Families Building Nations, or Nations Building on Families? An Exploration of How African Caribbean Immigrants (Re) Construct Family in the Context of Immigration and Oppression in Canada

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work University of Toronto

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Abstract
This study retrospectively explores the experiences of separation and reunification of African Caribbean immigrant families and how they rebuild their families in the context of immigration and oppression in Canada. Experiences of multiple separations and prolonged reunification have been expected and commonplace for many Caribbean families who have immigrated to Canada since the 1960s. There is a gap in social work knowledge about the experiences of African Caribbean immigrant families in Canada, and this lack is particularly important in light of the frequency of these families’ contact and conflict with institutions such as child welfare agencies, the educational system, and the criminal justice system; these are social institutions where social work has an instrumental role. The study sample consisted of 27 participants, including 25 who identified as African Caribbean women and men, and two who were not African Caribbean-identified. This qualitative study used a decolonizing critical constructionist grounded theory
methodology, with data collected through semi-structured individual interviews and focus groups. The major themes that emerged from the study include “Cast Out,” “Keeping Up,” and “Child Rearing.” Together, these themes point to the specific realities and complexities involved in the impact of multiple separations and extended reunification on African Caribbean immigrant families. For social work, the findings offer important contextual knowledge about African Caribbean immigrant families that may help to inform transformative policies and practices. Additionally, the findings aim to contribute towards depathologizing and decolonizing understandings of the historical and contemporary social conditions and subsequent life choices and chances of African Caribbean immigrant families in Canada.
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Prologue

The experience of migrating to Canada is one that I have in common with participants in this study. I come to this project with the experience of immigrating to Canada with my siblings. The turmoil of immigrating was not without life-altering consequences for all of us. Four of us migrated to reunite with our mother in 1974, but my two older brothers and my oldest sister were over 18 years of age and had to stay behind. At that point in time, Canada was reviewing its racist, restrictive Immigration Act of 1952, which focused on the kind of people who would be allowed entry. Canada changed its immigration policies in 1976 as a way to respond to growing criticism from non-European Commonwealth countries about its use of discriminatory race-based exclusionary criteria that restricted immigration from countries in the Caribbean. The change, as noted in the 1976 Immigration Act, created four classes of immigrants: family class, humanitarian class, independent class, and assisted class. In order to reunite with the rest of the family, my older siblings needed to apply under the independent class using the point system, instead of under family class, since they were no longer considered dependent children due to their age. They also had to decide if they even wanted to come to reunite with the rest of the family. By the time my older siblings immigrated, they had each faced the reality of poverty and underemployment in the Caribbean, and then, after migration, were met with racism in Canada (Toronto) and United States of America (New York, St. Louis). Indeed, three of my four older brothers did not live past the age of 50, with two dying prematurely of cancer and one from a heart attack while he was living on the streets. The process of bringing our family back together never really materialized for my family, and this experience has informed my interest in exploring how African Caribbean immigrants (re) construct family in Canada.

Reuniting with our mother was all that mattered to me as a young child. It was an exciting journey because our friends and family in the Caribbean were happy for us and helpful to us in making the life-altering change. There was hope about the future and about living in a place full of abundance. After all, Canada was where all the merchandise in the barrels, which we didn’t have in Trinidad came from. This was merchandise that we could not afford to buy or that simply was not available. Canada was a land of plenty compared to Trinidad when we immigrated. Being a child initially seemed to provide me some protection from experiences of oppression, such as racism, as I adjusted to my new life in Canada. However, I did not escape the presence and impact of racism in my childhood as I endured isolation and exclusion from activities, since
I attended predominantly white schools and lived in mostly white neighbourhoods. I was not prepared to deal with racism, and racism was not part of what I imagined life would be like in Canada. I was more focused on being reunited with my mother, and I met the newness of the experience of living in Canada with wonder and openness.

I immigrated to Canada with no knowledge of Canadian history, no knowledge of Indigenous peoples, and no knowledge about the particularities of Canada’s history of colonization. Yet being an immigrant to Canada from the Caribbean has also contributed to my understanding of the presence of colonial legacies. In Trinidad, I learned more about Christopher Columbus and British colonial rule than about African slavery, indentured labourers, or the Indigenous peoples of the Caribbean. The focus was on celebrating the nation’s independence from British colonial rule. The independence of many Caribbean countries from European colonization happened in the mid-1960s. Canada brought in changes to immigration policies in relation to the Caribbean around this time while governments carried on the practice of residential schools and the removal of Indigenous children from their families. I recognize that, in Canada, the foundational reality of colonial legacies for the Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island is connected to experiences of immigration to Canada and the ways in which immigration, nation building, and colonization intersect.
Chapter 1

Introduction

1 Chapter One

1.1 Introduction – Outline of the thesis

This study is an exploration of the ways African Caribbean immigrant families (re) construct and navigate Canadian society in the context of oppression. I am using (re) construct instead of reconstruct in order to highlight the fact that the study is an exploration of the ways in which family is being defined, imagined, and enacted by African Caribbean immigrant families beyond the dominant Eurocentric norm. The African Caribbean experience places in the foreground the importance of speaking to the specificity of difference within the shared experience of race and racism. My research specifically attends to the lived realities of the English-speaking African Caribbean population, which is the largest language group in the Caribbean. The African Caribbean population in Canada is necessarily and simultaneously central, visible, and invisible because of the use of the term “Black” to categorize immigrants of African descent from places as varied as the Caribbean, South America, the United States of America, Africa, and Europe. This usage conflates and obfuscates the specificities of the experiences across such diverse ethnicities and experiences. I aim to distinguish the African Caribbean immigrant experience from the general category of Black and at the same time maintain the centrality of anti-Blackness in Canada.

African Caribbean, Caribbeans, and Afro-Caribbean will be used interchangeably in this study to refer to people from the Caribbean region self-identified as being of African descent. For my study, Caribbean as a space and place is being defined in terms of the English-speaking Caribbean, which is consistent with what Gaztambide-Géigel (2004) refers to as the insular Caribbean, an area where “the common experience of the slave driven sugar plantations” is shared and highlighted (p. 138). This definition contextualizes the colonial roots of Africans in the Caribbean and the complicated relationships between colonialism and its legacies in migration.
In this first chapter, I introduce and contextualize the African Caribbean experience of migration to Canada that so often includes lengthy separations and strained reunifications. Many families experience living apart, separated by national borders and immigration policies. Caribbean transnational families and their configurations can help to illuminate the challenges as well as the potential transformations involved in (re)constructing immigrant families. The experience of dealing with conditions of oppression created and sustained through colonial policies and practices in both the Caribbean and Canada further highlights the risks for these families involved in immigration.

In this thesis, the Caribbean is put in a historical, economic, and political context in relation to Canada’s nation-building\(^1\) efforts in order to shed some light on the circumstances that contribute to migration out of the Caribbean. Canada’s nation building was supported by social work’s professionalization at the beginning of the 20th century. The social work profession has continued to play an important role in Canada’s nation-building efforts, especially in relation to colonization and immigration and their impact on African Caribbean immigrant families.

The second chapter sets out the theoretical framework for the study, that is, a critical decolonizing approach that accounts for the contextual, historical, and political framing of the lives of African Caribbean immigrant families. This framework is informed by Critical Race Theory (CRT), Black Feminist Thought (BFT), and anti-colonial and Indigenous approaches. It attends to the contributions and limitations of anti-racism and anti-oppressive practice (AOP) and grounds the study firmly in a critical decolonizing perspective. Counter to the traditional approach in grounded theory and building on constructivist grounded theory, race and racism in this work do not have to “earn [their] way in” (Clarke, 2008, p. 164) to grounded theory, but rather are treated as ever present and requiring acknowledgement. CRT, BFT, anti-racism, AOP, and anti-colonial and Indigenous approaches all challenge the exclusion, erasure, and silencing of race and racism in social work and constructivist grounded theory research. To these perspectives, I have added my concept of social injury in order to support a more nuanced understanding of what happens to families and society, beyond the frequent focus of social work on the individual, when society experiences the impact of structural violence.

