine how individuals interact with these contexts and with each other to construct categories and identities. By undertaking this investigation, my goal was to demonstrate the contextualized social construction of identities and social categories, and the consequent complexity of these phenomena. By focusing on second-generation youth who can be physically identifiable as Black in Canada, I sought to extend research on this demographic, and to shed light on the diversity of experiences of this group that has been regarded as relatively homogenous.

As noted earlier, the word Black is used to indicate individuals who may be physically identifiable as members of the African Diaspora, and who may or may not identify themselves as Black. Before presenting the details of my study, I will first outline a brief history of Black settlement in Canada, and then discuss some of the psychological research that has been conducted with this population thus far, primarily surrounding racial and ethnic identity. I will then detail the use of discursive approaches in the study of racial and ethnic identity, and the contribution that these approaches can make to the study of this topic and population.

### **Black Canadians: A Brief History**

The history of peoples of African descent in Canada shares some similarities and some notable differences to the history of these peoples within the United States. For example, the enslavement of Africans in Canada was not as widespread, was qualitatively different (i.e. lack of plantation labour) and had little influence on the development of the Canadian economy compared to the United States. However this institution did legally exist within Upper and Lower Canada in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (Winks, 1997). In addition, the relationship between Canada and the US regarding their Black populations is far reaching. Much of the early Black settlers in Canada originated from the US, either arriving as slaves of British Loyalists, or as individuals who earned their freedom after fighting on the side of the British during the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812 in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (Winks, 1997). Despite common perceptions of Canada as the “promised land” for enslaved Africans in the US, the conditions of many free Black populations in Canada, specifically within Nova Scotia, was far from desirable. This was largely due, but not limited to, mismanagement and poor decision making by the local provincial and larger British governments responsible for their immigration and settlement (Winks, 1997). These included lack of adequate housing and farmland (as was promised to these settlers for

fighting in the wars), and much racial disharmony between white settlers and these Black populations as a result of economic strains (Clairmont & Magill, 1999; Winks, 1997).

Blacks who arrived in Canada as fugitives from slavery in the US, although initially well received, eventually faced mixed reception and outright discrimination and segregation (Winks, 1997). Additionally, these immigrants did not mix with the earlier Black loyalist populations.

Currently, immigrants from the Caribbean and Africa represent the largest populations of African Diaspora in Canada. The largest wave of Caribbean immigration to Canada began in the 1950's. At this time, changes to the Canadian immigration policy enabled Caribbean immigrants to move into the country. These changes included Prime Minister Mackenzie King's removal of the outwardly racist selection guidelines in 1947, while at the same time encouraging immigration for the purpose of labour. Specifically, the Immigration Act allowed Canada to accept a yearly quota of domestic workers from the Caribbean after 1955 (Anderson, 1993), but at the same time placed restrictions on the acceptance of these workers into the country. These included stipulations that they must be unmarried and between the ages of 18 and 35 (Bashi, 2004). In 1966, the program was suspended due to the fear that the women accepted as domestic workers would bring their unskilled partners and children into the country. It was reinstated in 1973 with revisions: domestic workers could remain in the country, so long as they kept those positions and worked for the same individuals. If they failed to maintain this in any way, they were at risk of being deported. In addition, they were denied access to citizenship but, after protests, were allowed to apply after residing in Canada for three years (Bashi, 2004). In 1967, racial discrimination in immigration policy was officially removed and the points system – where immigrants are accepted based on their potential contribution to the Canadian economy –

was implemented as an attempt to have a universal set of criteria by which immigrants would be assessed (Anderson, 1993).

African immigrants were similarly affected by the 1967 change in Canadian immigration policy, in that their entrance to Canada was no longer formally restricted. However, Pupkampu and Tetty (2005) outline that the imbalance of immigration officers around the world serves as an informal restriction of the number of African immigrants that can enter the country. As compared to 46 immigration officers in Europe, 26 in South East Asia, and 11 in the Caribbean, there are a total of 8 immigration officers on the entire continent of Africa (Pupkampu & Tetty, 2005). In addition, these researchers highlighted that the professionally trained immigrants who do arrive in Canada face discrimination, as their qualifications are often not accepted in the Canadian labour market as compared to immigrants from European countries.

The preceding review is by no means comprehensive, and is simply meant to demonstrate the ambivalent treatment that has met Black populations in Canada upon their respective arrivals. Additionally, Winks (1997) argues that Canadians are generally ignorant of the history of Black populations in their country, often pointing fingers at the US and its strained race relations, while not recognizing Canada's mis-steps concerning its own Black populations.

Currently, people of Caribbean heritage in Canada consist of people from Antigua, the Bahamas, Guyana, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago etc. People of West African origin consists of peoples from Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria, Niger, Senegal etc; and people of East African origin are comprised of peoples from Djibouiti, Eretria, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia etc (Statistics Canada, 2006b). My thesis is primarily concerned with second-generation Canadians who originate from these regions, specifically with those individuals who are visually identifiable as, or identify themselves as Black.

## **Black Racial and Ethnic Identity in a Canadian Context**

In the past decade, there have been a few notable psychological studies conducted within the Canadian context among Canadians who identify as, or who are identifiable as Black, with a primary focus on race and/or racial identity (Boatswain & Lalonde, 2000; Codjoe, 2006; 2007; Joseph & Kuo, 2009; Lalonde, Jones & Stoink, 2008; Outten, Gigure, Schmitt & Lalonde, 2010; Smith & Lalonde, 2003; Smith, Schneider & Ruck, 2005). For example, Boatswain and Lalonde (2000) determined that the label most preferred by Black Canadians is “Black”, which was chosen as the most preferred from a list of labels by 35% of the respondents. Through open-ended reports, the participants indicated that they used the word Black as a descriptive term, to describe racial identity, or to signify racial pride. In addition, although there was a greater percentage of participants who preferred the label Black, 20 different labels were listed as the first preference among this group. This finding indicates that these participants had access to a large number of possible labels and categorizations upon which they could draw. The researchers indicated that this variability was larger than in any previous American findings. Importantly, within this study 93% of this sample specified that their heritage was Caribbean, indicating the diversity label choices that existed within this small group in and of itself.

Lalonde et al. (2008) acknowledge the differences between the United States and Canada regarding the “politics of race” (p. 129), but point to a “shared cultural experience” of discrimination as a point of comparison between the two populations (p. 130). These researchers utilized the MMRI (Sellers et al., 1998) in their study to determine the relationship between Black parents’ racial identity, and their socialization practices with their children regarding issues of racism and discrimination. They did not find the expected relationship between racial centrality and nationalism in parents, and the racial socialization (preparation for bias) of their

children, as has been found in American samples. They did, however, find that the private regard and assimilationist subscales of the measure had low internal reliability within this sample. The researchers partially attributed this low reliability to a possible lack of relevance to the particular sample of Black Canadians studied. This seems fairly likely, as the MMRI was developed specifically for use with African-Americans, taking into account their unique history and culture within the United States (Sellers et al., 1998). Therefore cognitive similarities between African-American and Black Canadian populations, due to experiences of racism, were taken for granted within this study. Additionally, the researchers note that the majority of their sample was of Caribbean origin (specifically Jamaican and Trinidadian), and were first-generation immigrants. Recognizing the potential cultural differences between African-Americans, the sample of Canadians used, and the diversity of the phenotypically Black Canadian population, the researchers called for further investigation of the experiences of Black Canadians as a disaggregated group.

Joseph and Kuo (2009) looked at different ways in which Black Canadians cope with racial discrimination. Specifically, they investigated whether “Africultural coping” strategies were utilized by their sample of Black Canadians in reaction to interpersonal, institutional, or cultural discrimination. The concept of Africultural coping, defined as “the extent to which individuals of African descent adopt coping behavior[s] specifically derived from African culture” (Joseph & Kuo, 2009, p. 81) was adopted from a US study, which investigated coping strategies determined to be specific to African Americans (Utsey, Adams & Bolden, 2000). Utsey et al. developed a scale to measure Africultural coping, based on the rationale that existing models of coping were developed from a Eurocentric perspective, and did not adequately address the African American experience and the coping strategies specific to this group – strategies that

had been documented in previous research (Utsey et al., 2000). They also pointed to the preservation of various African cultural practices and customs among African-Americans, which were hypothesized to play a role in the coping strategies that this group would display.

Joseph and Kuo hypothesized that their Black Canadian sample would display both Africultural and “general” coping strategies. Note that Utsey et al. (2000) referred to “general” coping strategies as based in a Eurocentric worldview. The researchers’ findings supported their hypothesis. However, a point of concern with this study was that, unlike Utsey et al., the researchers did not provide adequate evidence that Black Canadians had any level of preservation of African culture that would influence their coping strategies; nor did they provide a breakdown of the ethno-cultural composition of their sample, indicating only that the majority of participants identified both of their parents’ racial background as “Black”, and that half of their sample was composed of first-generation immigrants. Given the ethnic diversity of Black Canadians outlined above, it is quite likely that there would be varying cultural influences not directly connected to African ancestry, that could be associated with the preferred coping strategies within this sample. Instead there was an underlying assumption that Black Canadians were culturally similar to their African American counterparts (which may or may not be true in certain respects), and would therefore possess cognitive similarities to them as well. It is however important to note that these researchers did account for the type of racial discrimination encountered, as a contextual variable that would impact the coping strategy utilized by their participants.

Finally, a 2003 study by Smith and Lalonde investigated the relationship between Black identity, achievement and mental health in a Canadian student sample. The researchers hypothesized that students with closer ties to other Blacks would have better academic

performance and would be more psychologically healthy. The rationale provided here was that studies in the United States provide evidence supporting a positive relationship between Black identity and achievement, and between Black identity and mental health. The researchers found no differences in GPA between students who had differing levels of affinity to the Black racial group, however they did find a positive relationship between in-group ties and confidence in academic abilities.

Similar to Joseph and Kuo (2009), it is clear that there was a taken for granted assumption within this study regarding psychological and cultural commonalities between Black Canadians and African Americans. For example, the researchers highlighted that the sample was culturally diverse, but did not provide a cultural breakdown of their sample; nor was information on generational status provided. It is plausible that there were cultural and generational differences within their sample that may or may not have an impact on their participants' academic performance and mental health. In addition, other than comparable experiences of racism between African-Americans and Black Canadians, no other rationale was provided as grounds for comparison between the groups. An arguably more important cause for concern within this study was the privileging of Black identity over other relevant identities and societal/contextual factors that may have had an impact on their outcome variables of interest. Within their literature review, Smith and Lalonde discuss various societal factors, such as historical segregation and current streaming practices within public schools as reasons for Black Canadian students' underachievement. Turning attention away from outward societal issues to inward psychological factors can have the effect of placing the responsibility of achievement solely on the psychological state of group members, and in this case, a psychological state that is primarily tied to group membership (i.e. racial identity). This takes attention away from the vast

range of possible factors that can and do affect achievement. To be fair, this was just a single study; however, studies such as these that do not critically examine the contextualized social construction of race and ethnicity, could potentially lead to the pathologizing of individuals perceived to be members of the particular social group. This is due to the focus on what are believed to be group psychological characteristics, as opposed to, at the very least, a combination of possible social and psychological factors that may contribute to outcomes of interest.

These studies highlight the issues that can arise when emphasis is placed on the cognitive features of race and ethnicity, without adequate accounting for how racial and ethnic groups and identities are socially constructed. Although these researchers were simply testing hypotheses, they did not provide adequate justification for their predicted relationships, as there were underlying assumptions associated with the psychology of racial and ethnic group members in one societal context based on evidence obtained from similarly labeled groups in different societal contexts. Researchers who do not account for the social construction of racial and ethnic groups risk making generalizations that may in turn further marginalize already marginalized groups, or at the very least oversimplify the experiences of members of these groups.

Additionally, Danso and Grant (2000) note that there is a paucity of research on continental Africans in Canada, due to the tendency of early Canadian census data to lump all “Blacks” into one category. This paucity is strongly reflected in the psychological research literature, as seen in the few studies noted here. In one study conducted specifically with the continental African population in Canada, Grant (2007) found that, as compared to first generation Asian immigrants, African immigrants identified more with their culture, participated more in cultural activities, and held more collectivist beliefs. This was coupled with strong identification with Canada and multiculturalism. A qualitative study of second-generation

continental African-Canadians found that children whose parents emphasised cultural background and practices were more likely to feel successful and be more successful in school. Knowledge of, and pride in one's cultural background served as a buffer against racism, and provided these students with coping skills, and the self confidence to be themselves. The cultural values and norms that they were taught at home were those from their home country (Codjoe, 2006). These findings indicate, at the very least, the diversity of experiences of peoples who can be visually identified as Black within Canada, and the need for more nuanced approaches to research among these populations.

### **Discursive Approaches to Racial and Ethnic Identity**

Discursive approaches are one way by which the social construction of groups, and negotiability and heterogeneity of group identifications can be given greater attention. It must be noted here that discursive approaches do not account for the internal psychological processes that occur within individuals, as the focus here is on observable interactions and their consequences (Verkuyten, 2005). However as cognitive approaches are the dominant form of research within this field, alternative approaches that address different types of research questions are extremely useful in further building our understanding of ethnic and racial identity.

The examination of discourse allows us to understand not only the uniquely personal and contextualized content of ethnic and racial categories and identities, but also how identities are constructed, highlighted and downplayed by speakers within social interaction (Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998; Edwards & Potter, 1992). Analyzing discourse also allows us to situate talk in the immediate, and also within wider social context (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 2003). As Augoustinos (2001) highlights,

The strength of discursive approaches is that they are able to empirically demonstrate the active construction and use of categories in discourse, and the ideological effects and consequences some uses and constructions have. This is different from the usual social-cognitive approach which treats categories as fixed social entities ‘out there’ in the real world which, in turn, are represented as discrete cognitive entities in people's minds. It emphasises the social-constructionist nature of social categories and identities (p. 208).

Looking not only at the content of talk, but also at how talk is used to achieve certain ends within an interaction, is imperative for understanding the real life work of how people construct their worlds and themselves within these worlds (Edwards & Potter, 1992; Potter, 1996). Additionally, self-categorizations are not regarded as starting points in explaining how individuals view the world (Edwards, 1998)

The approach of analyzing discourse is not new to the study of social identity. Several studies have been conducted over the past few decades that have illustrated the complexity of identity construction and categorization in various contexts (Duveen, 2001; Carbaugh, 1999; Edwards, 1998). Ullah (1990) demonstrated how second-generation Irish youths drew on the current social and political climate in Britain to construct and justify their identity choices. In addition, he illustrated how these individuals accepted and resisted categorization by others, and how claims to identity were sometimes inconsistent. Interestingly, participants did not see this inconsistency as problematic. Other researchers have illustrated how identities and social categories are constructed and negotiated within immediate interactive situations (Malhi, Boon & Rogers, 2009; Merino & Tilega, 2011; Verkuyten, de Jong & Masson, 1995; Verkuyten & de Wolf, 2002). For example, using positioning theory (Davies & Harre, 1990), Malhi et al. (2009)

illustrate how South-Asian Canadian women asserted their conceptions of Canadian and South-Asian identity within the context of a discursive interview, accepting and rejecting the voiced implications of membership within each social category throughout the course of the conversation. Participants actively positioned and repositioned themselves and others in relation to the social context and to the other speakers within the conversation.