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\(^1\) In this dissertation, I employ a critical understanding of nation building as set out in the seminal work of Thobani (2007), which specifically attends to the roles of power, racism, and institutional and state practices in the formation of a nation state (p.160).
The third chapter provides an overview and critical evaluation of existing literature in order to situate my study in relation to earlier works. I discuss relevant literature from the areas of psychology and immigration, and identify significant ideas and findings. I examine the literature through the lens of a critical decolonizing approach informed by CRT, BFT, AOP, and anti-racism, anti-colonial, and Indigenous approaches. These are the sensitizing concepts that serve to locate the specific realities of African Caribbean participants at the centre rather than on the margins of the study. The literature review offers an overview and analysis of relevant research, identifies contributions and gaps, and situates my study in relation to the existing literature.

In the fourth chapter, I describe the methodology used in the study, which builds on the epistemology of constructivist grounded theory to more directly address issues of race, racism, and colonization. I highlight the constructivist turn that creates space for a more critical race and decolonizing approach to grounded theory.

The findings of the study are addressed in Chapter Five. Here, the experience of migration for African Caribbean immigrant families is analyzed as a way of striving for survival under oppressive conditions through a series of losses exemplified by multiple separations and precarious reunifications. The findings are grouped under three key themes: “Keeping Up,” “Child Rearing,” and “Cast Out.” “Keeping up” includes staying in touch across national boundaries, maintaining parental/family responsibilities by providing economic support through remittances, exploring opportunities for employment, expectations of wealth, and return visits to the Caribbean. “Child Rearing” involves experiences of discipline, violence, separation, and reunification, and the ways these experiences are managed through informal networks that serve as long-term and long-distance child care and child welfare. “Cast Out” refers to experiences of being kicked out, pushed out, and left out. Figure 1 illustrates the relationships among these key themes.

Chapter Six discusses and situates the findings in relation to existing literature and practice issues, and highlights the ways that issues of oppression interfere with African Caribbean family (re) construction. I theorize about how African Caribbean immigrants (re) construct family in the context of oppression. The limitations of the study are considered, and implications and directions for future research are indicated.
In Chapter Seven, I conclude the dissertation by discussing the importance of both acknowledging needs and rights, and taking action. Finally, I discuss the implications of my research findings for social work when social work professionals are working alongside African Caribbean immigrant families.

1.2 African Caribbean Immigrant Families - A Better Life

Migration is not without risks to life chances and life itself. For Melanie Biddersingh, a young girl from Jamaica, the opportunity to come to Canada to live with her family for an opportunity to have a better life was not supposed to be a risk to her life or worse than staying in the Caribbean, but it was. Melanie and her brothers were sent here to Canada by their mother, who was struggling to provide for the family in Jamaica; her mother sent them to live with their father and stepmother in Toronto with the hope for a better life (Pagliaro, 2013). Melanie experienced a violent and horrific life and death that included being beaten, starved of food, kept in a closet, and then killed. What was left of her tiny body was found in a burned suitcase in 1994 (Torstar News Service, 2012). Melanie’s death has gained significant media attention in Toronto during the past few years, particularly with the recent sentencing of her father for first-degree murder and her stepmother for second-degree murder. Her tragic death is an extreme version of what can happen in a (re) constructed Caribbean immigrant family in Canada. Melanie’s mother’s hope for a better life for her children turned into a horror story that added insult to injury. Despite her mother’s plea for help from the authorities in the Caribbean and Canada, the attention to Melanie’s life and death was much worse than inadequate. Melanie suffered inhumane treatment and indignity, was kept away from her family in the Caribbean, and ultimately murdered. Both she and her brother died here in Toronto as teenagers, and their lives of abuse and torment were seemingly invisible to anyone in the outside world (James, 2015a). This is a startling example of the simultaneous invisibility and representation of African Caribbean immigrants because, as reported by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, the police investigating the suicide of Melanie’s brother approximately one year after they immigrated did not call the Children’s Aid Society (“Here’s what the jury,” 2016). There was nothing in place to protect them as immigrant children in life or death from their father and stepmother’s abuse and maltreatment. Ultimately, her father was tried and convicted of first-degree murder in her death, with no chance of parole for 25 years (James, 2015b). The conditions of violence that Melanie suffered in her young life need to be accounted for within the larger social, economic, and political contexts of Canada and
the Caribbean. Her experience is a reflection of not only some of the realities of the individual and community, but also of the structural violence that informed her unique experience as an African Caribbean immigrant child.

Immigration from the Caribbean is not typically associated with extreme hardships related to war, famine, or persecution, and certainly not with conditions as dire or desperate as the conditions often associated with migrants from Africa. Without a context for migration from the Caribbean, immigration is by default viewed as an individual choice exercised under normal circumstances. That may be the case for some Caribbean people, but for others that understanding would not apply. A common reason offered for the migration of African Caribbean families from the Caribbean in the mid-1900s has been framed in terms of the pursuit of a “better life” or a “maximization of household income” (Palmer, 1990, p. 5). The Caribbean region lost more than five million people in the late 20th century to migration (Braziel, 2008).

The need to migrate for labour or education is generally not perceived negatively by African Caribbean families, but rather acknowledged as a desirable opportunity that will hopefully mean improvement in the life conditions for the whole family, especially their children. To this extent, immigration in these societies is seen as a cultural expectation (Thomas-Hope, 1992) that leads individuals to expect that, at some point in their lives, they will be able to leave their country and go abroad, where living conditions will be better. The pursuit of higher education, better employment opportunities, or family reunification are some of the reasons why English-speaking African Caribbean families migrate to places like England, the United States of America, and Canada. Braziel (2008) refers to such individuals as “postcolonial emigres,” who migrate from previously colonized territories in pursuit of rights to education, economic betterment, and citizenship. This happens often as a logical outcome of the colonial dream (of a “better life”) that has been planted like a seed since childhood.

The history and politics of the economic relationships between the Caribbean region and Canada exemplify the complexities and layered qualities of the larger issues of globalization, and also the challenges involved in the movement of people across borders. The search for “a better life” frames the issue of migration from the Caribbean as an individually motivated search and choice. This myth of a better life (Wolff, 2013) is heavily promoted through American imperialism (Ritzer, 2010) and arguably nurtured and sustained globally by neoliberal economic practices. Neoliberalism, like social work, emerged from the city of Chicago. Ritzer (2010) states that,
under the guidance of economist Milton Friedman, the University of Chicago became an important centre for the development of neoliberalism, which combines notions about individual liberty and neo-classical economics. He describes the emergence of neoliberalism from the 1930s to its development over the course of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century and the significant influence of Friedman’s students, who returned to Chile during the 1970s and implemented his ideas (p. 111). The “privatization of industry, deregulation, and reduction of public spending on social welfare programs” were not successful and negatively impacted the poor, resulting in the worsening of their social conditions and the destruction of their social safety net (Ritzer, 2010, p. 135). The governments of Ronald Reagan in the US, Brian Mulroney in Canada, and Margaret Thatcher in the UK also employed variations of this neoliberal approach during the 1980s. The outsourcing of capital and the movement of sites of production to the global South were negative effects of neoliberalism in the Caribbean (Braziel, 2008) that led many people in the Caribbean to migrate to the global North in pursuit of employment and better life conditions.