There is also a growing body of research that demonstrates the constructed nature of culture and group boundaries, as well as heterogeneity of “within group” cultural representations when studying social interaction, and when social context is taken into account (Augoustinos, 2005; Reicher, 2004; Yon, 2000). For example, in an ethnographic study with students in two Toronto high schools Yon (1999) brings attention to the diverse and contradictory understandings of Jamaican culture. This diversity of understanding was displayed both within a film about Jamaican Dancehall culture that was shown to his participants, and through their reactions to this film, despite stated beliefs within his sample of this culture as cohesive, uniform and stable. This is not to say that there are not stable aspects of culture (see Hofstede, 1991), or that certain ideas about a particular culture are not shared between individuals. However analysing discourse allows us to examine these shared representations, as well as unique ideas of culture that will arise within social interaction. It draws attention to how these ideas are constructed and used socially, as compared to the focus on internal cultural attributes that influence external behaviour, and are the focus of traditional research in this field.

The current analysis employs these methodologies in order to demonstrate the social construction of identities and category content among second-generation Canadian youth who are physically identifiable as Black. This will be achieved by examining how these youths spoke about racial, ethnic and national identities and categories, and the immediate and wider social

contexts within which this talk was situated. Additionally, by not only highlighting talk on race and ethnicity, but also on other relevant categories and identities that arose within the discussions, I will further exemplify the fluidity and overlapping nature of categories and identities, and also demonstrate the relevance of categories and identities outside of race and ethnicity for visible minority populations.

## **Methodology**

### **Participants**

Thirty-four participants were recruited for the study to participate in 6 separate focus groups. Criteria for participation included being of high school age, and being a second-generation Canadian, that is, being born in Canada or having arrived in Canada before age six (see Meyers, Gao, & Emeka, 2009; Rumbaut, 2004 for the rationale for this designation), and having one or both parents born outside of Canada. I chose to focus specifically on youth of high-school age because this is the target age group for the community program for which the data would also be utilized (see procedure). I also chose to focus on second-generation participants, as these youths would be socialized within Canadian culture, and would conceivably – but not necessarily – have some connection to the cultural backgrounds of their parents.

Participants were also recruited to reflect diversity in cultural background, with parents being born and/or raised in East Africa, West Africa, and the Caribbean (specific countries from which participants' parents were from are provided in Tables 1 to 3). These designations are based on the 2006 Statistics Canada census (Statistics Canada 2006a). The sample was not meant to be representative, but to acknowledge the cultural diversity that exists among individuals who can be identified as Black who live in the General Toronto Area (GTA). Therefore, a purposive

sampling method was used to recruit participants. Local youth serving community organizations, churches, and personal contacts were solicited in order to gain contact with participants. I conducted six discussion groups; two with young people of East African background (EA1 and EA2), two with young people of West African background (WA1 and WA2), and two with young people of Caribbean background (CRB1 and CRB2). These groups took the form of open-ended, semi structured discussions, as opposed to more structured approaches associated with focus group research (Myers, 1998).

Participants' ages ranged from 13 to 19 years ( $M = 15.6$ ;  $SD = 1.5$ ). Twenty-nine of the participants were second-generation Canadians, with five participants reporting arrival into Canada after the age of 6, or had both parents' born in North America (therefore third-generation Canadian; see Tables 1 to 3). Despite an attempt to have equal numbers of males and females, the sample was 63% Female. Several participants in EA1 and WA1 reported speaking and/or understanding languages from their parents home countries. Within EA2, all of the female participants wore hijabs. Demographic information for each group is provided in tables one through three.

It is important to note here that I acknowledge that the selection criteria for participants are those that I deemed relevant for the purposes of the study. Therefore the designations of East and West African and Caribbean are by no means suggested as naturally occurring categorizations, or categorizations that the participants would chose for themselves on a day-to-day basis. Therefore when analyzing the data, I made every effort to ensure that the contexts and categorizations deemed relevant by the participants are reflected in the presentation of the analysis (Wetherell, 1998).

## **Procedure**

This project was conducted in part to facilitate the creation of a community program in the GTA for youth of African and Caribbean descent. Participants were told that they were participating in a discussion group concerning the experiences of youth of African and Caribbean heritage in order to make recommendations for this program. This approach was useful for soliciting talk that was not solely concerned with the topic of this thesis, thereby eliciting a larger range of conversation topics within the groups. Parental consent was obtained for participants under the age of 18, and these participants were also required to sign an assent form acknowledging their voluntary participation in the study. Participants 18 years and older signed their own consent forms in compliance with the University of Guelph Ethics Review Board. All participants were given a pizza dinner and public transportation tickets for participation in the discussions. Present at each session was the researcher (RL), as well as a male note-taker. The first note-taker (EB) was present at groups EA1, EA2, WA1 and WA2, and the second note-taker (CO), was present at CRB1 and CRB2. The researcher and note-takers were all visibly identifiable as Black. Within each discussion, I identified myself as a first-generation Canadian, originally from Jamaica. EB introduced himself as a first-generation Canadian from Ghana, and CO introduced himself as a second-generation Canadian of Caribbean background. This was done with the hopes of facilitating rapport with the participants (Mahli et al. 2009). It is however important to note that although the researcher, note-takers, and participants may have had grounds on which to connect due to commonalities in physical appearance and countries of ancestry, there was no guarantee that these commonalities would be mutually or consistently recognized by all parties involved, due to the diversity of experiences and possible identities that each individual could have drawn upon within this research context.

Additionally, the researcher acknowledges the power dynamics implicit in the researcher-participant relationship, specifically, with regards to, but not limited to, differences in age, education level and status as a researcher within the discussions. Efforts were made to ensure that participants felt comfortable expressing themselves as they pleased, acknowledging the constraints of the specific contexts of the discussion groups and conversation topics.

All but one discussion group were conducted within the community settings within which the participants were recruited within the GTA. Specifically, EA1 was conducted at a local university campus that was determined to be most convenient for the study participants. Within each discussion, at least two participants knew each other before coming to the sessions. Therefore each group contained a mix of individuals who were both familiar and unfamiliar to varying degrees with their conversation partners. Sessions lasted between one and two hours each. All discussions were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim, eliciting over 240 pages of text. All names used in the extracts, with the exception of the researcher (RL), and note-takers (EB and CO), are pseudonyms.

### **Analysis**

The results of this study are presented in three main sections. The first section details how participants negotiated and justified their identity choices. By breaking my selected excerpts within this section into three subsections, I will demonstrate how these participants negotiated between a) racial and ethnic labels; and b) racial, ethnic and national labels. The third subsection will outline the how participants of mixed racial-ethnic background negotiated their identities. The second section of my analysis will outline how participants constructed the categories with which they did and did not identify in order to justify their identity choices. This section will be broken down to reflect how participants constructed a) national and ethnic categories and

identities; and b) racial categories and identities. Finally, the third section of my analysis will highlight various other categories and identities that were relevant to the participants, that emerged from the discussions.

It must be noted here that I have chosen to loosely adhere to the definitions of racial, ethnic, and national labels and identity that were outlined in my literature review, in order to maintain consistency with research in this field. That is, the terms race and racial identity are used here to refer to talk concerning people and groups believed to share physical characteristics such as skin colour and facial features. Ethnicity and ethnic identity are used to refer to talk concerning people and groups believed to share cultural traditions and history. More specifically, participants' mention of the countries and cultures outside of Canada that they and their parents are connected to are treated as ethnic terms here. The term national identity is used to refer to talk concerning Canadianness or Canadian identity. Despite my decision to present my data in this manner, I have also been careful to highlight within my analysis points where these terms overlap and where the definitions of each become fuzzy and unclear. In other words, primary focus must be given to how these labels were used by the participants themselves within the contexts that they arose.

### **Negotiation and Justification of Identities**

The following section outlines the various labels that participants drew upon to communicate their identifications. Edwards (1998) argues that social cognition approaches to identity and categorization lack a theory of language and the empirical study thereof. By focusing on how arguments were made to support identity choices within a group setting, I will demonstrate the fluidity of racial and ethnic identifications, and that these categories are not unproblematically defined and accepted. The range of arguments presented will demonstrate that

identity choices for these youths were numerous, and were neither orderly nor predictable as is emphasized in cognitive approaches (Ullah, 1990). Rather than focusing on how identities are primed or activated within particular contexts as emphasized in social-cognitive approaches (Edwards 1998), I will show how these identities are actively negotiated and justified within social interaction. I will also demonstrate how group participants sometimes used ethnic and racial designations interchangeably.

### **Racial and ethnic labels**

#### *Excerpt 1*

RL: No? Okay (1) Alright so I'm gonna switch gears a little bit u::m (.) because a part of (.) yea a part of this discussion is talking about like (0.2) you know (0.2) kids of (0.2) like (.) African and Caribbean background (.) S::o (.) like do you guys identify as Black? Or do you guys identify as (.) like (0.3) you know (0.2) the country that your parents are from? or just Canadian? like (0.6) like when somebody- has anybody ever come up to you and said (0.3) "what's your back [ground"]

Stephen: [Yea ]

RL: or "where're you from?"  
((several participants agreeing))

Stephen: I say I'm African

RL: Okay

Donna: [Same here]

Nathaniel: [Nah ] (0.4) they ask if you're- nah they-they know you're [Black]—

David: [Or just] say  
like- just say I'm [Somalian ]

Donna: [No they'll ] probably know you're [African ]

Nathaniel: [They ask me] I'm  
Black bro—

Donna: They just wa- ( )

Stephen: ((slightly mocking Nathaniel)) I'm Black I'm Black hh hh hh

This excerpt was taken from EA2. Here, RL supplies three categories to the participants: "Black", "the country that your parents are from", and "just Canadian". The categories of "African" and "Caribbean" may have also been supplied by RL, as she mentions that the current discussion specifically concerns youth of these backgrounds. We see that initial responses to

RL's questions are offered as unproblematic and without requiring further explanation. Stephen, who was born and raised in Canada, and who indicated on his demographic questionnaire that both of his parents are from Ethiopia, is the first to offer a response by identifying with the general label of "African", therefore choosing to identify neither by his country of birth, nor the specific country of his parents' birth. Donna, who was also born in Canada and who indicated that her background was Eritrean and Saudi Arabian (see Table 2), agrees that she uses the same label of African. David chooses to use the more specific label of Somalian in response to RL's questions. Nathaniel on the other hand, does not at first offer a specific category label. He instead refers to an abstract category of "they" – which we can take to mean any individual that inquires about his background or identity – as knowing that "you're" Black. By speaking in these general terms, Nathaniel is already offering an explanation as to why he would identify as Black as compared to any other label, before actually stating that he identifies as such. He is also implicating his group members in the category of Black with his statement, "they know you're Black", by using the term "you" instead of "I" or "me". "You" is potentially anyone that can be physically identified as Black, which would include his fellow participants. His response is also offered in a manner that is in opposition to his group members' responses. By saying "Nah", before offering his explanations, Nathaniel downplays their responses as less valid than his, and then begins to offer his explanation before actually stating his identification. He also introduces the idea that identity labels may not be so much a matter of choice, as a matter of how you are perceived by others.

Donna attempts to respond to this by partially adapting Nathaniel's stance that "they" would know something about the person being identified, but what they would know is that the person is African as opposed to Black. This can be seen as an attempt by Donna to resist the

category within which Nathaniel has implicitly placed her. She acknowledges that there may be something identifiable about an individual whose identity is in question, but does not accept that being “Black” is what is identifiable. The exchange continued as follows:

***Excerpt 2***

Rachel: Yea  
Stephen: Black is [Black hh hh hh ]  
Nathaniel: [There’s no distinc- ] like I’ve been called Nigga before though  
RL: Oh yea?=  
Nathaniel: =It’s cool  
RL: hh hh hh It’s cool that you’ve been called Nigger before?=  
Nathaniel: =NAH nah nah (.) like (0.2) [now ]  
RL: [ Yea ]  
Nathaniel: I know like (0.2) before I used to say like (.) “I’m Somalian (.) I’m not”  
(0.2) you know “that’s not gonna happen to m::e”  
RL: Oh Oka::y (0.2) Why not?  
Nathaniel: (0.6) ‘caz just-it’s just the stereotyping (0.2) in my country they say like it  
doesn’t happen (0.4) But it does↑  
RL: That peopl::e  
Nathaniel: (0.2) They do iden-identify us as Niggers  
RL: O::h ok [ok ok ]  
Donna: [K that’s true]  
RL: [S::o- ]  
Nathaniel: [So yea] I’ve been called Nigga so (0.5) so I’m Black

Here Nathaniel continues on with his explanation by going into further detail as to why he identifies as Black. He references a personal experience that has influenced his specific choice of identity. Here, Nathaniel has worked up his category entitlement (Potter, 1996). By bringing up a personal experience of what is recognized in Western society as a highly specific form of racism, Nathaniel legitimizes his position to not only challenge his group members’ responses, but to include them in the category with which he identifies. He further adds to this legitimacy by describing his belief before this incident that it would never happen to him, and that he would previously identify as Somalian. He states that not only was this his personal belief, but a widely held belief in “his country” which we can interpret as Somalia. This further legitimizes the

authority in Nathaniel's assertion, as he invokes an idea of consensus (Potter, 1996) among the people of Somalia. In other words, he argues that this was not a belief held solely by him, but by an entire country of people. He also exercises interest management (Potter, 1996) by arguing that his motivation for identifying as Black is not based on previous identification, or even voluntary identification with this category, but specifically on his experience of racism. By claiming that being called a Nigger would not happen to Somalians, there is a suggestion that it happens only to certain other Black people. Also, by stating that "they" identify "us" as niggers, Nathaniel is once again including his fellow participants, and perhaps Somalians in general, into the category of people who could potentially be identified as such, which would be people who are generally physically identifiable as Black.