Gaztambide-Géigel (2004) argues that, during the Second World War, the West Indies (a name that reflects Columbus’s imperial and colonial quest to reach India by sailing west from Europe) was transformed into the Caribbean “when the British survived on the basis of concessions to US hegemony in the Americas” (p. 140). The change signalled an imperial transition from the British Empire to the emergent American “empire.” The victors of the Second World War founded the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank to help with the rebuilding of Europe after the war (Black et al., 2003), but the reach of the IMF and World Bank would rapidly be felt beyond Europe. During the mid-1960s, European colonial rule in the Caribbean gave way to independent nation states and struggles for decolonization within the Caribbean region (Williams, 1984). For European interests, the change in colonial power amounted to a strategic shift from the associated costs and responsibilities of official colonization to an unacknowledged economic and financial colonization of the territories. This neo-colonialism depended on the predatory lending practices of the IMF and World Bank, which resulted in the indebtedness of the newly formed nation-states to their previous European empires and to the developing American imperialism (Black et al., 2003). This political and economic context stifled the choice of governing systems and maintained the dominance of European and American power in the Caribbean region (Black et al., 2003; West-Durán, 2003).
In the latter half of the 20th century, African Caribbean people did not escape the effects of globalization and free trade. The underdevelopment of the region from the 1970s, along with the neoliberal policies of the IMF and World Trade Organization, including austerity requirements, created long-term indebtedness and the economic dependency of the countries in the Caribbean region (Girvan, 1980). In the 1980s, the advancement of free trade policies and the development of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) provided the conditions under which multinational companies could create temporary manufacturing operations in countries, exempt from the jurisdictions of those countries. In effect, they created denationalized zones (Klein, 2007). For example, a free zone was set up in Jamaica where garment materials, such as the collars for designer shirts, were brought into a guarded complex to be sewn by predominantly female workers for low wages (Black et al., 2003). When the Jamaican workers protested their working conditions and went on strike, the company locked them out, brought in workers from China, and eventually shut down the operation (Black et al., 2003). This exploitation of female workers in the garment industry exemplified the kinds of negative practices utilized by multinational companies in the Caribbean, which were enabled and supported by the neoliberal agenda of deregulation, and also their economic and political effects on globalization.

The lure of the metropolis and its abundance of resources stand in stark contrast to the conditions of high unemployment rates and poverty in the various Caribbean countries (Bowen, 2007). It is really not a surprise then that, facing these types of severe conditions of underdevelopment, Caribbean citizens venture, at great expense, to remove themselves from the Caribbean when an opportunity becomes available. Immigrating can be a matter of survival for some African Caribbean people, as it is for others in the global South; thus, they commonly resort to immigration to Europe, the United States of America, and Canada in search of better employment opportunities and living conditions.

In order to fully understand the impact of high rates of migration on the Caribbean region, it is necessary to examine the impact migration has had on the families that must deal with the separations involved. The migration of family members out of the Caribbean to the global North for employment often means the separation of children from their parent(s) (Bakker, Eilligs-Pels, & Reis, 2009). What is it like for African Caribbean immigrant families who separate from their families to seek a better life? The specific circumstances of their experiences of rebuilding
families in Canada can now be placed at the centre of this research and prioritized for exploration.

1.3 Background: Accounting for the Presence of People of African Descent in Canada - Building a Nation

People of African descent have been in Canada for 400 years (Milan and Tran, 2004). Controlling and managing the movement of African Caribbean peoples into and out of what is now Canada has been inextricably linked to the policies and practices of colonial nation building. The presence of African Caribbean people in Canada has been marked by resistance from the bureaucratic gatekeepers of immigration and by the incredible perseverance of immigrants themselves. The history of Canada’s colonial agenda reveals that the Canadian nation state has been built through the practice of welcoming preferred settlers, keeping out unwanted immigrants, and colonizing the Indigenous populations (Thobani, 2007). The impact and influence of this colonial ideology on the lives of African Caribbean peoples was apparent in the early 1900s, when African Caribbean people were subject to specific bureaucratic exclusion that prevented entering and staying in Canada (Shultz, 1982). The exclusion of people of African descent from migrating to Canada was the policy until the mid-1900s, based explicitly on race and on worry about issues of assimilation and the creation of a “Black problem.” People of African descent who wanted to immigrate also faced these kinds of anti-Black restrictive and exclusionary immigration policies in the United States of America and the United Kingdom (Bashi, 2004). Under pressure from Commonwealth countries, Canada’s shift in its immigration policies in the 1950s cracked the door open for the entry of a trickle of immigrants from the Caribbean. This was a concession on the part of the Canadian government to demonstrate that racism was not part of its immigration policies; however, the centrality of race in the formulation of these changes was evident in the restrictions imposed on who could immigrate and under what conditions (Satzewich, 1989).

The influence of the anti-Black racism on the practices of bureaucrats in immigration offices meant limited opportunities for African Caribbean immigration to Canada, with few exceptions. The “Domestic Scheme” stands out as one of the few opportunities available to African Caribbean women to migrate to Canada before 1962 (Calliste, 1991). Young Black women

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2 Thobani identifies the tensions at play in nation building among the exalted colonial subjects, the unwanted immigrants, and the Indigenous peoples of Canada.
without children who were willing to come as live-in domestic workers were allowed into the
country under the “Domestic Scheme” in the 1920s, the 1950s, and the 1960s (Calliste, 1991).
The changes to the earlier racist immigration policies that took place in the 1960s did not stop
the immigration practices that continued to restrict the flow of African Caribbean people into
Canada (Satzewich, 1989).

Prior to the shift in the mid-1970s to a point system, the Canadian immigration process excluded
African Caribbean people on the basis of race and racism. Yet, despite the shift to the point
system, the immigration process remained biased even as it operated on the assumption of
colour-blind equality. This approach to dealing with racial bias and inequality was based on the
supposition that race was no longer an issue because, at the time, entry into Canada from Europe
and especially from other regions, such as Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean, was based on a point
system that would yield deserving, desirable, and meritorious immigrants. Anyone who could
achieve enough points would have an equal opportunity to enter Canada and was expected to
assimilate and contribute through hard work.

The acquisition of the points needed for entry include possession of enough desired education
and financial resources, two assets that are often difficult to access for African Caribbean
immigrants. Whether applying from inside Canada or from the Caribbean, African Caribbean
immigrants face specific anti-Black racism. The immigration policies directed towards African
Caribbean immigrants reflect a management approach, as compared to a welcoming approach,
which European immigrants have received both in the past and in the current time frame.
Historically, the colonial governments of Canada have recruited immigrants from Europe to
build the nation on disputed lands and have continued this strategy for nation building with
peoples from non-European countries. For example, in the face of high unemployment rates on
reserves in Canada, the recent Conservative government, under the leadership of then Prime
Minister Stephen Harper, recruited immigrants from Ireland and provided welcoming centres
that helped to facilitate their immigration process and expedited employment in Canada. At the
same time, the Harper government made it more difficult for African Caribbean immigrants to
sponsor family members through family reunification avenues by increasing both the length of
time and the cost to the sponsor of the personal financial responsibility for the sponsored family
member(s).
The marginalization faced by African Caribbean immigrants who made it through the point system shows up in the rates of underemployment (Block & Galabuzi, 2011). Their education, experience and credentials are not valued as equal or equivalent (Galarneau & Morissette, 2008); therefore, they end up working in short-term, part-time contract jobs or unemployed. The standardization of the point system used by immigration is a systemic mechanism that affirms the exalted status of the desirable immigrant and denies African Caribbean immigrants equitable access to Canada. Colour-blind equality obscures the everydayness of racism that is made visible in the experiences of racism detailed in the daily lives of the participants in this study.

The peak of migration from the Caribbean was in the mid to late 1970s to early 1980s and has been in decline ever since (Plaza, 2004). Almost 60% of the people who identified as having Caribbean origin live in Toronto and make up approximately 6% of the city’s population (Lindsay, 2001). The presence of African Caribbean populations is evident by the change in the faces of the city and also in the cultural and economic impact of festivals like Caribana. This cultural festival is one of the largest in North America and generates over $400 million in revenue for the city (Ogilvie, 2010). Despite this ability to generate profits for the city of Toronto, 45% of African, Black, and Caribbean families live below the poverty line (Ornstein, 2000).

1.4 Building a Profession

The recent account of the history of the professionalization of social work in Canada (Jennissen & Lundy, 2011) is a production of knowledge that normalizes the exclusion of Black and Indigenous peoples from the practice of social work. The inference may be drawn that they are undeserving of inclusion as practitioners or recipients of social work. Social work’s early focus on and movement towards professionalization meant that their efforts targeted immigrants and poor homeless children on the streets, while they remained silent about the residential schools charged with assimilating Indigenous children in support of Canada’s nation-building project.

When race and racism are marked as realities in social work, the question about who is being “helped” and who is doing the “helping” readily emerges.