Claiming the label of "Black" was also explained in less controversial terms within the focus groups. The following excerpt is from WA1:

***Excerpt 3***

RL: Okay (.) yeah (0.6) Okay so the last<sup>↑</sup> question that I wanted to ask you gu::ys (0.2) is:: (0.2) like (.) do you guys- (.) do you guys (.) like (0.2) do- do (.) when people say "Black" like in terms of like (0.2) "I am Black" or whatever like (0.2) what does that mean to you guys like (0.3) do you guys identi-like (.) do you guys say "I am Black?" or do you guys say like "I'm Ghanaian" or=

Oprah: =No I say Black

Jason: I say [ Black]

Mark: [[I say ] Black]

Monica: [I say Black ]

RL: Okay (.) why hh hhh hh why is that? its like (.) you guys [have- ]

Stephanie: [People are] like "what, where, huh, huh?"=

Carrie: =Ye::a, and they always [say Guyana ]

Stephanie: [If you're not Jamaican] (0.2) if you're not [Jamaican- ( )]

Carrie: [I say Gh- ] I [kno::w<sup>↑</sup> ]

Stephanie: [when I say] Ghanaian everybody [tells me I say Guyana]

Monica: [Do they say Guyana?]  
 Oprah: Yea I'm (.) I'm like n::o (0.2) Ghana (0.2) "wha:.....t?"  
 Female voice 1: ( )  
 RL: Oh so people just don't [know where Ghana is?]  
 Female voice 2: ( ) [I just say African ]  
 Oprah: [Yea ]  
 Stephanie: [They're] like "oh I thought you were from St. Lucia"=  
 RL: =Okay (0.2) so does that mean that (.) like it's just 'caz it's easier?=  
 Oprah: Mmm hmm  
 RL: To say Black?=  
 Oprah: Point simple blank period

RL initially asks two questions at the beginning of the discussion: the meaning of the label "Black" to the participants, and whether they identify themselves as Black. They respond only to the second question, and most of the youths agree that their preferred label is "Black" as opposed to "Ghanaian". Interestingly, none of the participants identified or mentioned the category of Canadian, and it is possible that this may be a direct result of that category not being supplied by RL to the participants. However in excerpt 1, the category of Canadian was supplied to the participants and they did not take it up. It is therefore also possible that the participants of WA1 did not see this as a relevant category within this exchange. When questioned about this later on in the discussion, the participants responded that they did consider themselves to be Canadian, but that they would not identify as such as if asked.

Here, before RL can finish her question, Oprah immediately interjects that she would identify as Black, and other participants follow suit. When probed, their explanations for identifying as Black appear to be as reactionary as Nathaniel's explanations in excerpt 2 and based on a similar phenomenon of being denied a preferred identity. However whereas Nathaniel relates a single but highly impactful experience of overt racism, these participants speak in more general terms about a lack of recognition by interested parties of the country with which they would identify. Oprah's agreement with RL's question about the ease of this choice of identity

gives the impression that the shift between racial and ethnic label's here is unproblematic. In this case, no participant chooses to argue for their identity as Nathaniel did in excerpts 1 and 2. This is despite the fact that we do see some evidence of variation in identity choices. We see that Carrie may have been attempting to identify herself as Ghanaian, but the direction of the conversation puts an end to her statements. Another participant also states that she identifies as "African", which appears to be another response to the described situations where individuals have little knowledge of Ghana as a country. The consensus among the more dominant participants appears to have rendered these alternative identifications irrelevant within this interaction. The justification of one form of identification here has therefore had the effect of minimizing other categories that participants may have voluntarily identified with otherwise.

Excerpts 1, 2 and 3 illustrate the tensions that can exist between racial and ethnic labels and identifications. Although individuals may chose particular labels, the act of being categorized by others, interferes with this autonomy to chose. For the most vocal participants in each group, the racial label is described as one of second choice when the cultural or ethnic label is denied. There was also evidence of lack of consensus within both groups on preferred identity labels.

It is however important to keep in mind that the distinction between racial and ethnic labels made here may not have been evident or even relevant to the participants. Additionally, these examples plainly illustrate how differences in categorization can arise between researcher and research participants. RL suggested several categories to each group, however the participants chose for themselves the categories by which they preferred to be identified. These were not chosen unproblematically, as the participants offered arguments based on previous experiences to justify the labels that they claimed.

## National, ethnic and racial labels

Participants also argued for their choices in identification with regards to categorizations of nationality. Within acculturation research, identification with “ethnic” and “national” groups are usually conceptualized in cultural terms. For example individuals are considered “bi-cultural” when they report connections to both their ethnic culture and the national culture of the country within which they currently live (Phinney, 2003; Phinney & Devich-Navarro, 1997). However, when participants are in a position to justify their identifications, culture is not necessarily a means by which to do so. The following excerpt was taken from EA1 following a discussion about the inequities that exist between people of colour and those identified as White in Canada:

### *Excerpt 4*

- Spence: No like some people (0.3) a big one is like (0.3) they say like “where’re you from?” I’m like “I’m Canadian” you know like “What’s your background?”
- John: Obviously yea [yea]
- Spence: [but ] I feel if it’s a white person when you say Canadian they won’t question [you ]
- RL: [They wont] (.) yea
- John: Wait who asks you? What is your background?=  
Spence: =Like a-like anyone (0.2) like if it’s school or whatever=  
John: Ye::a  
RL: Ok I asked you-  
Spence: [Yea]  
RL: [like ] (.) you know?  
Spence: I’d t-I’d just say usually Canadian or [whatever ]  
RL: [Mmm hm]  
Spence: I’m from Canada but I’m-my background’s Ethiopian but (.) they usually ask for it again (0.2) to find out your background [is ]  
RL: [O::h ] oka::y

At the beginning of this discussion group, Spence had responded to RL’s question of “where’re you from?” by stating “Ethiopia” although he was born in Canada (see excerpt 7). However he now names a specific situation in which the question would receive a different response. Here, Spence is making an argument regarding a difference in treatment between

White Canadians and people of colour in Canada. He is arguing that there is an assumption of foreignness of people of colour as compared to White Canadians, when they are questioned along these lines. Spence reports an experience of the relatively newly studied, but well documented phenomenon of identity denial (Cheryan & Monin, 2005), which has been studied as form of racial microaggression (e.g. Sue, Bucceri, Lin, Nadal & Torino, 2007). He asserts that his response to this questioning would be that he is Canadian, which can be seen as a form of identity assertion, where an individual attempts to prove to others that they are a member of the in-group to which their identity has been denied (Cheryan & Monin, 2005). RL reminds Spence of their earlier exchange, and Spence in turn qualifies his statement by saying that he “usually” identifies as Canadian. Therefore he avoids being potentially accused of inconsistency in this exchange by downplaying the frequency with which he identifies as Canadian. At the same time, he uses this exchange as an opportunity to revise his previous response by now stating that he is “from Canada” but that his background is Ethiopian, thereby placing greater emphasis on his Canadian identity.

Spence uses this exchange to both support his argument about the inequities that exist between White Canadians and people of colour, while simultaneously claiming Canadian identity within the discussion group itself. Within this account, identifying as Canadian has nothing to do with culture or a sense of belonging to country, but is used as a challenge to the power dynamics that he argues exists within the society. Additionally, John’s question regarding who asks these questions brings attention to the idea that responses to this question may also depend on the identity of the asker.

In contrast to Spence’s account, participants in WA2 explained why they would not identify as Canadian. Again, these explanations did not include ideas of culture or customs in the

sense that is usually covered in acculturation research. Rather, the broader national context of Canadian diversity is invoked to justify the identifications chosen within this interaction:

*Excerpt 5*

RL: That's funny (0.2) U::m (0.2) okay so:: (3) like (0.2) so do you guys identify:: (.) like if somebody asks yo::u (1) like how you identify (.) like (0.2) I guess (0.5) different from what's you background but do you guys identify as Black↑ (.) or do you guys identify as (0.2) Ghanaian or Canada::n or=  
Felicia: =Mmm  
Rudy: Ghanaian and [Canadian]  
Cathy: [Yea ]  
RL: [Okay]  
Cathy: [I just] (0.2) I don't really acknowledge Canada that much (0.2) unless I'm going to the states  
RL: Okay  
Felicia: hh[hh]  
Damion: [hh] [hh hh hh hh hh]  
RL: [HA HA ]  
Cathy: Yea to [me ( ) ]  
Rudy: [Yea Canada] (0.3) and the sta::tes (0.2) is two different things=  
Felicia: =Yea=  
RL: =Oka::y  
Rudy: Cuz the sta::tes↑ (.) like where I grew up↑(0.3) it was Black (.) White (.) Mexican↓=  
Damion: =Yea  
RL: [Right]  
Rudy: [So ]  
RL: Okay (0.6) Okay  
Rudy: And the Black people↑ (0.3) we would just all hang out toge[the::r ]  
RL: [Uh huh]  
Rudy: it doesn't matter if you're like (.) Jamaican (.) they call themselves African [American]  
Damion: [African ] American=  
Cathy: =I don't get [the ]  
Felicia: [Yea]  
Cathy: [difference with that ]  
Rudy: [They don't call themselves]  
Felicia: [Yea ]  
Rudy: Caribbean (0.3) or like [Ghanaian]  
Felicia: [Mm hmm]  
Rudy: or anything like that=  
RL: =Okay

Rudy: Yea (0) But he::re↑ (0.3) they're (.) like "oh I'm from Ghana::" (0.3) or "I'm from Jamaica::" (.) that's what they say=  
 Damion: =They're proud to say it, [yea ]  
 Rudy: [They] don't [say ] "I'm African American"=  
 RL: [mm hmm]  
 Felicia: =Mmm hmm  
 RL: Or [African Canadian ] Yea  
 Rudy: [African Canadian]  
 Felicia: Mmm hmm Ghana  
 RL: [Okay]  
 Cathy: [But ] down here no one likes to acknowledge Canada basically↓  
 Rudy: [Yea]  
 Felicia: [Yea] That's true  
 Cathy: No:: one likes to acknowledge Canada

Here as in previous excerpts, RL introduces several categories on which participants could potentially draw in order to identify themselves. Felicia shows some hesitation, but Rudy offers up the new hyphenated category of Ghanaian-Canadian. Cathy, on the other hand, begins to justify her lack of identification with Canada, and continues to do so towards the end of the exchange. Her mention of the United States, a different national context, opens the door for her fellow participants to speculate on the differences between the US and Canada with regards to national identification. Here, participants tap into a common societal discourse of Canadian multiculturalism vs. the US American "melting pot" (e.g. Marcus, 2007; Peach, 2009; Persichilli, 2009). Rudy, who works up her category entitlement (Potter, 1996) by stating that she grew up in a particular area in the US, first describes this area as having little diversity with regards to the ethnic or racial labels that individuals use to describe themselves. She compares this to Canada, where individuals identify themselves based on various nationalities. She also refers specifically to Black people, who she describes as all adopting the label of "African-American", something that she describes as not being done in Canada. There is some empirical evidence to support this claim, as Boatswan and Lalonde (2000) found that in a university student sample only 18 per cent of their participants preferred the label of "African-Canadian" as one of their top three

preferred labels, as compared to 63 per cent who preferred the label “Black”. Cathy concludes the discussion by stating, “no one likes to acknowledge Canada”. She moves from speaking in personal terms initially, to broad terms where she implicates people in general as not acknowledging Canada in their identifications.

This excerpt demonstrates the ways in which participants can draw on broader societal contexts in negotiating their identifications. The idea of Canadian multiculturalism was drawn on here to explain lack of identification with Canada. Cathy could have given any number of other explanations, such as not feeling connected to Canadian culture, or feeling more immersed in Ghanaian culture. However within this exchange, rather than personalizing her reasons for identifying in a particular way, Cathy invokes consensus among the Canadian public (Potter, 1996), thereby framing her actions as a social norm. Whether this means that Cathy feels more or less connected to Canada or to Ghana is beyond the scope of this analysis, however it does shed light on how wider social context influences the ways in which individuals chose to express their identities.

In the following excerpt from EA2, Nathaniel also draws on broader national and international contexts to support his arguments for a lack of desirability of identifying as Somalian:

***Excerpt 6***

Nathaniel: But it's a hassle though (.) you have to say you're (.) you say you're Somalian and then they're suspicious all of a sudden-

((Text omitted; group gets interrupted by outsider at this point))

Nathaniel: What was I talking about?

RL: You're saying like=

Nathaniel: =O::h I was (.) oh=

RL: =People get suspic- hh hh

Nathaniel: Caz-

Kimberly: They [do]  
 Nathaniel: [we] (0.2) we have some (0.4) we have some people in our country  
 that (0.3) bring a bad name (0.2) to the country=  
 RL: =Mm hmm  
 Nathaniel: There's Islamist insurgents  
 Female voice: [Somalian pirates? ]  
 Nathaniel: [and they think we're] terrorists too you know?  
 RL: Right [yea]  
 Stephen: [Yea]  
 Nathaniel: So=  
 Female voice: =[True ]  
 Stephen: [Better] to call ourselves Canadian (0.3) We're peaceful  
 Nathaniel: They start bo::thering you and stuff [especially]  
 Stephen: [Yea ]  
 Nathaniel: at the border (.) you're tryna cross-

Nathaniel describes identifying as Somalian as a “hassle”. He goes on to explain that there is a subset of people within Somalia that give the Somalian diaspora an undesirable reputation. He argues that this reputation in turn leaves people who identify to as Somolian open to harassment and prejudicial treatment. Within this excerpt he gives the example of crossing the US-Canadian border, and immediately following this exchange, several participants within the group relate their past experiences of racism at the hands of Canadian and US authority figures. Stephen uses this as an opportunity to highlight why identifying as Canadian is more desirable. He contrasts Canadians as “peaceful” as compared to Nathaniel’s description of some Somalians in Somalia as violent. Whereas Nathaniel makes reference to the inconvenience of others’ negative generalizations about Somalia, Stephen makes a positive generalization about Canadians and uses this as an argument for identifying as such. Note that within excerpt 1, Stephen identified as “African”. Therefore his advocacy for identifying as Canadian here is another demonstration of how fluid the use of ethnic, racial and national labels can be.

Additionally, whereas in excerpts 1 and 2, Nathaniel was making an argument for identifying as Black, here he is making an argument for *not* identifying as Somalian. This is

despite his indirect identification as Somalian here, where he states that “they think we’re terrorists too”. Here there is an acknowledgement that he can be recognized as Somalian, and discriminated against because of this. Later on in the conversation when the participants give accounts of their experiences of discrimination, we learn that this is due in part to the recognisability of their last names as Muslim or Somalian.

Finally, similar to Spence’s account in excerpt 4, experiences of prejudice are drawn on here to make a particular argument to support identifying as Canadian. However whereas Spence related his choice to claim Canadian identity as a trigger for differential treatment, Stephen argues that the use of Canadian identity will assist in avoiding incidents of prejudice.

Excerpts 4, 5 and 6 demonstrate the various ways in which participants justified their choices of national and ethnic labels. Claims related to the actual cultural features of these categories were minimal within these accounts. Taken together, the excerpts demonstrate the role that immediate and wider social contexts can play in choice of identification, and again emphasize that these choices are not straightforward and unproblematic.

### **Participants with “mixed” racial-ethnic heritage**

Two participants within my discussion groups indicated that they were of mixed racial-ethnic background. The term “racial-ethnic” is used here to signify that both racial and ethnic terms were used by one of the participants to describe her background. The following two excerpts will highlight the ways in which these particular participants justified their choices of identification within their discussion groups.

In the following excerpt from EA1, a question regarding cultural background is quickly transformed into one of current identity for one participant:

*Excerpt 7*

RL: Okay (1) um:: (3) so:: (.) my next question is (.) um (4) u::h (3) okay so:: (0.2) you guys are a::ll (0.2) u::m (0.2) East African (0.2) decent (.) right?  
(everyone nods)

RL: Yea? Where're you guys from?=  
Spence: =Ethiopia  
RL: Yea, Ethiopia::  
Eric: Eretria  
RL: Eretria::  
Sharrie: [Ethiop-]  
John: [Ethiop-] I'm the same (.) Ethiopia  
RL: Yea (.) where're you (.) you're \$just looking at me blankly like\$-  
Danielle: OH (.) Yea:: (0.3) well my dad's (.) mixed↓  
RL: Okay  
John: What is he?  
Danielle: Point (.) no (0.2) one point five- he IS He's GREEK (0.2) caz his side of the family is white  
RL: [Okay]  
Danielle: [So:: ] (0.2) and he doesn't like when I just say I'm full Ethiopian so-

Within this exchange, there appears to be an unspoken understanding of the purpose of the question “where're you guys from?” as it was explained to the participants before hand that the discussion was surrounding the experiences of youth of African background. In addition, similar to the previous excerpts, RL supplies the category of “East African” to the participants, which further indicates the expectations of this exchange. However all of the participants within this group were born in Canada or arrived before age 5, and their response to the question could have potentially been “Canada” and for Sharrie and John who were born outside of Canada, the respective countries within which they were born. However they respond by naming the countries within which their parents were born and/or raised. It is therefore likely that the immediate social context has had some influence on the responses elicited within this interaction.

Notably, Danielle appears to hesitate when it is her turn to answer the question, and when she does, she does not immediately describe her background in the same manner as her fellow

participants. She instead references her father's mixed heritage, and upon prompting by John, attempts to express herself in terms of fractions. Danielle's hesitation is indicative of the difficulty that she is having in fulfilling the requirement of the question, which has now been partially shaped by the responses of her group members. As it is apparent that both of her parents are not of a single racial or ethnic background, she cannot state that she is "from" one specific place in a manner that is similar to her fellow participants. As a result, a question of cultural background is instead transformed into one of current ethnic identity, as indicated by her explanation of why she does not identify as "full Ethiopian". She specifically names her father as the reason for her inability to use this designation, not only because, as she explains, he is part Greek and part Ethiopian, but also because of his described disapproval of her past attempts to identify with just one culture. She therefore explains why she does not identify as fully Ethiopian here, while at the same time puts forward that this is an identity that she may have utilized in the past, and that she could potentially claim if not for the barriers named. Also, she does not describe herself as mixed here, as she consistently makes reference to her father's background and not her own. For example she could have stated that her grandparents were of particular backgrounds, thereby relating those backgrounds directly to herself. However immediately following this exchange, she does go on to identify herself as "one point five", as means of indicating that she is part Ethiopian and part Greek.

Additionally, within this exchange, Danielle describes one side of her father's family as both "Greek" and "White". She does something similar slightly later on in the discussion – beyond what has been presented here – by stating that "his Dad is Greek, and his mom is Black", to describe her father's heritage. She therefore uses racial and ethnic terms interchangeably within her description. Note also that the term Greek could also be seen as a label of nationality,

rather than a label of culture or ethnicity. Danielle's description of her father above, demonstrates the fluidity of using racial and cultural or ethnic or national labels in everyday speech. Here there is no distinction made between racial and ethnic labels for these descriptive purposes.

Within CRB2, Andrea, who noted on her demographic questionnaire that her mother was Canadian by birth with Hungarian heritage, and her father was born and raised in Guyana, was also placed into a position of having to explain her choice of identification:

***Excerpt 8***

- RL: Andrea what do yo::u identify as?  
Andrea: Black and White (.) and I really get- really irritates me when some people say “oh you're (.) you're more Black than you're White” (.) but I usually get “you're more (.) more White than you are Black↑”  
RL: hhhh [hh]  
Andrea: [hh] but (0.3) like I- it just- (0.2) when someone says (0.2) “oh Andrea you're more White than you are Black” I'm just like (0.2) <“but I'm Black and I'm White”> and (3) some people tell me like (0.2) when I say that (.) I have an issue with that they kind of say “ohh well (0.3) you kinda (.) if you think about it really good you know you shouldn't (0.2) just think (0.2) you're just Black or just White you kinda have the best of both worlds” and at the same time it's like (0.2) but you also get discrimination from both sides right↑-  
RL: Okay=  
Andrea: =Caz you after (0.2) like my Black friends “oh well Andrea, you know (0.2) you're so (Black-)” or they say something like (0.3) I need (0.3) I feel like (0.4) when people talk to me its like I have to be either Black (.) or White-  
RL: [O::h]  
Andrea: [I cant] be both↑

Here, Andrea launches into an explanation of her choice of identification without any additional prompting from RL or anyone else within the group. Within her account, she makes reference to what appears to be her past experiences of having individuals place more emphasis on one of the categories with which she identifies over the other. She states repeatedly that she identifies as both “Black and White”, indicating the equal emphasis that she places on both identifications. This emphasis is in opposition to what appears to be the viewpoint of whomever

she has argued with that these categories – Black and White – are mutually exclusive. This idea of mutual exclusivity is further revealed with the statement that because she is both Black and White, she has “the best of both worlds”, and by her stated frustration that to other people she can’t “be both”. It indicates an understanding, at least on the part of the individuals with whom she has had these conversations, of a clear-cut separation between the two categories. Andrea’s choice of identification is further explicated later on in the exchange when RL asks her to elaborate on why she feels that people pressure her to identify as either Black or White:

***Excerpt 9***

- Andrea: Well becaus::e (0.2) like (0.2) I don’t have (0.2) I (0.5) like I only have um:: (1) two (0.3) well (.) yea (.) two mix friends↑ (0.2) and it’s kinda the same thing↑=  
 RL: =Mm hmm=  
 Andrea: =like (.) with all of us (0.3) so like (0.3) majority of my friends they’re either (0.2) Black or they’re White (0.4) and (0.2) sometimes (.) when I’m over like (.) with (.) when I’m going out with like (0.2) my Black friends I guess (0.2) like if they ask me to go somewhere and I go with them (0.3) and then I’m just (0.4) I (.) I just (0.3) as (0.4) they assume that I’m presenting myself as (0.3) I’m Black like (0.3) I don’t know (0.3) I just (0.3) I feel with like when I meet another light skin (1) person (0.2) or a mixed person (.) it’s just like (0.2) they associate themselves as either (0.2) they’re Black or their White (0.2) [I           ] I haven’t met (0.2) I’ve only met one girl that’s like (0.2) “oh I’m  
 RL: [Oh ka::y]  
 Andrea: both Black and White you know I can (0.2) I can (0.2) fit into both places↑”  
 RL: Mm hmm=  
 Andrea: =and (0.3) yea

Here Andrea states that when she is out with a group of friends who she identifies as her “Black” friends, they assume that she is presenting herself as Black only. She also states that other people of mixed racial background do chose to identify as either Black or White, and that it is rare to find someone similar to her who appears to consistently identify as both. By making this comparison, the message that is relayed is that her choice of identification is unique. Within her account, she presents five possible identifications from which she could chose: “Black”, “White”, “Mixed” “Light-skinned”, and “Black and White”. Although she indirectly identifies as

mixed or light-skinned with the statement, “when I meet another light skin person or a mixed person,” she does not use these terms when responding directly to the question of how she identifies. Generally speaking, the term “mixed” implies an unproblematic combination of its constituent parts. However, Andrea’s identification as both Black and White implies an enduring difference and separation between the two categories, and yet a strong and equal identification with both. In addition, Andrea emphasizes that the choice to identify as both Black and White is strictly her own, whereas in excerpt 7, Danielle pointed to her father as one reason that she cannot claim a singular identity. Andrea also does not invoke cultural or ethnic categories as Danielle did, which are also possible categories on which she could have drawn.

These examples demonstrate the difficulties that participants of mixed racial and/or ethnic background, experienced when asked to identify themselves in a particular way. For Danielle, the difficulties arose within the immediate social context, whereas Andrea describes the difficulties that she has experienced in the past. The nuances of these exchanges are not something that can be captured on traditional ethnic identity scales, as the rationale behind these scales is that a participant has one particular identity or reference group in mind when they fill out the scale. Recent research by Townsend, Markus and Bergseiker (2009), brings attention to the difficulties that biracial and multiracial individuals within the United States face when asked to fill in surveys and demographic questionnaires in which identification options are restricted to singular racial or ethnic categories. Danielle and Andrea’s experiences as illustrated in these excerpts exemplify such difficulties, save for the fact that both participants had the opportunity to justify their chosen identifications within this context.

The preceding excerpts clearly demonstrate the social nature of identifying with categories that are defined by researchers as racial, ethnic, and national. Within each discussion,

at least one participant was in a position of having to justify her/his choice of identification. This justification was either based on the current group dynamics, or on reports of past experiences. Wider social context, both national and international, were also drawn upon within these accounts, emphasizing the importance of explicitly considering contextual details in studies of identification.

### **Constructing and Identifying with Categories**

As previously outlined, social-cognitive approaches to racial and ethnic identity take for granted the idea that there is consensus among researchers and research participants about the nature and content of categories (Augoustinos, 2005; Zagefka, 2008). This section demonstrates how category content was constructed within the discussion groups. In some cases, participants expressed agreement regarding the characterization of the category in question, whereas in other cases there was disagreement. This section will demonstrate the various ways that individuals constructed the characteristics and meanings of the groups with which they did and did not identify, in order to perform particular actions within the conversation.

#### **Constructing national and ethnic categories and identities**

National and ethnic categories were drawn upon in order to justify particular identifications. In the excerpts below, the content of these categories is constructed in order to support these justifications.

In the following excerpt, the participants within CRB1 describe why they do not identify as Canadian. This sentiment is similar to that captured in Excerpt 5, and was a fairly prominent theme throughout all 6 of the focus groups. As a lead up to this discussion, the participants were again asked by RL what their response to the question of “what are you” would be. This excerpt occurs after a brief debate regarding the meaning of the question, where Alicia states that she

would describe herself as “what [her] parents are”, i.e. the ethnic or national category that her parents identify with. Here, the participants characterize Canadian culture in a way that supported their stated lack of identification with this category:

**Excerpt 10**

Alicia: It's not ME: who live there but I wouldn't be like I'm Canadian like (0.2) it doesn't make sense to me it doesn't even make [sense ]  
RL: [Why not?]  
Alicia: Cuz like (0.2) PEOPLE ALWAYS ask like-  
Stacey: [What is Canadian ]  
Alicia: [Oh what's Canadian culture?]  
Shawn: I don't [really ]  
Stacey: [what is Canadian ] and what is [American ] if you take  
Alicia: [like (.) it's not a culture]  
Stacey: it in [Canada and America] are like the only two countries where it's  
Alicia: [its like yea ]  
Stacey: just really (.) diverse=  
Shawn: =Yea=  
Stacey: =there's no (0.2) one [race- ]  
Alicia: [caz no one] says they're Canadian like—  
Stacey: where everywhere else (0.2) [you can identify ]  
Shawn: [Yo I don't really catch on] when people say  
[what are you ] hh hh  
Stacey: [you, you can see] what you know (0.2) like, [Jamaicans are Black]  
RL: [You don't catch- ]  
Shawn: I don't catch on when they say [what are you]  
Stacey: [Chinese are ] Asian or whatever or however  
you describe them, like=  
RL: =Okay

Alicia acknowledges that to identify as what her parents are may not be completely logical as she has not actually lived “there” – “there” being the countries within which her parents were born. However she describes identifying as Canadian as even more illogical. Her description of why she does not identify as Canadian is interrupted by Stacey, who attributes the inability to identify as Canadian to the lack of a clear definition of what Canadian culture looks like. Alicia then goes from questioning the definition of Canadian culture, to outright denying that such a culture exists. The two then work to construct Canadian culture, and interestingly,

American culture, as being indefinable, due to the racial or cultural diversity that exists within these countries. Stacey suggests that in other countries, a particular race is representative of that country, “Jamaicans are Black, Chinese are Asian”, but that this is not the case for Canada due to the diversity that exists. Identifying as a particular nationality is therefore constructed in both cultural and racial terms within this account. Culturally speaking, Canadianess is indefinable, therefore one cannot identify with something that does not exist. Racially speaking, other countries have a specific race that is clearly associated with that country; Canada does not have this, and therefore it is even more difficult to define what a Canadian looks like or is. These participants do not construct Canada as undesirable to identify with due to, for example, the cultural practices of Canadians that they do not desire to take on, or even perhaps due to feeling marginalized from Canadian culture. They instead construct Canadian culture as a non-entity that an individual cannot claim as it does not exist.

Additionally as mentioned earlier, the idea that “no one says they’re Canadian” was a common theme that emerged within these discussions, and was used here to justify why these individual participants would not identify as Canadian themselves. Here, talk of a multicultural Canada was drawn upon as it was in excerpt 5, however this time the United States was also included in this description.

Interestingly, there was no mention here of White people, or people of European ancestry, being identifiable as, or representative of Canada or America. This is however something that is fairly prevalent and well documented in the research literature, as Whites are seen as prototypical representations of these countries (Devos & Ma, 2008; Yogeeswaran & Dasgupta, 2010). This idea did however arise in at least two of the other discussion groups. For

example in the following excerpt, Danielle explains why she would rather identify as Black than White:

***Excerpt 11***

Danielle: I'd rather be Black than White (0.2) honestly↑ (0.2) I'm not even trying to be racist [but] (0.5) I dunno (0.2) I wouldn't wanna be White  
John: [ ( ) ]  
RL: Why?  
Danielle: Beca::use (.) it's s::o (.) plain (.) they don't have anything to their cultu::re  
John: Yea=  
Danielle: =It's like (.) "I'm Canadia::n (0.2) I eat pizza::"  
RL: hh [hhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh ]  
Danielle: [like (0.2) it's like that (.)] I dunno  
RL: So pizza [Wasn't the right thing] to buy today? [hhhhh ]  
Danielle: [When people↑ ] [When people get like] when people get like (.) racist↑ (0.2) I actually think it's s::o funny↑=  
RL: =Okay=  
Danielle: =It's like (.03) I dunno you're just jealous [that I'm Black] and you're  
RL: [hhhhh ]  
Danielle: White

Here, Danielle equates being Canadian with being White when she discusses what she first refers to as White culture, as Canadian culture. This is therefore another example of how these terms are used interchangeably within everyday interaction. She also uses the same strategy that Stacey and Alicia use within excerpt 10 to justify her chosen identification. She constructs Canadian culture as plain and boring, as almost non-existent ("they don't have anything to their culture"). On the other hand, Danielle constructs Blackness, or Black culture as something that is enviable to individuals who are not Black, and racism is treated as an extension or result of this envy. Her constructions therefore served to support her choice of identity. Additionally, Danielle clearly identifies herself as Black here, whereas in excerpt 7, she experienced difficulties in expressing her identity in terms of cultural background. Perhaps for Danielle, the use of the racial term within this context was less difficult as she was not asked to describe her background,

whereas in excerpt 7, the inquiry into where she was from required more attention to the actual cultural or ethnic make-up of her family.