Educated white women who embodied the nation-building agenda of keeping Canada white are presented as having launched the professional start of “legitimate” social work. The whiteness of social work was also draped in eugenics during this progressive era and was supported by
powerful social workers, including Jane Addams and Mary Richmond in the United States of America (Kennedy, 2008), and Charlotte Whitton in Canada (McLaren, 2008). The history of child welfare in Canada is one where educated upper class white women exercised cultural imperialism as they challenged the sexism and endorsed the racism of the late 1800s and early 20th century. Indeed Charlotte Whitton is the best example of the times, as she was simultaneously the head of the newly standardized child welfare system, the Canadian Council on Child Welfare, highly educated, politically active and a supporter of eugenics (McLaren, 2008). In the contestation about which immigrants should gain entry into Canada, she was against the immigration of the “feeble minded” (McLaren, 2008). She conducted research and made the case to the government that social work would and should be the profession that could not only bring standardization to the distribution of social welfare across Canada, but also make the shift from institutionalizing children to providing them with foster care (Struthers, 1981). She was instrumental in creating the social work profession for the newly educated class of women who, in the context of sexism, faced few or no prospects of employment and potential for independent living. The intersecting of these social locations all inform the ways in which she constructed child welfare in policy and practice in relation to immigrants, Indigenous peoples, and nation building.

Pon, Gosine, & Phillips (2011) highlight the ongoing predominance of white women in social work in Canada and implicate the historical caring efforts of these women in the national narratives that differentiated among the preferred national subject, the imperative to “kill the Indian,” and the unwanted racialized Other (p. 393). The active role of social work in the devastating history of the Indian residential schools (TRC, 2015); the Sixties Scoop, which describes a period of time when thousands of Indigenous children were removed from their families and adopted out to non-Indigenous families (Sinclair, 2007); and the current overrepresentation of Indigenous children and families in child welfare (Statistics Canada, 2011) all demonstrate the presence of racism and colonialism in social work’s path to professionalization.

### 1.5 Assimilation to Multiculturalism - Social Work Knowledge Production and Practice

Immigration policy is used as an instrument of nation building by restricting the number of people granted entry into Canada each year and by stipulating the particular criteria they must
meet. Canada’s immigration policy shifted from restrictive race-based criteria targeting unwanted African Caribbean immigrants in the first half of the 1900s (Shultz, 1982), to being the first country in the world to have multiculturalism as an official policy in 1971.

Social work reflected the nation-building agenda of the early policies that focused on assimilation of newcomers to white middle class ideals through the work of social workers in settlement houses and social welfare services (Iacovetta, 2006). The ideology of assimilation and the notion that Blacks could not assimilate were used as justifications for restrictive, race-based immigration policies. However, the shift towards multiculturalism sold an image of Canada as a country made up of many people of many cultures, and a belief that including more cultures would create a mosaic of those cultures. Social work reflected the nation-building agenda through the concepts of both assimilation and multiculturalism.

Social work’s use of a multicultural framing, in which African Caribbean immigrants are homogenized, pathologized, essentialized, and positioned as other, and in which the specificity of the African Caribbean immigrant experiences is decontextualized, is reflected in the materials produced in the 1980s and 1990s. The gap in knowledge production within the field of social work is illustrated in publications such as West Indians in Toronto (Christiansen, Thornley-Brown, Robinson, & Herberg, 1982), a book produced by The Family Services Association of Metropolitan Toronto; the Cultural Profiles Project (1997-2002), made available in hard copy and PDF versions on the web by the AMNI Centre at the Faculty of Social Work, University of Toronto; and, lastly, Frameworks for Cultural and Racial Diversity, a book by Dorothy Chave Herberg (1993) at the Department of Social Work, York University. All three approaches offer some degree of information about the culture of African Caribbean immigrants and ideas about how to work across these cultural differences. These productions demonstrate the ways in which social work carries out the nationalism of Canada’s shift to a multicultural approach and the implementation of its multicultural-based immigration policies. As funded projects of the government, they carry the weight and legitimacy of the state in their representations of Canada and its immigrant populations.

The application of a critical lens on multiculturalism by Yee and Dumbrill (2003) to these examples of social work knowledge production reveals how social work managed to avoid the issues of power, inequality, and whiteness. There is no questioning of Canada’s history of
colonialism and racism in the construction of the immigrant African Caribbean as the Other. Multiculturalism, according to Bannerji (2000), is situated in the legacy of colonial struggle between the French and British. This legacy contextualizes multiculturalism as an ideology and its use as an instrument of nation building. The restriction of African Caribbean immigration to Canada throughout the 20th century was grounded in racism, as was the history of the regulation of the movement of Africans in the diaspora during slavery and its abolition.

Social work failed to meaningfully address issues of race, racism, and power at the point of its inception as a profession in relation to unwanted immigrants and Indigenous peoples. For African Caribbean peoples specifically, both historically and contemporarily, this failure is reflected in the social work knowledge production and practice that either serve to make invisible or, alternatively, to individualize, homogenize, and de-politicize the experiences of African Caribbean families and communities.

1.6 Race, Racism, and Overrepresentation

Contextualizing the relationship between social work and African Caribbean immigrant families necessarily involves consideration of issues of race, racism, and diversity. African Caribbean immigrant families exemplify what Dominelli (2010) describes as service users who live global issues at the local level. Issues of race, racism, and diversity within racialized groups require attention and exploration in relation to social work and the experiences of African Caribbean immigrant families, as Caribbean immigrants deal with racism at both the individual and structural levels (Henry, 1994; James et al., 2010). These forms of racism are demonstrated in multiple ways, including daily microaggressions, police carding, education pushout (frequently referred to as “dropout”), and gross overrepresentation in the systems of criminal justice (Sapers, 2013) and child welfare (CAST, 2015). For example, data from the Toronto District School Board indicates that almost 40% of African Caribbean students drop out of school (Anisef, Brown, & Sweet, 2010; Brown, 2009). Moreover, a recent report from the Office of the Correctional Investigator shows an overrepresentation of Black inmates, who make up almost 10% of the total prison population but account for only 2.9% of the general Canadian population (Sapers, 2013). This is an example of the kind of homogenizing of statistics in relation to race that is a reflection of and consistent with the problem of Canada’s omission of and general reluctance to include race in its collection of statistics. It is important to disaggregate the
ethnicities of immigrants included in the category of “Black” because the disaggregation can reveal the heterogeneity of the Black immigrant populations to Canada, as well as any significant differences among them. Despite the challenges posed by the inconsistent availability of disaggregated data for Black populations in Canada, the above statistics indicate a significant presence of African Caribbean immigrant families in conflict with the law, and also with educational systems and social services.

The issues of race, racism, representations and overrepresentations of African Caribbean immigrants become more complex in social work’s application of interventions, theory, and research. For example, consistently collecting and disseminating race-based data would be an important practice of transparency and community accountability on the part of child welfare organizations. Moreover, disaggregating race-based data is a necessary step that would more clearly demonstrate the diversity of ethnicities that make up the category of “Black” and reveal the presence, specific needs, challenges, and lived realities of African Caribbean families. The importance of disaggregating the data is underlined by the recently released data from CAST, which highlighted the diversity of country of birth among Black families: 47% of Black parents and 16% of the Black children involved with the agency were born in the Caribbean.

In her work exploring the experiences of African Caribbean families as service users in child welfare, Clarke (2012) highlights issues of institutional racism, sexism, and classism that marginalize and criminalize this population. The overrepresentation of African Caribbean children in the care of child welfare in Toronto is an issue that has long been known to the Caribbean and African communities, but only recently acknowledged by child welfare officials (CAST, 2015). In 2015, the CAST reported that Black children accounted for 41.8% of children in care, while Black children accounted for only 8% of the population of children in the city.  

The longstanding failure of Toronto-based child welfare agencies to report race-based statistics is consistent with the general practice of child welfare organizations in Canada at this time. The lack or limited availability of race-based data in child welfare exemplifies the silence on issues of race and racism in social services, which seriously hinders the potential to assist and meaningfully support families impacted by social work. Indeed, Clarke (2011) notes that workers

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3 CAST is only one of four child welfare agencies in Toronto, so this report still does not offer a full picture of the extent of overrepresentation.
are not always aware of race and racism and of the ways these phenomena can negatively impact African Caribbean immigrant families.