Interestingly, the same line of reasoning that Stacey and Alicia drew on in excerpt 10 to construct Canada as too diverse to be identified with, was used to legitimize their identifications with the countries and cultures that they claim later on in the discussion. In this excerpt, it is Alicia's identity that is being debated:

***Excerpt 12***

Alicia: People are like o:h, "you're lying you're not Cuban" and I'm like "oh because you're Cuban (.) you don't have to be Hispanic Cuban" [there's]  
RL: [Yea ]  
Alicia: Black people who lived in Cuba (.) [you]don't have to be like=  
RL: [Yea]  
Stacey: =I kno::w they [don't get that]  
Alicia: [The other thi-] "oh why aren't you like (0.2) mixed" or like (0.2) you know? [And I'd be like] that's how [it is ]  
Stacey: [Like there's- ] [just like] there's White (.) Jamaicans and there's White Africans (.) like they are Black like Hispanic peopl::e hh hh hhh

Whereas in Excerpt 10, Stacey uses the generalization that, "Jamaicans are Black..." in order to emphasize her point that it is difficult to identify as Canadian because there is no one race that represents Canada, here she uses the particularization (Billig, 1985) of "[j]ust like there's White Jamaicans...they're Black, like, Hispanic people" to support Alicia's expressed frustration of being denied a Cuban identity. She singles out White Jamaicans and Black Hispanics in order to argue that assumptions of racial homogeneity within these nations are incorrect. Therefore to deny the validity of Alicia's chosen identifications because she is not visibly identifiable as what her interlocutor imagines a Cuban to look like is also erroneous. Both participants draw on the idea of diversity to support Alicia's identification with a specific group here, whereas before, this diversity was used to dismiss identification with a particular group.

They construct Jamaica and Cuba as diverse in order to justify Alicia's identification with Cuba, whereas before, they had constructed Canada as diverse in order to justify their lack of identification with this country.

### **Constructing racial categories and identities**

The content of racial categories were also called into question within the discussion groups. The following excerpt demonstrates an instance where one group member's construction of a particular group draws disagreement from at least one other group member. RL asks the participants in CRB2 if they believe that community programs specific to Black youth were needed. The following discussion occurs in response to this question:

#### ***Excerpt 13***

- O'Neil: Yes  
RL: Why?  
O'Neil: Because (0.2) we're like a minority↑=  
RL: =Okay  
O'Neil: there's (0.3) I'd say↑ (3) as (0.3) being a Black kid myself (.) there's not a lot of (0.2) things that we do have to do (0.3) after scho::ol if (.) we're not in school and what not if we're not playing sports it's like (.) nothing=  
RL: =Okay=  
O'Neil: =so (2) yea it would be nice (0.2) to have a program so you could do something with your spare time ( )=  
RL: =Okay (0.3) So- were yo-were you saying that like there is nothing that you can do like (.) oth-like that's available for Black kids other than playing sports and stuff like that? Or  
Brittany: Just cuz you're Black doesn't mean you can't join a program  
RL: But [that's- ]  
O'Neil: [You can] but there's not a lot of programs out there for Black youths (0.2) or specifically (0.4) or TO their liking should I say  
Brittany: To their like-well uh (0.2) I think that (0.3) bu- for black kids specifically ye::a (0.2) I agree with that but to their liking no because (0.2) you don't (0.2) cant speak for each (0.2) black person as a whole=  
O'Neil: =Nahh, well (0.3) I'm speaking from (.) myself personally [and ]  
Brittany: [Your] perspective=  
O'Neil: =and my friends  
Brittany: Ok there you go=  
O'Neil: =Yea (2) not for every black youth [but ] (0.2) from a couple people I've

RL: [Okay]  
O'Neil: talked to

The category construction within this excerpt is much more subtle than previous examples. Here, the category in question is “Black Youth”. O’Neil, who works up category entitlement by identifying himself as a “Black kid”, provides a description of Black youth as being in need of particular resources and activities. Black youths are therefore initially constructed as being at a deficit due to lack of access to resources outside of sporting activities. O’Neil also supports his arguments by using the terms “we” and “we’re” to invoke consensus among this group. In other words, he depicts the needs of Black Youth as he describes them, as mutually agreed upon by group members.

It is however clear that Brittany does not agree with O’Neil’s characterizations. She challenges his position at almost every turn, first by questioning the validity of his statements, and then by questioning his authority to speak on behalf of Black youth in general. Brittany’s contributions serve to undermine a particular depiction of this group, while at the same time offering an alternative depiction that there is no deficit experienced by Black youth. Although she agrees with O’Neil that there may not be enough programs that are designed specifically for this group, she asserts that they cannot be sure that Black youths do not like the programs that already exist. In other words, she is suggesting that there are options already available to Black youths. The two descriptions are therefore in direct opposition to each other, and O’Neil is consequently left to revise his position. Whereas he begins by creating a general picture of the experiences of Black youth, he ends by presenting his initial characterizations as experienced specifically by him and his friends. The overall result of this exchange is that no general picture is presented about this group.

Contrasting ideas of category content were not only present within discussion groups, but across groups as well. Specific to the category of “Black”, participants discussed it as not being a relevant category at all, or as one that had specific, albeit difficult to articulate meanings attached to it. The following excerpt is taken from EA2. The discussion occurs following RL’s question of whether the females in the group identify as Black or Somalian. Three of the girls including Rachel were adamant about their dislike for identifying as Black:

*Excerpt 14*

- Rachel: I don’t get why you have to categorize yourself by skin colour (0.2) And PLUS (0.3) if you’re Black your Black has a (0.2) like uh paper (.) or like a crist-Black is a colour [(0.3) it’s not ] yo::ur nationality neither is your  
RL: [Yea it’s not a-]  
Rachel: background (0.2) So it doesn’t make sense=  
RL: Right

Here, Rachel reduces the racial category of Black to the colour/shade that the word also represents. She suggests that to apply the word Black as a means of categorization is invalid because in reality, no one is actually the literal colour of Black. She therefore uses a similar strategy to that of Stacey and Alicia in excerpt 10, and Danielle in excerpt 11, by characterizing the category that she chooses not to identify with as a non-entity. She then compares this characterization to two concepts that she presents as more valid with regards to how one identifies oneself. Nationality and background are presented as more tangible means of identification. Rachel therefore rejects identification by skin colour, on the grounds that there is no meaning behind this type of classification, while at the same time suggesting that identification by other means is more acceptable.

By contrast, in CRB1, the participants did attempt to attribute a more qualitatively significant meaning to the category of Black.

**Excerpt 15**

RL: Um:: (0.3) so (0.3) i-ok so you guys told me what you think (.) people think Black is but what do you guys think Black is?  
((3 second pause))  
Michael: Respecting your culture you could say  
RL: What's [your culture? ]  
Alicia: [Yea like what] you are you know=  
Michael: =They, uh—  
Stacey: Yea:: your [backgro::und]  
Michael: [see your- ] ACCEPTING WHAT IT IS YOU KNOW↑  
Alicia: Yea:: [like ]  
RL: [Which] is what?  
Michael: Accepting that you know↑  
Stacey: You're Black

It is clear here that these participants experience some difficulty in answering the question. For example when RL asks Michael to clarify what is meant by “your culture”, no clear definition is given. Interestingly, Stacey associates the term “background” with Blackness, which is in opposition to how this term was used by Rachel in the previous excerpt. Whereas Rachel argued that Blackness is not a part of, or does not define one’s background, here Stacey associates one with the other. Additionally, Michael brings up the idea of acceptance, and when RL seeks clarification on this as well, a clear response is also not given right away. However shortly afterwards within the same discussion, Michael is able to specify an aspect of Blackness that to him, requires acceptance:

**Excerpt 16**

Michael: ((text omitted)) But then after (0.4) but still you have to accept that you were a slave (0.2) like you know sometime in your history your family (.) you-your ancestors were slaves=  
RL: =mm hmm  
Michael: People don't get that people are like oh “no no no that's not me” [oh- ]  
Alicia: [Oh yea]  
[they say ] oh no I'm- “I'm”-  
Michael: [You know?]  
Shawn: [You don't- YOU DON'T know that ]  
Alicia: [a different background (0.2) I hate when they do that]

Shawn: You don't know that  
RL: They're what? They're whatever [back- ]  
Alicia: [They're] like, "oh no I'm from The  
Michael: [It's bullshit]  
Alicia: [Bahamas ] or wherever or like-

Here Michael makes reference to the historical period of trans-Atlantic slavery, which would be a common thread for most phenotypically Black individuals who are indeed descendants of enslaved Africans brought to North and South America and the Caribbean. Michael indicates that some people take issue with what he states as a general truth for anyone identifiable as Black. Alicia also expresses frustration at the experience of having these individuals deny their connection to this point in history. Alicia and Michael's descriptions indicate that they do not find whatever other identifications that these individuals may draw on as valid. This is in direct opposition to Rachel's argument in excerpt 14, where she sees other means of classification as more valid than calling oneself Black. Additionally Rachel's Somalian background likely means that her ancestry cannot be traced to enslaved Africans brought to the Western world, and is therefore likely not a relevant point of reference for her. This is also true for Nathaniel who willingly identified as Black in excerpt 1, and for the participants of West African background, many of whom also identified as Black. Michael's characterization of what must be accepted when one identifies as Black is therefore clearly debatable.

Within this exchange, Shawn is the only participant who appears to disagree with Michael's point, and goes on to elaborate that no one is able to tell whether their specific ancestors were enslaved Africans. Shawn's position is interesting considering that he is the only first-generation Canadian participant in the group, born and raised in Jamaica, and would arguably have greater ability to trace his direct ancestry than the other participants in the group.

Excerpts 13 through 16 clearly demonstrate the multiple characterizations that can exist for particular groups. These examples illustrate that category content and the nature of the category itself is often debatable among individuals who may or may not lay claim to these identities. They emphasize the need for greater attention to be given to how researchers chose to address issues of identity related to racial and ethnic and national categorizations.

### **Other Categories and Identities of Relevance**

The preceding sections have dealt largely with – researcher defined and participant elaborated – racial, ethnic, and national labels and categories. However these were not the only types of categories that arose within the discussion groups. The following section will highlight the other categories that arose most often within our discussions. These categories sometimes directly overlapped with racial and ethnic categories, and sometimes were discussed as stand-alone phenomena. They included discussions surrounding gender, social class, neighbourhood and religion. Through bringing attention to these parts of the discussions, I wish to further highlight the complexity of identity and experiences of my participants. It demonstrates the multiple sources of identity for these young people that, depending on the context, can be discrete, overlapping and sometimes contradictory.

It must be noted that the categories are treated here as they emerged from the discussions, and must not be taken as conclusive evidence for all of the categories that were relevant to these participants and youth who may be similar to them. Nor do I wish to promote the idea that these categories are discrete and should be teased apart at the researcher's convenience in order to support traditional hypothesis testing in social-cognitive approaches. I instead wish to highlight that studies that only address the categories and identities deemed relevant by the researcher can miss other important factors that contribute to the lived experiences of their participants.

## Race and gender

The following excerpt is specific to the overlapping categories of race and gender. The excerpt is taken from CRB1, and occurs during a conversation about interracial dating, specifically between White females and Black males.

### *Excerpt 17*

- Stacey: I can actually share because (0.2) okay (0.2) like (.) um today like thre::e or four of my friends (0.2) um they're guys they were talking about how um (.) why they don't like to date Black girls, or-  
[[((Michael sucks his teeth))<sup>i</sup>]
- RL: [These are Black guys? ]
- Stacey: Huh? They're Black guys [talking] about (.) they're talking about the
- RL: [Yea ]
- Stacey: differences between Black girls (.) and White girls↓ (0.2) and just like ho::w (.) u::m (0.2) Black girls (2) what's the (.) what did he say?  
[I know he said ] (.) he's like (0.2) White girls like (0.2) they (.) they care
- Alicia: [They're difficult ]
- Stacey: about you [like ] whatever (.) [they know how to express their feelings]
- RL: [Okay]
- Alicia: [Yeah and they think about you (.) hhhh ]
- Stacey: and Black girls are more hard co::re I guess (.) in a way?
- RL: [Okay ]
- Michael: [Mmm hmm]
- Stacey: And I agree with tha::t (.) because you see in [my:: ] personal opinion
- Alicia: [That's true]
- Stacey: is White girls-
- Michael: They don't friggin cry [as much]
- Stacey: [you see-]
- Alicia: Ye::::a
- RL: W-Wait (.) hold on
- Stacey: Kay see like with u::m (0.3) White girls and Asian girls especially↑ (0.3) they're more submissive (0.3) so they'll do anything (0.2) that (.) they tell them to (.) whereas Black girls [( ) "who the hell] you talking to though-"
- Shawn: [hh hh hh hh ]
- Alicia: Caz like [say- ]
- Stacey: [like ] that right?
- Michael: Mm [hm:::]
- Stacey: [Like ] I d-(0.2) I don't mean like (0.2) in a ghetto way or anything like tha::t but it's just like (.) Black girls I think (.) we think more for ourselves (.) we think about (.) our (2) I can't even think of a word right now-

Stacey's description of her friend's depiction of Black girls and White girls is notably favourable towards White girls and negative towards Black girls. Although the term "hard core" isn't markedly negative in and of itself, the use of this description as an explanation for not liking to date Black girls gives the impression that it is indeed negative. Stacey states that she agrees with what she described her friend as saying, however her explanation for why she agrees is vastly different from what she states her friend has said. She begins by qualifying what she is about to say as her "personal opinion". By not presenting these stereotypes as facts, but as an opinion, Stacey opens up an opportunity to express herself without being challenged. Rather than framing her descriptions of White and Asian girls positively, in the same manner that she described her friend as having done, she reworks the described emotional sensitivity of White girls, (and includes Asian girls in this description) as a weakness, as something undesirable and inferior to the nature of Black girls. Stacey self-identifies as Black within this description with the use of the pronoun "we" and when she goes on to describe Black women's contrasted lack of emotional sensitivity, it is stated in a positive manner; as assertiveness and self-assurance rather than as cold or "hard core". Stacey draws on well known societal stereotypes that are often used in discourse of interracial dating, specifically between White women and Black men. For example, a recent Youtube parody by comedian Tommy Taylor, which has received over 120,000 views between February and September of 2012, depict Black men as abused by their Black female partners, and in need of rescue by more emotional and sensitive White women (The Tommy Taylor Show, 2012). This negative view of interracial dating between Black-males and White Females, by Black females in the United States has also been documented in academic literature (e.g. Childs, 2005).