1.7 Towards a New Social Work – The Purpose of the study

The history of the helping profession of social work includes the profession’s enthusiastic enactment of the dominant society’s ideas about belonging, assimilating, and nation building. The actions of early social workers reflected white middle-class ideals and definitions about who deserves to be helped, which groups of people belong in Canada, and the culture to be considered the standard against which all others are to be assessed. The vulnerable and marginalized communities of Indigenous peoples, immigrants, and/or people living in poverty were predominantly on the receiving end of the old profession’s targeted “helping.”

A new social work needs to actively consider and address issues of race, racism, power, and colonialism. The purpose of this study is to explore how African Caribbean immigrant families (re) construct family in the context of immigration and oppression in Canada. This qualitative study seeks to examine retrospectively their lived experiences of separation and reunification with family. The study will contribute to social work’s understanding of African Caribbean immigrant families’ experiences of (re) constructing family in Canada in the context of oppression.
Chapter Two – Theoretical and Conceptual Issues

2.1 Theoretical Underpinning of the Methodological Approach: A Framework

In exploring how African Caribbean immigrants (re) construct family in the context of oppression in Canada, it is necessary to also address issues of race, class, gender, and colonization, and the ways in which they intersect at the theoretical level. Rather than ignoring or erasing these issues, my research reinserts them back into the discussion as relevant and central to understanding African Caribbean immigrant experiences within social work research. The following sensitizing concepts of Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001), Black Feminist Thought (Collins, 2000; Lorde, 1984), and a Decolonizing Approach that includes anti-colonial and Indigenous thought (Smith, 2012) will be employed to account for the need to include the conceptual issues of race, gender, class, intersectionality, and colonization. Additionally, these concepts serve as the theoretical underpinnings of the methodological approach and are further engaged to frame, integrate, and assess the existing literature.

2.2 Critical Race Theory

The existing gaps in the application of anti-racism and anti-oppressive practice reflect the persistent presence and morphing of racism. Additionally, multiculturalism, as outlined in the preceding section, is inadequate in its application in cases where racism and colonialism are avoided completely. After 100 years of professional practice, social work must address the overrepresentation of African Caribbean and Indigenous families in child welfare in relation to racism and colonization. When social work’s application of AOP or anti-racism avoids or fails to adequately address issues of race, racism, and power, or when social work relies on cultural stereotypes when dealing with diversity, the avoidance and reliance clearly signal that a new approach is needed.

CRT provides more robust strategies and analysis to address the limitations of AOP, anti-racism, and multiculturalism, and also to address their application in social work practice and research. Derrick Bell and Alan Freedman’s work is credited with the 1970s emergence of CRT (Delgado & Stefancic, 2013). Lawyers, activists, and legal scholars such as Kimberlé Crenshaw, Angela Harris, and Mari Matsuda joined with them to begin to strategize and theorize about how to
combat the new expressions of racism that they were observing and objecting to, in the stalling and rolling back of advances gained by the civil rights movement in the US (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). A basic tenet of CRT asserts that racism is common and that its very ordinariness indicates how unacknowledged it is and therefore how difficult to address (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Further, CRT contends that not seeing colour or a colour-blind concept of equality can address only extreme forms of racism. The daily forms of institutionalized racism remain untouched by the colour-blind approach, and the result is the erasure of consciousness about race and a failure to account for more nuanced or complex circumstances of inequity. CRT contests liberalism, which insists on treating everyone as the same despite differences in histories or present conditions, as an inadequate framework for dealing with racial inequality (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Importantly, CRT supports a social justice stance that elevates the voices of People of Colour (POC) from the margins and also values these voices and the counter-narratives that come from the experiential knowledge of POC. These characteristics are all consistent with the values of social work, which promote social justice, equity, and ethics; however, CRT adamantly requires the integration of consciousness with action. I would suggest that, in relation to the lived experiences of African Caribbean immigrant families and communities in Canada, social work as a profession is in a state of struggle to integrate consciousness of race, racism, and colonialism with action.

A second insight of CRT is about the social construction of race, as discussed by Haney Lopez (2013), who points to the reality and the ways that race is interpreted and used by society to create disadvantages for some and provide advantages to others. Moreover, Delgado & Stefancic (2012) assert that “race and races are products of social thought and relations. Not objective, inherent, or fixed, they correspond to no biological or genetic reality; rather, races are categories that society invents, manipulates, or retires when convenient” (p. 8). For example, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal has ruled that the government of Canada racially discriminated against Indigenous children and families in its funding practices for child welfare (The Canadian Press, 2016). The treatment of Indigenous children and their families by the government was unequal; they were denied equal access to resources, as compared to non-Indigenous children and families involved with child welfare and their particular histories of colonization and residential schools were not taken in account.
In valuing the voices and counter-narratives that come from the experiential knowledge of POC (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012), CRT also centres the concept of storytelling as a way in which POC can express their own unique perspectives about their experiences of racism. Storytelling in this way is an active mechanism for generating counter-narratives to the dominant stories about POC perpetuated in colonial societies built on a seemingly naturalized state of white supremacy.

Additionally, CRT assumes that movement towards attaining racial equality for racialized people depends on the convergence of the interests of the people in power with those of racialized people seeking that change (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015). An example of interest convergence would be Canada changing the overtly racist immigration laws that excluded POC from entering the country (Satzewich, 1989), to the use of the Domestic Scheme as a mechanism for Caribbean women to come to Canada (Calliste, 1991), in order to address the accusations of discrimination from other parts of the British empire like the British Caribbean countries.

Interest convergence alone does not necessarily address the specificity of a gendered analysis of the negative impact of Canada’s immigration policies on African Caribbeans, particularly those participating in the Domestic Scheme. In a more complex gendered analysis, proponents of the concept of intersectionality (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995) argue against the marginalizing of gender in relation to race in the previous iterations of race theory and for the centralizing of race; this concept reveals how CRT is informed by Black Feminist Thought. Crenshaw et al. (1995) account for the ways in which race and gender intersect to produce unique experiences of these multiple social locations and relations of power. This accounting creates space for multiple intersecting social identities and the unique voices that emerge from those experiences. Importantly, intersectionality does not treat these multiple social locations and identities as additive, which allows for the specificity of the experiences to be addressed. Intersectionality directly challenges the idea that any person needs to be considered through the single dimension of race alone (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015).

2.3 Black Feminist Thought

Although intersectionality is part of CRT, it is Black Feminist Thought (BFT) (Collins, 2000) that explicitly expands on the ways in which gender and other social locations such as race, class, and sexual orientation, for example, converge to produce unique experiences. A significant contribution of Collins’s (2000) scholarship to BFT is her theorizing about race, gender, and
class as structured and interlocking. BFT specifically discusses the “unique matrix of domination characterized by intersecting oppressions,” which accounts for the ways in which it is not static (p. 23). BFT also acknowledges the everydayness of racism, the problems associated with a colour-blind approach, and the erasure of the standpoints of oppressed groups (Collins, 2000). Objections to exclusion, marginalization, and victimization from outside or within Black communities are further themes in BFT, as are empowerment and activism (Collins, 2000; Lorde, 1984). For Collins, (2000) there is recognition of the knowledge that comes from African-American women being marginalized into domesticity and of being the outsider within, who is working for a white family and simultaneously not being part of that family. An important cornerstone of BFT is its accounting for the complexity of lived experience that challenges the false hierarchies that place one oppression over another. Race is not more important than gender, sexual orientation, class, nation, or other socially constructed categories; instead, these categories of oppression are reflections of social relations of power and privilege. Moreover, these kinds of oppressions are presented as interlocking systems of power within a context (Collins, 2000). BFT recognizes the situatedness of Black women in general and the specificity of African-American women’s standpoint. BFT (Collins, 2000) as a social theory returns the centrality of African-American women and the everydayness of racism to the struggle for empowerment and social justice.