Within this account, the categories of race and gender cannot be separated as their combination represents categories on their own, e.g. Black-woman, White-woman, Black-man. Stacey treats these categories as discrete, with their own unique attributes associated with each. Additionally, although her descriptions of these categories were similar to the descriptions of her unnamed friend, the qualitative meaning behind these descriptions were quite contradictory. The characterization of Black women as strong and self-reliant has received scientific attention (e.g. Harrington, Crowther & Shiperd, 2010), and it is clear from Stacey's descriptions that this characterization can have both positive and negative implications, depending on the perspective of the describer or the person to whom the descriptions apply. Stacey's depictions of the categories and their respective content achieve a specific purpose. By transforming the description of Black females from a negative to a positive portrayal, Stacey builds up the category with which she identifies while simultaneously depicting interracial dating between Black men and White women as inherently flawed. Additionally, the behaviour of Black men within these situations was not called into question. Attention was only given to how women of the various racial groups named would respond to the actions of the Black males that they were involved with. This effectively rendered the roles of males within these situations as something to be reacted to, but not as something that should or could be addressed in and of itself.

### **Race and social class**

Racial categories were also found to overlap with social class within the discussions. In EA1, John discusses the social atmosphere of his school:

#### ***Excerpt 18***

John: ((text omitted)) it's like (0.4) in my school↑ huh (0.4) this is funny though hh  
hh one side of the school (0.3) is like all Black↓  
RL: Oh yea?

John: A::ll minority (1) like just (.) all cultures (1) and then the front of the school↑  
 (.) is all white

RL: Okay=

John: =and this school is located (0.2) on ((names a street intersection)) so it's a  
 pretty well to do rich area=

RL: =Oh okay=

John: =so like these kids are like (0.3) they think that like (2) like its-I dunno:: it's  
 like they-it's like (0.4) when I go to the like the White side of the school it's  
 like you know "he::y dude" like you know they have that like (0.2) they're laid  
 back you know they're more like rela::xi::ng (0.4) they like to party a lo::t so  
 it's like they come from a different type of lifestyle↑ (0.5) so they all relate  
 with each other↑ (0.6) so like (0.3) I-I ta::lk to them like in terms of cla::ss and  
 like (0.2) I-I kind of talk to them↑ but (0.4) usually it's like a stereotype (.)like  
 if you're hanging out with them↑ it's like well ((suspicious tone)) "o::h (0.2) ok  
 (.) so you're like a rich kinda (0.2) Black White boy kinda thing↑" [so ]

RL: [hh hh hh]

John: (0.4) they USUALLY HAVE THAT TYPE OF IMAGE BUT LIKE usually I  
 think that (0.2) o::h (0.2) u::hh it's as if (0.3) u::m "they might ro::b us or they  
 might (.) steal from us" ((continues talking about dynamics of school))

Here, John paints a vivid picture of racial divisions that he says exist within his school.

However John does not only make reference to racial divisions, but implicates social class – and culture – in these divisions as well. His description of reactions to his interactions with the White students in his school shows the overlap between racial and social class designations, when he relates that he is described as a “rich kinda Black White boy”. He is stating that he does not think that he is perceived as just a student interacting with other students, or even as a Black student interacting with White students. His description instead implies that he is regarded as being the same as the people that he has chosen to interact with; as being “rich” and “White”, and that he cannot simultaneously be, for example, Black and poor, and have anything in common with the rich and White students. Note that John does not describe himself as Black and poor within this account, but the description that he gives of what he is perceived to be, leaves an unspoken comparison with something that he is not perceived to be in these situations.

The linking of race and class within this description is important, as it creates a picture of issues of stereotyping and prejudice that students such as John may face. For example John spoke at length within this discussion group about how Black students went on “robbing sprees” throughout the school at various times, specifically targeting White students. He makes reference to these events here with his description of how the White students might perceive him and other Black students (i.e. that “they might rob us”). However John was not clear on what the motivations were for these sprees. It is only clear that he sees tensions between students within his school, which may be due to a combination of race and social class factors. As a Black student that chooses to freely interact with White students, there is the suggestion that he is regarded with suspicion, both from Black students and White students, because of these tensions.

### Gender

Discussions of gender also occurred outside of discussions of race. For example, in the excerpt below, participants in CRB1 discuss issues of gender and sexual behaviour:

#### *Excerpt 19*

- Michael: So like yo (0.4) but *bere*<sup>ii</sup> times when a man’s like okay “yo (0.2) she ran me *domes*<sup>iii</sup>” the girls (.) the girls↑ they deny it↑ but then after it’s out (.) they’re like “okay yea yea yea I did it (.) still”(0.3) But they can’t (.) they get- they get caught slippin’ caz it’s true (1) you don’t know a man that’s gonna really lie (0.6) cuz no:: man no:: (0.3) none of the *man dem*<sup>iv</sup> really lie↓ (.) they they, guy, we don’t lie-
- Stacey: That’s not true
- Michael: That-no:: (.) no no we’ll lie to you (0.3) but won’t lie about catching something↓<sup>v</sup>
- RL: [hh HH HHH HH HH hh ]
- Alicia: [hh hhh hh hh hhh hhh hh ]
- Stacey: [No:: that’s not true EITHER ] BECAUSE (0.2) listen here (0.2) *bere* guys are coming up to me (0.3) no (0.2) *bere* guys are talking about me saying o::h “ya u::m (.) ya so you gave my friend good *breezies*<sup>vi</sup>” or they’re saying tha::t I’ve given them *breezies* I never sucked dick in my life (0.4) yet for some reason I::’ve given them [( ) ]
- Michael: [ *Bere* girls are say that are lying eh↑ ]
- Shawn: hh hh [hhh hh hh] hh hhh

Francis: [HH HHH ]

Stacey: Ka::y but [do you wanna (0.2) do you wanna (0.2) go there?]

Michael: [I'm not sayin' you're lyin eh↑ ]

Stacey: [Am I lying right now? ]

Michael: [I'm not sayin you're lyin'] I'm jus sayin' *bere* girls lie=

Shawn: [ hh hh hh hh hh hh hh hh ]

Stacey: =I understand that but I'm not lying right now because *bere* guys will come up to me and say "oh yea that was a- wha- like tellin' me how I-I j-gave them good brains<sup>vii</sup> blah blah blah (.) but I've never done that before

Stacey introduces her personal experiences within this exchange in order to argue with Michael's characterization of male integrity when they report on their sexual encounters. What is interesting within this exchange is that no one questions the idea or practice of inquiring after his or her peers' sexual activities. Instead, Michael initially depicts males up as honourable for not lying about receiving oral sex, as compared to his depictions of females who deny these encounters as somehow dishonest or dishonourable. Stacey takes issue with these characterizations, specifically Michael's claims that males do not lie about their sexual encounters. However whereas Michael has claimed that males do not lie about the activities that they have actually participated in, Stacey argues that males lie about participating in activities that they actually have not. By placing her personal experiences within the discussion, Stacey essentially puts a face on the nameless females who are implicated within these sexual encounters and are subsequently placed in situations where they are forced to confirm or deny their activities. She works up her category entitlement as a female who has been lied to – and about – in order to support her argument that males do lie about their sexual encounters, and that not all females who deny their involvement in these activities are liars. When Michael attempts to hold on to his position, Stacey challenges him directly, and Michael consequently revises his position, not by altering his generalization to account for some male dishonesty, but by instead

making an exception for Stacey as one female who may not lie about her sexual encounters, as compared to the numerous other females that do.

This exchange is somewhat disturbing as it brings to the fore representations of gender and sexuality that may exist within the circles and communities within which these young people socialize. Males are depicted as powerful and sexually autonomous, and females as weak and sexually submissive. Male sexuality is celebrated by Michael, whereas female sexuality is something to be questioned and investigated, a cause for suspicion. For Stacey, having been a female who has been questioned (or accused) about her sexual conduct, this is an opportunity for her to defend her own integrity. She does not, however, defend the integrity of other females or question Michael's general depictions of their deceitfulness. Instead she questions Michael's claims about male honour, but is ineffective in getting Michael to revise his claims.

### **Social class**

Similarly, issues of social class were addressed outside of ideas of race and ethnicity within the discussion groups. Specifically within EA1, John was particularly vocal about what he felt was needed to empower youth to become more successful. When asked if programming should be specific to Black youth, or to youth of East African background, he states that the question is "a hard one" but then goes on to reject the idea and instead emphasizes that the focus should be on youth in poor communities. He continued as follows:

### ***Excerpt 20***

John: ((text omitted)) so like I think it should just be:: these-these type of lea-these type of uh (.) program::m (0.3) in terms of like uh (0.2) I guess going into communities↑ (0.3) and like actu-like I never see (1) like er-like I lived-I lived in like you kno::w ((priority neighbourhood)) community↑ (0.3) right (.) so it's not (0.2) it's not like it's-it's:: nice out there it's kinda roug-like it gets rough right↑ and I never see like (0.6) I never see them like teaching or like empowering youth (0.6) like these kids don't know like (0.4) they don't-they think like oh (.) "I can't get a job ma::n? Alright I'm just gonna sell-I'm just gonna sell (0.2) jus

gonna sell drugs↓” (0.3) and they-they quickly go into it like (0.4) who::a like you can get a job bro (.) if I got-If I had a job like if I had like a m-good experiences (0.3) in volunteering and work (.) why can’t yo::u get a job?

Here, John is making reference to the lack of leadership that he sees in poor communities – a topic he touched on several times throughout the discussion. He references a particular neighbourhood that he grew up in that has been named one of Toronto’s 13 priority neighbourhoods, due to the level of poverty that exists within these communities. He uses his personal experience as someone who has grown up in an impoverished neighbourhood as a contrast to what he relates as the experiences of other young people in these communities. By using this contrast, he argues that pursuing a life of crime is not the only option for these youth, and not an inevitable outcome of growing up in a priority neighbourhood.

John works up his category entitlement as a young person who has grown up in a poor neighbourhood to speak both to the experience of living there, as well as to provide an alternative perspective as to what youths from these neighbourhoods can achieve. He speaks specifically to the negatives of living in such a community, when there were undoubtedly various other factors that led to his success in obtaining a job, as compared to what he describes as the youth’s failure to do so and to instead pursue criminal activity. He first makes reference to the possible impact that mentorship within these communities might have, then ends by implicating the attitudes of the youths themselves in their negative choices. There is the suggestion that mentorship may have an impact on these youths’ attitudes. Therefore, despite naming negative circumstances within the community, the role of the individual, and the possibility for intervention at the individual level, is also highlighted as a contributing factor to the outcomes of youths from these neighbourhoods.

## Neighbourhood

Neighbourhood identity was also discussed by the participants in CRB2. This type of identity is notably different from what was discussed in the previous excerpt, as it has more to do with particular areas, rather than living in state of poverty as previously described. In the following excerpt Brittany, with some agreement from other participants in the group, discusses the pressures that she feels with regards to behavioural expectations associated with living in specific neighbourhoods:

### *Excerpt 21*

Brittany: ((text omitted)) Like (0.2) like what we were talking about yesterday to::o is like (0.2) if you live in one area:: even if you're not (0.2) like your (0.2) mentality your mindset isn't like that area you feel like because I grew up in that area↑ (0.3) I should act like this↓ like (0.3) I grew up in like (0.6) ((names intersection)) with all these Chinese people or White people so I have to (0.6) you know what I mean its kinda like you want to:: (0.6) mould yourself or portray your area

RL: Okay

Brittany: And you feel like if you don't act like where you're from↑ (1) its kind of like yo::u're (1) like straying or

O'Neil: You're fake?

Brittany: Yea (0.6) Basically (.) and if you tell someone (0.3) where you're from and its like "oh you don't seem like that" it's like you're not living up=

Sade: =To the street [name ]

Brittany: [to like ] the (.) reputation (0.3) of your street intersection

The argument that Brittany is making here is related to a concept that environmental psychologists have named Place-identity (Proshansky, Fabian & Kaminoff, 1983). Place-identity can be conceptualized as a form of self-identity that consists of "broadly conceived cognitions about the physical world in which the individual lives," (Proshansky et al., 1983). Similar to research on racial and ethnic identity, much of the work done on place-identity has been from a social-cognitive perspective (Dixon & Durrheim, 2000). However by focusing on the discursive

elements of place-identity, we are able to look at the social actions that are performed rhetorically with reference to this form of identity (Dixon & Durrheim, 2000).

Within this account, Brittany is arguing for personal autonomy. She claims that neighbourhood identities are restricting, and that there is pressure placed on individuals to display behaviour that is reflective of the neighbourhood that they are from. Her mention of the ethnic/racial composition of the area in which she lives suggests that the behavioural expectations may have as much to do with the people that live within the neighbourhood as with the neighbourhood itself. She is therefore arguing two things within this account, a) that there are particular social markers that individuals display – and are also embedded inside the individual (i.e. “your mentality, your mindset”) – associated with particular neighbourhoods; and b) that she is aware of these markers but does not identify with them. In addition, she depersonalizes this issue by using the terms “you” and “you’re” as opposed to “I” and “I am”, suggesting that this is not an experience unique only to her.

Participants in CRB1, WA2 and EA1 also discussed the significance of living in particular neighbourhoods and areas of the GTA. These discussions were sometimes tied to discussions of social class, and were other times similar to the excerpt above with regards to the behaviours – noted as stereotyped or otherwise – that were expected from individuals who lived in these areas.

### **Religion**

Finally religion was another relevant category for participants in at least three of the discussion groups. For example, WA1 and WA2 were conducted within churches, with the youths in WA2 participating in extracurricular activities that were ran through their church. Within EA2, all of the female participants wore hijabs, however conversations surrounding

religion did not arise spontaneously. Towards the end of the discussion group, RL asked the females why they wore hijabs. Below is Rachel's response to this question:

***Excerpt 22***

- Rachel: I just uh (0.2) to be honest I just wear my hijab because (0.6) um (1) it makes (0.4) I (2) its like=  
Celeste: =It's a ( ) your dad won't let you take it off  
Nathaniel: Bro:: it's not about that (0.4) just allow her (.) let her speak  
RL: Ye::a let her finish  
Rachel: One is religious reasons (0.6) and my Dad will never let-let me take it off  
RL: [Okay ]  
Rachel: [unless] I'm at ho::me=  
RL: =Okay=  
Rachel: =but also (.) I like it because (1) it just (2) it makes me feel like no::body can judge me (0.6) because of what I we- not w-not because of what I wear (0.6) but how my hair looks or (0.6) how my (0.3) uh (0.3) what I wear or how my body looks [(0.6)They] can't judge me on that  
RL: [Okay ]

This response was given after the participants argued over who was most qualified to respond. Stephen advocated for Rachel to respond, as she was the only one “doing the whole thing”, or fully covered from head to toe. The other girls within the group wore the veil that covered their hair, but not their necks or the rest of their bodies as Rachel did. Before Rachel can fully formulate her response within the excerpt here, Celeste interjects that Rachel's father is the reason for her adherence to wearing the hijab. Rachel does not deny her father's role in her decision, but then goes on to supply her personal reasons for her attire. In supplying her reasons, she presents herself as autonomous and in control of how she is perceived, as compared to just obeying the wishes of her parent. By wearing the hijab she is more able to control how she is read. Her references to her hair and body suggest that she is referring to how she is read physically as a female. She also spends more time elaborating on her personal reasons for wearing the hijab, than on the religious reasons that she mentions at the beginning of her

explanation. For Rachel, the hijab is not so much about religion, but also about her identity in general.