CRT and BFT part ways when nationalism is taken into account. CRT discusses nationalism in contrast to assimilation and as a path to struggle against domination (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). BFT, in contrast, provides a much more nuanced and complicated gendered analysis of nationalism (Collins, 2000). Although CRT highlights the issue of the diversity of many communities in relation to nationalism, BFT’s analysis of nationalism accounts for the heterogeneity within Black Feminist struggles and identities, and advocates for an analysis that goes beyond the borders of the United States. Together, they convey the breadth and depth of their complex perspectives. CRT and BFT also acknowledge the reality and struggles of Indigenous peoples in the context of the United States and support decolonizing social theory. Importantly, the specificity of African Caribbean immigrant families’ experiences is recognized by BFT through discussions about the African diaspora.
2.4 The Limits of Anti-racism and Anti-Oppression Practice in Social Work

My study holds race and racism as important factors in the exploration of the experiences of African Caribbean immigrants who are rebuilding their families in Canada. In order to address the systemic reality of race and racism at the site of social work’s assessments and interventions, it is necessary to provide contextualization by referencing the centuries-long history of Blacks in Canada (Mensah, 2010; Milan & Kelly, 2004; Winks, 1971), the reality of slavery in Canada for both Blacks and Indigenous peoples (Cooper, 2006; Trudel & Tombs, 2013), racism in Canada (Shadd, Cooper, & Smardz Frost, 2005), and colonization in Canada, especially in relation to discussions about the limits of anti-racism by Lawrence & Dua (2005). Lawrence and Dua (2005) forcefully assert that anti-racism is incompatible with decolonizing approaches when it does not address the realities and legacies of colonialism. The reality of racism experienced at the individual, everyday, institutional, systemic, cultural, and ideological levels by African Caribbean people in Canada has also been acknowledged as a problem (Henry, 1994; James, 2010). Resistance against racism and advocates’ efforts to achieve change further characterize the history of racism in Canada. From the individual efforts of Viola Desmond in Nova Scotia to the organized civil disobedience in the 1950s, which targeted Dresden in northern Ontario (Walker, 2010), an anti-racism approach has involved the fight for the elimination of racism and the promotion of equity.

Despite its importance as an approach, anti-racism has significant limitations; it has, for example, been critiqued as problematic because of its focus on only one kind of oppression (Lorde, 1984; Collins, 2000). Lawrence & Dua (2005) additionally problematize anti-racism by pointing to the need for anti-racism to address colonization in order to remain relevant and contextualized as a means for creating social change in Canada. The use of an anti-racism approach also must face the critique levelled by Jeffery (2005) about the problems encountered in anti-racism’s application in social work; she contends that it can reproduce the dominant by virtue of the gap that exists between theory and practice. The range of these limitations supports exploration and a move towards an anti-oppression approach, which aligns with social work’s value of social justice.

It is important that an anti-oppression approach appears to recognize and be much more inclusive of a variety of the structural oppressions that people experience in their daily lives. Anti-
Oppression Practice (AOP) attempts to address social work’s application of the values of social justice and equality, with an emphasis on recognizing both the individual difficulties and the institutional forces that are creating them (Baines, 2011). AOP has also been transformed through Indigenous perspectives to mean a way of life (Thomas & Green, 2007). The process of developing an AOP approach has further had to contend with the significant issues raised by questions about how to work through the tensions involved in attending to particular forms of oppression (Barnoff & Moffatt, 2007) and by the problematic possibility of equating all oppressions, whereby racism becomes void of context.

The challenges described above raise important concerns about limitations in the application of anti-racism and anti-oppressive approaches, especially in social work research and interventions. A key concern for social work is how to apply these concepts that challenge structural issues, without returning to an individualizing understanding of race and racism. Within these approaches, race and racism move in and out of relevance, and the re-inscription of the dominant seems a constant challenge to bridging the application of anti-racism and anti-oppression approaches to practice. However, I contend that anti-racism alone is simultaneously too broad and too narrow to capture the complicated experiences of African Caribbean immigrant families.

Anti-Black Racism (ABR), in contrast, offers a kind of specificity in the identification of what is missing from the application of anti-racism and anti-oppressive practice, since ABR identifies the specific target population of the racism as Black. ABR problematizes and contextualizes the meaning of Black in relation to social relations of power and simultaneously centralizes the specificity of the target population. ABR talks back to the ways that social work’s use of a multicultural approach such as cultural competence focuses on differences among and generalizations about groups of people and also permits the erasure of race and, more particularly, the racism targeted towards people marked as Black.

AOP can also sometimes seem to omit the historical, political, economic, colonial, and sociocultural contexts, omissions that make it more like multiculturalism (Pon et. al., 2011; Yee &Wagner, 2013) Any application of anti-oppression that acts like multiculturalism inherently centralizes the dominant by homogenizing, essentializing, and pathologizing those who are marked as different from the dominant. The challenge for social work is how to practice AOP
and maintain a focus on equity, transformative change, and the specificity of the ways in which race and racism are enacted.

2.5 Anti-colonial and Indigenous Approaches - Decolonizing

The efforts to break free from colonialism’s grip happen at various levels of resistance, including independence struggles and academic challenges to the supremacy of the colonial project. In the tumultuous 1960s, English-speaking Caribbean islands, after much concerted political effort, experienced the official shift from the status of British colonies to the status of independent nation-states (Williams, 1984). Internationally, there was a significant production of knowledge about post-colonialism by academics in the fields of cultural studies, history, and literature. Loomba (2005) highlights these scholars’ concerns about the silencing of the colonized, the recovery of the histories of the colonized, the domination and agency of the colonized, the contested voice of the oppressed, and issues of representation. These concerns reflected a heightened awareness of the fight for social justice.

The fight for liberation from colonization continues today in Canada for Indigenous peoples as they navigate contested territories, persistent race-based legislation, and unsettled land claims (Cannon & Sunseri, 2011). The complex of academic research has not escaped the questioning of its role in the colonial project, particularly the ways in which the research has caused harm to Indigenous communities internationally. Smith (2012) definitively outlines the ways Western colonial research is implicated in the oppression of Indigenous peoples around the world. She demonstrates how the epistemological and ontological underpinnings of Western colonial research enable researchers to simultaneously claim to be experts about Indigenous people and yet still refuse to recognize Indigenous rights, land claims, or ways of knowing as legitimate. This contradiction challenges research and researchers specifically in relation to Indigenous communities and knowledge production, and generally raises questions about epistemological and ontological assumptions and other ideas involved in conducting research. For example, questions about who gets to determine what, if any, research is conducted and who owns the research confront the history of research conducted in the name of Canada’s colonial project. First Nations in Canada have addressed these issues through the establishment of Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession (OCAP) principles, which aim to reestablish self-determination.
for First Nations in relation to research conducted in First Nations communities (First Nation Information Governance Centre, 2016).

A decolonizing approach recognizes that Indigenous peoples in Canada continue to deal with the legacies of colonialism and accounts for the ways those legacies are linked to the experiences of African Caribbean immigrants to Canada. Therefore, research, its methods and application with African Caribbean immigrants in Canada must to be historicized within the legacies of colonialism. This historical perspective then allows us to draw parallels between the experiences of overrepresentation by both Indigenous and African Caribbean immigrant populations in the child welfare and criminal justice systems and the high push-out rates from educational institutions. This parallel highlights a context of systemic oppression that necessitates enactment of social work research and practice focused on social justice.

All of these concepts together help to address the erasure and silence, and also the salience of issues of oppression: racism, sexism, classism, hetero-normativity, and colonialism, and the ways these issues intersect with each other and other forms of oppressions to produce unique experiences for African Caribbean immigrants. The concepts all acknowledge the reality of structural violence, inequity, and the need for change through action, and they all challenge the imposition upon POC of the hierarchy of Western ideas and activities. They also reject white supremacy. However, beyond the challenges involved in the application of these concepts, there is the problem that they do not account for the injurious impact on society of practices of oppression. Johan Galtung’s (1969) concept of structural violence paved the way for the recognition of violence at institutional and individual levels. Galtung (1969) recognized that, although structural violence was difficult to prove empirically, violence was happening at an institutional level and that it had a negative impact. He defined violence as “present when human beings are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realizations are below their potential realizations” (p. 168). The concept of structural violence addresses the ways people’s life chances are affected by and reflected in society, but not the injury to society. The ways society becomes injured by these inequities and the distribution of responsibility for these inequities warrant further exploration.
2.6 Social Injury

I offer my concept of social injury to capture the ways in which colonial and imperial violence has negative impacts on society in general and how we might redistribute the responsibility for oppression and its elimination. Social injury is the identification of the impact of the collective harm from the unequal distribution of social responsibility for the problems of inequity. My concept of social injury refers to my thinking about harm and healing at both the societal and individual level; that is, in much the same way that individuals can be injured and healed, so too can society. The many individual experiences of structural oppression together form a collective experience of harm and healing that become a mirror of social injury. Social injury is a way of understanding the collective harm that African Caribbean immigrants experience from oppression, as identified in their everyday individual and structural experiences. For example, oppression generally and racism specifically are harmful to society, and they are evident in the overrepresentation of African Caribbean families (CAST, 2015) and Indigenous peoples (Statistics Canada, 2011) in the social welfare system. Social injury is reflected in the ways the negative impact of race and racism becomes normalized, as evidenced in the parallel tracks of the overrepresentation of African Caribbean and Indigenous peoples in areas of poverty, child welfare, incarceration, and high school push-out rates. These overrepresentations are social injuries because they affect society as a whole, that is, not only the individuals experiencing these kinds of structural violence, but also their communities.

The elements of action and of doing something to create change are part of what makes CRT, BFT, Indigenous approaches, AOP, and anti-racism significant and different; their proponents insist on remedying the identified social justice issues of oppression through positive action for change. In the light of these approaches, I began to consider action and responsibility on an individual level and on a broader social level. I reflected on what happens when no individual is held to account for discriminatory social policy; there is a kind of intentional and unintentional acceptance of the impact of oppression on POC when no action is taken to change the conditions of oppression. This is when I thought about the harm as a social injury.

The responsibility for society’s structural inequalities such as unequal access to and distribution of social resources is expected to be handled by individuals who are collectively marked, for example, by race, and who are then expected to be individually responsible for managing the
impact of these structural inequities. The concept of social injury questions how the responsibility for the negative impact of harmful social policies can become more equitably socially distributed. Harm and disadvantages accrued from social policies such as slavery, colonization, and imperialism were enacted at the individual, community, and institutional levels. The concept of social injury helps to expand the sites for change in order to move responsibility beyond the individual level and include community-based and structural change.

2.7 Articulating a Critical Decolonizing Approach: Bringing it Together

My critical decolonizing approach to research is enacted through the multiple lenses of CRT, BFT, a critical analysis of anti-racism and AOP, and anti-colonial and Indigenous approaches by positioning the experiences of African Caribbean immigrant families in Canada in the context of European colonialism and American imperialism. This approach includes a decolonizing analysis of the very existence of the Canadian state and the nation states of the Caribbean and the ways these came to be in relation to each other as a result of the historical and ongoing legacies of colonial policies and practices. My model for a critical decolonizing analysis specifically includes the process of contextualizing, de-pathologizing, historicizing, de-individualizing, and politicizing the experiences of African Caribbean peoples in Canada. This approach is also applied to the profession of social work and its response to African Caribbean communities. It is important that my critical decolonizing approach acknowledges the necessity of writing myself into the story. It is also important that I be conscious about where I start the story, where I venture in the story, and where I stop. In these stories about African Caribbean immigrant families, I centre complex and layered African Caribbean experiences, realities, and perspectives.

Importantly, the limitations of these approaches when they are considered individually are reconciled when they are taken up together in my critical decolonizing approach. For example, race, racism, and ABR are centralized in CRT. However, for a more complicated understanding of race, racism, and ABR in relation to multiple oppressions, I turned to BFT because it offers the concept of intersectionality without decentralizing race, racism, and ABR. Moreover, BFT presents the concept of interlocking systems of domination, which accounts for heterogeneity in the experiences of oppressions without reliance on the hierarchy of oppression. These theoretical perspectives are from the fields of law and sociology respectively, and they are often challenging to apply, especially in the field of social work. The strength of AOP and anti-racism lies in the
challenges posed by their application to social work practice; they are important because they can also contribute to implications for social work. At the very least, these perspectives continue to have opportunities to be implemented and enacted. However, it is the need for the application of these perspectives in social work that informs the imperative that these perspectives meet the criteria of anti-colonial/Indigenous perspectives, in order to deepen their analysis and their capacity to historicize and contextualize practice in healing ways.

My critical decolonizing approach maintains the humanity, dignity, memory, and history of African Caribbean immigrant families. This approach does not separate African Caribbean immigrant families’ experience of violence at the hands of family from the context of their lives and the violence they collectively face at the hands of the state, or from the context of their families’ lives in the Caribbean; instead, this approach considers the injuries they suffer in relation to the interlocking systems of domination in terms of history, the legacy of colonialism, poverty, sexism, and racism. This contextualizing keeps intact the discussion about the damage of structural violence, with an opening up of and to the particular experiences of structural violence that African Caribbean immigrants experience within their families and communities. My critical decolonizing approach makes visible the need to account for their lives, migration experiences, and, for some, their deaths at the hands of parents and guardians. The approach also makes the need to account for systemic oppression visible and raises questions about how the oppression reflects on the society where such experiences occur. Society has to account for African Caribbean immigrant families’ triumphs or tragedies; I offer the concept of social injury\textsuperscript{4} as a way to understand what happens and as a way to build on my critical decolonizing approach.

\textsuperscript{4} See Appendix J for Diagram E: Relational Decolonizing approach in social work with African Caribbean immigrants. This diagram was developed in an earlier paper in order to account for the inequitable impact of oppression in Canada of African Caribbeans and Indigenous populations from a decolonizing perspective (Hackett, 2013).
Diagram A: Getting “Sensitized” - A Bounty of Concepts

The use of these theoretical perspectives as sensitizing concepts fundamentally acknowledges the history of colonialism and racism in both academic research and the profession of social work. No single theory can account for everything, and these theoretical perspectives complement and enhance one another to inform my methodology.
3 Chapter Three - Review of the Practice Literature - Introduction

I searched under the subject “social work” in the databases of Social Work Applied Social Services Index and Abstracts and Social Work abstracts, using the search terms Caribbean Immigrants, African Caribbean Immigrants, Caribbean Immigrant, and parent-child. I searched under the subject “Black Studies” in the database of Francis (Humanities and Social Sciences), using terms that included Caribbean Immigrant, and Caribbean and empirical research. All the searches yielded a dearth of literature. Social work was searched specifically through Social Work Abstracts with the following terms: Immigrant, Caribbean, Immigrant Caribbean, African Caribbean, West Indian, Afro-Caribbean. The PsychoInfo database was also searched, using the terms Caribbean immigrants and Caribbean immigrants and separation.

It is the everydayness of racism that remains interwoven rather than singular or peripheral in the lives of African Caribbean immigrants as they move through the experience of immigrating to Canada and (re) constructing their families. This population and their experiences have been understudied in research in Canada and in the literature of other nation-states that receive African Caribbean immigrants (i.e., UK, US). The available literature is dispersed in various disciplines and across geographical areas. In addition to social work research, the results reflected research in various disciplines from psychology (Smith et. al., 2004; Pottinger et. al., 2008) to epidemiology (Williams et. al., 2007). Studies of immigration that explore Caribbean populations in the US have focused more on the Spanish-speaking Caribbean populations that also have histories of parent-child separation resulting from migration. The research addressing English-speaking Caribbean immigrants ranges in focus from how they are in comparison to African Americans (Rogers, 2004), to health-seeking behaviours (Pivnick, et. al., (2010), education (Mathews & Mahoney, 2005), and mental health (Murphy and Mahalingham, 2006). The UK received the first big wave of migration of English speaking Caribbean immigrants in Europe and they too have focused on and adjustment and the issue of separation and reunification (Arnold, 2012). Social work has relied on related disciplines like psychology, psychiatry and biomedicine as a primary way to inform the helping provided to individual and families from marginalized communities. However, these disciplines operate largely from deficit-based perspectives. Mental health is the area of study about Caribbean immigrants that garners the most attention in UK and US, but less so in Canada as we do not collect race-based
data. Although the literature on mental health and Caribbean immigrants stands out as a large area of the research, its offerings are unclear. For example, Seeman (2011) contends that there is a lack of evidence to support the perceived high rates of psychosis among African Caribbean subjects in Canada; whereas, in the UK, there is a problem with the overrepresentation of African Caribbean immigrants in mental health institutions (Jackson et. al., 2007). However, in the US, Williams et al. (2007) found that the ethnic diversity and heterogeneity of the Black population matter in terms of the elevated rates of psychiatric disorders among third generation Caribbean Blacks, as compared to first generation Caribbean Blacks. Murphy and Mahalingham (2006) studied the perceived congruence between expectations and outcomes for Caribbean immigrants and added to the range of results relating to mental health. Despite the fact that there is little agreement in the literature psychology provides, psychology remains the discipline that social work often aligns itself with to inform interventions with children and families.