The preceding section demonstrates a range of categories outside of race, ethnicity, and current nationality that arose within the discussions. They were presented here to add greater context to the talk on racial and ethnic identity highlighted in this analysis. They were also used to further demonstrate the fluidity of social categories and content through highlighting their overlap with racial and ethnic categories. Finally, they were also useful in demonstrating other sources of identity that may be relevant to the day-to-day experiences of these youths.

### **Discussion**

Mainstream psychological research on ethnic and racial identity are largely concerned with the cognitive features of these identities (Verkuyten, 2005). Additionally, acculturation research that assesses how cultural context influences ethnic identity issues are largely concerned with cognitive processes as well (see for example Berry et al., 2006). I have argued here that the sole reliance on social-cognitive approaches to research concerning these identities runs the risk of homogenizing and essentializing already marginalized groups by not giving explicit attention to the social construction of group identities and the social categories to which they are attached. I have also argued that the utilization of discursive approaches can assist in shedding light on these issues, by focusing on the social actions that are performed in conversation. By enlisting the help of a sample of second-generation Canadian youths who were physically identifiable as Black, it was my aim to demonstrate the social construction of categories and identities, and by extension, the diversity of experiences of individuals who may be categorized as Black in Canada. The collection of data had two main purposes, a) to document how second-generation “Black” Canadian youth spoke about racial and ethnic identities within a community setting, and

b) to obtain recommendations for the design of a community program aimed at this demographic. The presentation of results and the discussion to follow are primarily concerned with the first purpose of this project as listed here.

In the first section of my analysis, I outlined how the young people within my discussion groups negotiated and justified their identifications. I highlighted how participants justified their choices between racial and ethnic labels, and also between these labels and the national category of Canadian. Within the examples given, when participants chose between racial and ethnic labels, their explanations involved past experiences of conflict between their ethnic label and the racial label of Black. However the differences in these conflicts demonstrated how identity choices were neither straightforward nor routed in similar experiences for individuals who were able to draw on the same racial label to identify themselves.

In excerpts 1 and 2, Nathaniel was able to draw on his past experiences of racism in order to justify his choice of identification as Black as opposed to Somalian. Research from social-cognitive perspectives has demonstrated that there is a relationship between perceptions of discrimination and increased racial or ethnic identity (e.g. Alvares, Juang & Liang, 2006; Pahl & Way, 2006; Sellers & Shelton, 2003). Nathaniel's choice of racial label could therefore be interpreted as an increased awareness of his Black identity. However the research cited here was conducted among individuals for whom the choice of ethnic or racial label had not been examined. In other words, embedded within these studies was the assumption that participants regard the racial or ethnic category as relevant to them, even if they did not strongly identify with it before their experiences or perceptions of racism. Therefore it would be erroneous to extend those findings to Nathaniel's experience, as he reported a switch in labels, rather than an increased attachment to or identification with a particular group. More importantly, it would also

be presumptuous to equate label choices with underlying cognitive processes without further exploration.

It is instead more useful to look at these types of research separately. Nathaniel's choice to identify as Black had to be justified within the group setting, demonstrating that this was not a straightforward or automatic identification. His reported experience of racism was drawn upon specifically to argue for his identity choice within this context, and had the effect of categorizing his discussion partners under his chosen label as well. The tension between racial and ethnic categorization, specifically for individuals of Somali background within the US and Canada, has been documented in the literature (Ajrouch & Kusow, 2007; Basford, 2010; Bigelow, 2008). For example, Bigelow discusses research that elucidates various ways in which Somali youth are racialized into the category of "Black" in the US, and how these youths resist this categorization by, for example adhering more strongly to the categories of Somali or Muslim. These researchers also look at the role of Muslim religious identification for these youth, and the tensions associated with negotiating this identity as well. A recent media article on Somalis in Canada also demonstrates these tensions. Here, the youths featured in this article discussed the implications of identifying as Black as opposed to Somali, and the unwillingness of many of their counterparts to identify as Black due to the negative perceptions of this category (Cromwell, 2012).

On the other hand, for most of the participants of WA1, the shift from the ethnic label of Ghanaian to the racial label of Black was not presented as very problematic. The denial of Ghanaian identity by others was instead presented as an inconvenience that was easily remedied by choosing a more socially palatable label. Therefore across discussion groups, participants who

chose – at least within this social context – to adhere to the racial label of “Black” provided vastly different reasons for doing so.

When participants explained and justified their choices between racial, ethnic and national labels, the wider Canadian and international contexts were invoked. This demonstrated additional strategies that participants utilized to explain their identity choices. It also exemplifies why acknowledging not only the immediate, but wider social context in studies of racial and ethnic identity is important, as these played very specific roles in the justifications given. Identity choices, as located within wider social contexts, have been previously demonstrated in discursive work (e.g. Hickman, Morgan, Walter & Bradley, 2005; Ullah, 1990). Here, conceptions of diversity, and experiences of prejudice and stereotyping situated firmly within the Canadian and US contexts were used to justify both ethnic and national labels. Identity labels were also revised at points in order to support the nature of the claims being made, exemplifying the fluidity and often times inconsistency of the use of ethnic, racial and national labels.

Examples of the negotiations and justifications that participants of mixed racial-ethnic background had to undertake were also highlighted. Although these excerpts were presented together, the talk of the individuals here were quite different. Whereas one participant had difficulties classifying herself into a single cultural background, the other expressed frustration of being classified within a single racial category. The tensions of identifying oneself versus being identified by others were clearly evident here as well. Interestingly, the difficulties that these participants describe have also been captured in academic research concerning biracial and multiracial individuals (Rockquemore & Brunson, 2002; Shih & Sanchez, 2005). However what is also clear is that the experience of having to – or choosing not to – make a choice between

identities was not unique to these individuals, as there were several identity choices available to the study participants in general.

Mainstream social-cognitive approaches do not usually give attention to these issues of negotiation and justification (Ullah, 1990). Although this research acknowledges how identities are influenced by, and change according to social context (Phinney, 2003; Turner et al. 1987), the process of choosing one identity over another is not usually problematized. For example Quintana (2007) argues that, based on research evidence, the nature of the labels that individuals use – whether they are racially or culturally based – are not as psychologically relevant as the underlying cognitive processes associated with these labels. However as demonstrated within my data, the act of negotiating identity both within the discussion groups, and the instances of justification that were related as having been experienced in everyday life, have implications for acts of inclusion and exclusion within social groups. For example Spence used his reported experience of being denied Canadian identity in excerpt 4 to demonstrate how his use of a particular label came into conflict with others' understanding of that label. By doing so, he was able to make an argument regarding how some members of Canadian society have the freedom to claim Canadian identity when others are excluded from this category. The social actions that can be performed by the use of particular labels within specific situations and contexts are therefore important in and of themselves.

Additionally, on a basic methodological level, it is plausible that many of these participants would experience some difficulties if handed a generalized ethnic identity measure such as the MEIM (Phinney, 1992), where they are asked to indicate their ethnic group membership and questioned on their level of identification with this group. As outlined in my literature review, many researchers use the terms race and ethnicity interchangeably (Cokely,

2007; Helms & Talleyrand, 1997) thereby classifying the label “Black” as an ethnic term in many cases. Therefore, would the participants in WA1 for example, fill out an ethnic identity survey based on identifications as Black, or as Ghanaian – the label they describe as having been denied? What implications would label choice have for the study results if participants do not view these labels in similar ways? The findings here suggest that such issues need to be considered more carefully when designing these measures. In other words, group membership and its associated cognitive processes should not be taken for granted.

The second section of my analysis dealt with how social categories were constructed within conversation in order to justify identity choices. One common theme within the data was the construction of categories with which participants did not identify as non-entities. However as other individuals within the discussion groups freely laid claim to those categories, the importance of the characteristics placed on social categories and the implications of these acts for identification becomes clearly apparent. For example participants who stated that they did not identify with the categories of “Canadian” or “Black” constructed them as having little substance to them, in other words, as not actually existing as acceptable social categories. However the participants that laid claim to Black identity attempted to construct this category in a substantial way, and were even offended at the idea that other individuals who they would classify as Black, may not regard “Black” as a category relevant to them. Therefore the meanings that individuals place on particular categories appear to be important for justifying identity choices. Additionally, individuals who may otherwise be considered to be members of the same social group had conflicting conceptualizations of these groups.

As discussed within my literature review, social-cognitive approaches often treat racial and ethnic categories as discrete and internally homogenous, with the meanings attributed to

ethnic labels assumed to be similar and shared among researchers and participants (Augoustinos, 2005; Brubaker, 2002; Zagfka, 2008). Despite acknowledgement that these categories are socially constructed (Markus, 2008; Quintana, 2007) and calls to address these issues through more careful study design and measurement practices (e.g. Helms, Jernigan & Mascher, 2005), research on the identities associated with these categories still fail to account for how these categories are contextually constructed both on an immediate and broader social level. Instead, it is taken for granted that study participants perceive the groups in questions in similar ways. By failing to ask questions of who considers themselves to be a part of a particular category and how they define these categories, we risk reifying the categories that have long been established as not based in biological fact. This reification has the dangerous implication of potentially homogenizing group members. As research on racial and ethnic identity is already mostly conducted among minority group members (Markus, 2008) who, as a consequence of societal structures and history may already be at a social disadvantage, psychologists must be careful not to contribute to social discourse that will further marginalize these individuals. Coupling discursive approaches with social-cognitive work is one such way of addressing this issue.

Within the final section of my analysis, I presented a range of other categories and identities that arose for the youths within our discussions. These were intended to provide further context for the lives of the research participants. Researchers who study racial and ethnic identity necessarily privilege these identities in order to determine their relationships with other psychological processes and behaviour among their samples. However as general psychological research on racial and ethnic visible minorities, specifically adolescents, in North America is drastically less than what is conducted on majority group members (Levesque, 2007) it is also important to look at other relevant identities and experiences for these populations in order to

avoid essentializing their experiences as most significantly related to race and ethnicity. The data presented here have demonstrated that for my study participants, other relevant categories included, but are not necessarily limited to, gender, social class, neighborhood and religion. Keeping in mind that one of the aims of the discussions groups was to obtain recommendations for community programming for youth of this demographic, discussions around these other social categories arose within this context. Additionally these categories may not have been significant to all participants, or significant in equal ways, but they were able to stimulate conversation and at some points debate when they arose.

The issues of gender that arose both within and outside of discussions of race surrounded romantic or intimate relations between males and females. Within these conversations, genders were constructed in particular ways, with males as more autonomous and females placed in more reactionary roles. The conception of male and female gender roles by adolescents in this manner is nothing new (e.g. Jackson & Cram, 2003). However the reproduction of these ideas among this sample suggests that this is a topic that could benefit from further exploration among youth of these demographics.

Issues related to social class, both within and outside of discussions of race and ethnicity also came up within the discussion groups. Early studies of racial identity have been criticized for attributing psychological processes and behaviours to race, when social class played equal or greater significance within the lives of the study participants (Gosine, 2002). The examples given within this project suggest that this is a topic that can also be explored further within Canadian samples. Gaining greater insight into how young people talk about living in low-income areas, specifically areas that are well known by the media and the public in general on account of being labeled “priority neighbourhoods”, can be useful for understanding the experiences of these

youths and designing programs for intervention. Additionally, John spoke of the lack of leadership within these communities. Investigating how residents of these areas define and talk about “community” and “leadership” would also be useful both theoretically, and for the planning of interventions. Finally, comparing this talk to how these neighbourhoods are characterized within the media would also be useful for elucidating the differences and similarities in accounts from insider and outsider perspectives.

Related to, but sometimes distinguishable from discussions surrounding social class were those concerning neighbourhood identity. Participants made reference to the behavioural expectations of living in a particular area, and the consequent pressure that was felt when they did not live up to these standards. Gaining further insight into the representations that individuals have of particular neighborhoods would be useful for reasons similar to those sighted for gaining further insights into ideas of social class and community membership. Understanding the types of discourse that exist around area of residence can have implications for how youth interventions are designed and implemented, including ideas for possible themes that can be addressed within discussions and workshops.

Finally, the topic of religion was also addressed within the discussion groups. The extract included within my analysis was specific to EA2, where all of the female participants were visibly identifiable as Muslim due to their hijabs. Rachel’s account as an adolescent female who practices the religion of Islam is somewhat similar to accounts documented elsewhere, where women wore the hijab to, among other things, control how they were perceived by others, most specifically by men (Droogsma, 2007). The women in the study cited here were in their twenties and early thirties, and expressed a wide range of reasons for choosing to wear the hijab. These researchers also noted that much of the research that exists on women who veil – wear the hijab

– have been conducted in Arab or Muslim societies. Therefore further exploration of how Muslim females that wear hijabs in non-Muslim societies would add to this body of knowledge, and investigations specific to younger females would be especially useful.

## **Limitations, Future Directions and Practical Implications**

### **Limitations**

As with all forms of research, this study has its own set of limitations. First, my use of discussion groups to obtain my data created a specific research dynamic. My role as the facilitator within the discussion groups meant that I framed the discussions, and to a certain extent guided their direction. However research by Myers (1998) demonstrates that even within moderated discussions, participants also have a strong role in shaping the conversation and the topics that emerge within it. Throughout the discussions I made every attempt to minimize my contributions in order to allow the participants to express themselves as freely as possible. However I do acknowledge the role of my contributions, as well as my mere presence in having some impact on the interactions that occurred within the groups. In presenting my data here, I was also careful to present excerpts where my own contributions are clearly apparent, so that the reader can also assess for her/himself the extent of my influence as a moderator.

Additionally, the extent to which small group discussion data are reflective of real world interactions must also be addressed. As these data are not meant to be representative of the inner thoughts and feelings of my study participants, the extent to which this is reflective of real world interactions is not a great cause for concern. The context of this research was made clear within my methodology and analysis sections, and the data collected here are relevant to this particular context. What is important to take away is that talk and expressed opinions on particular issues

are likely to fluctuate depending on the social context, and the implications of this are relevant to both social-cognitive and discursive, as well as quantitative and qualitative forms of research.

With regards to generalizability, the data collected here are not meant to be representative of the thoughts and opinions of individuals of this demographic. However the action orientation of discourse and the in-situ construction of category content and identities have been demonstrated repeatedly in discourse analytic studies. The present study adds to this body of research by demonstrating the contextual features that were relevant the sample of participants studied here, and can be used as a means of expanding knowledge among this and other populations in future studies.

### **Future directions**

Future directions related to the third section of my analysis has already been touched upon within my discussion, and will not be discussed further here. With regards to my general research findings, as research on Black Canadian populations is a small but growing area, my findings on identity and category content construction can inform how researchers choose to approach these populations. For example further investigation into any common themes that may emerge from discussions regarding Blackness in Canada can aid in conceptualizing the broader ideological representations that exist for this group specifically within the Canadian context. Further attention can also be given to the diversity of this group, with particular attention given to self-categorizations, and categorizations by others, and the psychological implications of these actions. On a more general level, there have been increasing calls for the marrying of cognitive and discursive approaches to the study of social categories and group identities (e.g. Augoustinos, 2001; Verkuyten, 2005; Verkuyten & de Wolf, 2002). Taking this approach with

research on Black Canadians would undoubtedly be beneficial for these populations both theoretically and practically.

### **Practical implications**

The practical implications of this study were embedded within its purpose. As the data collected here had the additional objective of providing information to assist in the development of a community program for youth of this demographic, this is an outcome that will continue to be pursued. A second potential implication of this research has to do with issues of naming. Media accounts that address issues that occur within Toronto's "Black" or "African-Canadian" community (e.g. Doucette, 2012), have essentially created this community through the act of naming it. The extent to which individuals who identify as "Black" or "African-Canadian" feel connected, or as though they belong to a singular cohesive community is something that should be investigated as opposed to being taken for granted. Studies such as these illuminate the level of inconsistency that exists between individuals who otherwise may be regarded as members of a cohesive group, and could potentially be utilized to encourage the media and policy makers to take a more critical approach to issues concerning the "communities" in question. It is however important to keep in mind that the act of naming can have both positive and negative implications. It can result in negative generalizations and stereotyping, and can also result in the mobilization of resources and collectivities to effect social change (e.g. Philogene, 1994).

### **Conclusions**

This study was conducted to investigate how second-generation Canadian youth who are physically identifiable as Black talked about racial and ethnic identity within a community setting. The role of the immediate and wider social contexts, and participants' interactions with these contexts, was also taken into account. Through the use of discourse analysis, I have

demonstrated that these participants had numerous categories on which to draw, and constructed category content in particular ways to justify their choice of identifications. I also brought attention to various other categories and sources of identity that were relevant to these participants within our discussions. This was done in order to explicitly take into account the contextualized social construction of social category content and identities, and to argue that researchers should take these features into greater consideration when studying issues of racial and ethnic identification. Through conducting this study, it was also my hope to add to the body of psychological knowledge that has been generated on members of the African Diaspora that currently reside in Canada.

Researchers continue to highlight the negative implications of conducting studies that treat race and ethnicity as social facts grounded in objective reality (e.g. Helms et al., 2005). By continuing to highlight these issues using various methodologies, more and more progress will be made in reducing this approach to these phenomena. As demonstrated here, the potential contributions of the use of discourse analysis to this goal is clear, and more careful consideration of these issues in general will be beneficial for both researchers, and for the groups and individuals implicated in this research.

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Table 1

*Demographic characteristics of participants of Caribbean Background (CRB1 and CRB2)*

Group	Participant	Age	Gender	Place of birth	Parents born and raised in:	
					Mother	Father
CRB1	Alicia	16	Female	Canada	Jamaica	Born in Cuba; raised in Jamaica
CRB1	Francis	14	Male	Canada	Canada (Trinidadian background)	Canada (Trinidadian background)
CRB1	Michael	13	Male	Canada	Jamaica	Jamaica
CRB1	Shawn	16	Male	Jamaica (arrived in Canada at age 13)	Jamaica	Jamaica
CRB1	Stacey	16	Female	Canada	Jamaica	Spain
CRB2	Andrea	15	Female	Canada	Canada (Hungarian Background)	Guyana
CRB2	Brittany	18	Female	Canada	Jamaica	Barbadoes
CRB2	Marsha	14	Female	Canada	Nigeria	Nigeria
CRB2	Natasha	15	Female	United States (arrived at age 7)	Canada	United States
CRB2	O'Neil	18	Male	Canada	Jamaica	Canada
CRB2	Sade	18	Female	Canada	Jamaica	Jamaica

*Note.* CRB1 short for Caribbean Group 1. CRB2 short for Caribbean Group 2.

Table 2

*Demographic characteristics of participants of East African Background (EA1 and EA2)*

Group	Participant	Age	Gender	Place of birth	Parents born and raised in:	
					Mother	Father
EA1	Danielle	17	Female	Canada	Ethiopia	Born in Ethiopia; raised in Greece
EA1	Eric	16	Male	Canada	Ethiopia	Eritrea
EA1	John	19	Male	Italy (arrived in Canada age 1)	Ethiopia	Ethiopia
EA1	Sharrie	15	Female	Denmark (arrived in Canada at age 5)	Ethiopia	Ethiopia
EA1	Spence	17	Male	Canada	Ethiopia	Ethiopia
EA2	Celeste	14	Female	Canada	Ethiopia; raised in Somalia	Ethiopia
EA2	David	16	Male	Canada	Somalia	Somalia
EA2	Donna	14	Female	Canada	Eretria	Saudi Arabia
EA2	Kimberly	14	Female	Canada	Somalia	Somalia
EA2	Nathaniel	16	Male	Canada	Somalia	Somalia
EA2	Rachel	15	Female	Canada	Somalia	Somalia
EA2	Stephen	17	Male	Canada	Ethiopia; raised in Somalia	Ethiopia

*Note.* EA1 short for East African Group 1. EA2 short for East African Group 2.

Table 3

*Demographic characteristics of participants of West African Background (WA1 and WA2)*

Group	Participant	Age	Gender	Place of birth	Parents born and raised in:	
					Mother	Father
WA1	Carrie	14	Female	Canada	Ghana	Ghana
WA1	Jason	15	Male	Canada	Ghana	Ghana
WA1	Jennie-Ann	15	Female	Canada	Ghana	Ghana
WA1	Mark	15	Male	Canada	Ghana	Ghana
WA1	Monica	15	Female	Canada	Ghana	Ghana
WA1	Oprah	15	Female	Canada	Ghana	Ghana
WA1	Stephanie	14	Female	Canada	Ghana	Ghana
WA2	Cathy	15	Female	Canada	Ghana	Ghana
WA2	Damion	17	Male	Ghana (grew up in US, arrived in Canada age 15)	Ghana	Ghana
WA2	Felicia	18	Female	Canada	Ghana	Ghana
WA2	Rudy	15	Female	Canada	Ghana	Ghana

*Note.* WA1 short for West African Group 1. WA2 short for West African Group 2.

Table 4

*Transcription Notation*

Symbol	Name	Use
[text] [text]	Square brackets	Indicates overlap between speakers. The left bracket marks the beginning of the overlap and the right bracket marks the end.
=	Equal sign	Indicates a direct continuation between the end of one speaker's utterance and the beginning of another speaker's utterance
(# of seconds)	Timed pause	A number in parenthesis indicates the time, in seconds, of a pause in speech
(.)	Micropause	A brief pause, usually less than 0.2 seconds
↓	Down arrow	Indicates falling pitch or intonation
↑	Up arrow	Indicates rising pitch or intonation that does not correspond with a clear question being asked
?	Question mark	Indicates a rising pitch or intonation that is usually accompanied by the asking of a question
-	Hyphen	Indicates an abrupt halt or interruption in utterance
>text<	Greater than/less than symbols	Indicates that the enclosed speech was delivered more rapidly than usual for the speaker
<text>	Less than/greater than symbols	Indicates that the enclosed speech was delivered more slowly than usual for the speaker
ALL CAPS	Capitalized text	Indicates shouted or increased volume in speech
<u>underline</u>	Underlined speech	Indicates the speaker is emphasizing or stressing the speech
::	Colon or colons	Indicates prolongation of sound
(text)	Text in parenthesis	Speech which is unclear or in doubt in the transcript
((text))	Double parenthesis	Transcriber's descriptions, including substitution of possibly identifying information

Table 4 contd.		
( )	Empty parenthesis	Something is being said but speech cannot be determined
“text”	Quotation marks	Indicates speech that the speaker attributes to someone other than her/him self
\$text\$	Dollar signs	Indicates that the enclosed speech was delivered with a smiley voice
hh hh hh	Laugh syllable	Laughter. Number of h’s indicate the approximate length of the laughter
HH HH HH	Laugh syllable	Indicates loud laughter
<i>text</i>	Text in italics	Indicates a slang term or a word in a language other than English

## Appendix A

### *Participant Flyer (East African Participants)*

Hi there!

**Are you between the ages of 15 and 18? Or in Grades 9 to 12?**

**Were you born in Canada or arrived before age 6?**

**Is your background East African?**

If the answer is yes to all three, this research study is for you!! All you have to do is:

1. Participate in a discussion group with 5 or 6 other youth about the experiences of youth of African and Caribbean decent. The discussion group could last up to two (2) hours. **A pizza dinner and a TTC bus ticket will be provided for your participation.**
2. Provide suggestions on what a community program designed for youth of these backgrounds should look like.
3. Fill out a form that asks a few questions about who you are, such as your age and the background of your parents

If you would like to participate, please fill out the information on the attached sign up sheet. **PARENTAL PERMISSION IS NEEDED IF YOU ARE UNDER THE AGE OF 18.**

If you chose to participate in this study, anything that we talk about in the group will not be shared with anyone else.

Not everyone that signs up will be included in the study.

Thanks!!

Rashelle Litchmore  
University of Guelph

**Appendix B**

*Participant Sign-up sheet*

<b>DATE:</b>	
<b>NAME:</b>	
<b>AGE:</b>	
<b>GENDER:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> FEMALE <input type="checkbox"/> MALE	
<b>COUNTRY OF BIRTH:</b>	<b>PARENT'S BACKGROUND/HERITAGE:</b>
<b>IF NOT BORN IN CANADA, AT WHAT AGE DID YOU ARRIVE IN CANADA?</b>	
<b>PHONE NUMBER:</b>	<b>EMAIL ADDRESS:</b>
<b>PARENT/GUARDIAN NAME (Not required if aged 18 or over):</b>	
<b>PARENT/GUARDIAN PHONE NUMBER (Not required if aged 18 or over):</b>	
<b>LOCATION OF RECRUITMENT (NAME OF COMMUNITY CENTRE/CHURCH/SCHOOL ETC.):</b>	

## Appendix C

### *Participant Demographic Sheet*

The following questions will be used to match what you say during the discussion to who you are. Please use the name that you plan to use in the discussion group. Your real identity will not be revealed. Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability.

**\*\* The information in this form will NOT be shared with anyone else in the group**

<b>Name:</b>	
<b>Are you:</b> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>What is your current age?</b>
<b>Where were you born?</b>	
<b>If not born in Canada, at what age did you arrive in Canada?</b>	
<b>Where was your mother born and raised?</b>	
<b>Where was your father born and raised?</b>	
<b>Where do you currently live? (neighbourhood)</b>	
<b>If you did not grow up in the above neighbourhood, where did you grow up?</b>	

Imagine that the following line represents how Canadian society is set up. To the left are families that are the worst off, have the least money, and least respected jobs or no job. To the right are families that are the best off, have the most money, and most respected jobs. **Now think about your family. Please tell us where you think your family would be on this scale.**

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9-----10  
worst off, most money, and least, respected jobs or no job  
best off, least money, and most respected jobs

## Appendix D

### *Focus Group Questions*

**Introductions:** I will introduce the note-taker and myself:

*Hi! My name is Rashelle. I'm doing a Master's degree at the University of Guelph in Applied Social Psychology. This is Emmanuel, and he is in the process of developing a community program for Black youth in Toronto. I've worked with various community organizations over the years where I have created and also ran programs for youth. Something that we rarely did when we started these programs was ask the youth what they thought was important to be included in these programs. This is what today's discussion is about. I would like to know, directly from you, what kinds of programs you would like to be involved in, and what you think is important for these programs to have. You can say anything that comes to mind, this is an open discussion and I would like you all to have an equal chance to talk and share your opinion. Please also feel free to talk to, ask questions of and engage with everyone in the room. I will be asking a few basic questions but wherever the discussion goes from there is up to you. Remember that this discussion is being taped, and when it is finished I will be listening to the tape and typing out what was said word for word. Emmanuel will also be taking notes on his laptop as you talk so that we can have an idea of who said what when we listen to the tape. Your real identity will be protected when we type out the discussion, so please feel the freedom to express your thoughts on anything that comes up. Please also remember that what is said in this room is to be kept confidential, and so we would like you to make every effort to respect the privacy of everyone in this room today by not discussing who they are with anyone that is not here. Also, if you feel uncomfortable with the discussion at anytime and would like to leave, please feel free to do so as well (but please let us know if you plan to return).*

Participants will also be asked to introduce themselves to the group by offering any information that they would like to share. At the very least they will be asked to share the name that they plan to use throughout the discussion.

**Questions (I will be encouraging conversation and discussion among the participants regarding community programming and these questions will be used as prompts to guide the discussion along):**

1. Have you ever participated in a community-based program? If yes, what did you like about it? What didn't you like about it? If you haven't participated in community program, is this something that you are open to?
2. What was the purpose of the program (e.g. sports, tutoring etc.)? Do you think you got what the program promised?
3. Who were the other kids in the program? Did you like them? Did you have anything in common with them? How were they different?
4. Were there both boys and girls in the program? How did you feel about that?

5. What do you think is the most important thing to include in a community program for kids your age? Why?

If the topic of racial and ethnic identity does not come up within the discussion using the above questions, the following questions will be used as prompts to direct the conversation in that direction:

1. Do you think it's important to have programs specifically for Black youth? Why or why not?
2. What about if the program was specifically for Caribbean kids? Or African kids? Would that make a difference?

All of the above questions are flexible and will be tailored to whatever comes up in the group. Additional probing questions will be asked where appropriate.

## Footnotes

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<sup>i</sup> This is usually a sign of displeasure

<sup>ii</sup> Many or “a lot”

<sup>iii</sup> Fellatio

<sup>iv</sup> Affectionate term for his male friends or males he respects

<sup>v</sup> A sexual encounter

<sup>vi</sup> See note 3

<sup>vii</sup> See note 3