3.1 Psychology - Attachment and Social Work

In psychology helping has been constructed as neutral, devoid of political content, and focused on individual adjustment. Helping is not neutral (Lundy, 2010; Pollack, 2007), and neither is social work’s reliance on the theories generated by the discipline of psychology, which focuses on individual/family and intra/interpersonal dynamics. The welfare of vulnerable children is one area where social work’s presence is expected, and, for this purpose, the education of social workers now includes a reliance on “evidence-based theories” to ensure good practice. One of the theories asserted to be based on significant amounts of evidence is attachment theory, which is now part of the arsenal of theoretical foundations currently utilized in the training of social work practitioners at University of Toronto, Factor Inwentash Faculty of Social Work, Canada’s oldest school of social work.

Over the course of more than 50 years, voluminous amounts of research that support the importance of attachment theory have been conducted in the field of developmental psychology (Cassidy & Shaver, 2008). The assumption underlying attachment theory is that the relationships between infants and their caregivers have a significant influence on later development and function as a template for the children throughout their life spans (Howe, 1995). Slater (2007) contextualizes how attachment theory is situated in the turn away from drive theories to more relational theories. Specifically, she identifies that studies conducted by various disciplines,
including social work, highlighted violence against children (physical, sexual, and emotional abuse), which made important contributions towards explanations about the consequences in children’s later development. This acknowledgement of relational power supported the growth of attachment theory.

Despite the theory’s many strengths, Slater (2007) argues that the focus on the mother as the selected attachment figure in attachment theory based on the assumption that she provides primary child care, reveals an underlying gender bias about the role of women to stay home and take care of children. Furthermore, she contends that it is inappropriate to pathologize children for having a troublesome start in life. Additionally, Slater asserts that individual differences matter in terms of how early relationships might affect later ones and furthermore, that the biological features of attachment theory are essentially grounded in animal studies.

It is interesting that Van Oudenhoven and Hofstra’s (2006) study applies attachment theory to acculturation, using the model of adult attachment offered by Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) to investigate “the relation between attachment styles of migrants and their adjustment to the new culture” (p. 786-787). The combination of these issues would seem useful in the case of African Caribbean immigrants. However, social work’s adherence to attachment theory as a primary guide for explanation and intervention has not taken into account the specificity and differences of African Caribbean immigrant families. When attachment theory and its explanations are applied in the same way across the board in social work practice with African Caribbean immigrants, this application necessarily enacts a colour-blind approach to equality and ignores the salience of race, racism, and power. What can attachment theory offer to African Caribbean immigrants in explanations about the experiences of separation and reunification with parents after significant periods of time? In relation to African Caribbean immigrants, how does attachment theory hold up?

### 3.2 African Caribbean Immigrants, Attachment, and Social Work

There is a dearth of literature in social work about this particular population. The commonness of separation and reunification in African Caribbean immigrant family configurations warrants a closer look (Dillon et al., 2012), and this research would invite the overt presence of their Caribbean voices in the construction of their experiences of moving between the Caribbean and Canada. For many African Caribbean families, separation from and later reunification with their
family members have been given in their experience of immigration to Canada. Often, the separation and reunification tend to happen across significant distances and in different countries. A question is: does that worsen the potential complexity of issues involved for different family members? In other words, when immigrant families are separated through migration, that is, a parent migrates ahead of his or her children, and they are reunited later, do the separation and reunification lead to future psychological problems?

A retrospective quantitative study with participants who were originally from the Caribbean now living in Canada between the ages of 18 and 34 years by Smith, Lalonde, & Johnson (2004) found that there was a negative impact of serial migration\(^5\) on the parent-child bond and that the age of separation seemed to be less important than the length of separation. Glasgow & Grouse-Sheese (1995) conducted a classic qualitative study in Toronto, using a support group format, with youth ages 14 to 21 years of age. The focus was on and their adjustment difficulties of feeling abandoned and rejected upon reunification with their parent after being separated for several years. Importantly, this study highlighted the young people’s experiences of abuse upon reunification and the culture of silence that perpetuates the abuse. However, it did so without much contextualization of their lives as immigrants from the Caribbean or of the ways race, class, and gender intersected in their experiences of abuse upon reunification or in their experiences of their parents/caregivers in Canadian society.

Canadian research on reunification and separation of African Caribbean families is limited; hence, it is necessary to look at US-based studies. The impact on children of these separations and reunifications was addressed in one of the largest longitudinal, mixed-methods design studies to focus on the experiences and effects of separation and reunification in immigrant families in the United States. This study found that separation from family members in the process of migration is prevalent (with 85% of youth in the study having experienced separation from a parent as a result of migration) and extended, with no substantial relationship between the length of the separation and psychological symptoms (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2002). Despite the large size of the sample (n=385 youth) and the diversity of recent immigrant participants included in this study (with youth from Central America, China, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Mexico), there remains a gap in this study in relation to the specificity of the experiences of

\(^5\) Serial migration is defined by Smith et al. (2004, p.108) as “A staggered pattern of migration…parents migrate to the new country first, with the children following at a later date.”
English-speaking African Caribbean immigrant families. The study challenges the application of object relations and attachment theory to this area of research instead the authors propose using ambiguous loss as an explanatory framework, to try and explore the ways in which immigrant families could be affected by losses and separation. There have been limited studies conducted about the issues faced by these families that reflect the importance of the issue of (re)constructing family in relation to immigration to Canada. My study also raises questions about the application of attachment theory to understanding the culturally diverse transnational immigrant families’ experiences of the impact of separation and reunification.

In both sending and receiving countries, there have been a limited number of studies that have addressed issues of immigration histories and family breakdown and centered the experiences of English-speaking African Caribbean immigrant families. Another study in the United States, this one dealing specifically with the English-speaking Caribbean population, also focused on children. Adams’s (2000) single case study of an eight-year-old boy from the Caribbean explored the psychological consequences of migration and found difficulties with integration in relation to loss and insecure attachment. However, for Adams, the focus of the problem was located in the person and was explained in terms of the dominant Western standards for adjustment, with an emphasis on pathology.

In the Caribbean, the studies conducted related to the migration of parents and to the children left behind focused primarily on youth and did not specifically target African Caribbean children. For example, Jones, Sogren, & Sharpe (2004) conducted a mixed-methods study in Trinidad with youth from 13 to 16 years of age who experienced parental loss due to migration and found that they experienced psychological difficulties, despite the economic benefits that came from their parents. Additionally, a study by Pottinger (2005) in Jamaica of younger children nine to 10 years of age reported that children whose parents migrated also experienced psychological difficulties and a negative impact on academic performance. These studies focused on the internal psychological issues experienced by youth and children related to their parents’ migration and suggested some level of blame directed at the parents.

In the UK, Arnold’s work (1997, 2006, 2012) is firmly concentrated on attachment and the African Caribbean immigrant populations from a psychiatric social work perspective. She theorizes (1997) that poor attachment and loss can better explain the issues arising for African
Caribbean families in relation to reunification, individual struggles with anxiety in dealing with ethnic identity formation, and academic difficulties (Arnold, 1997). Arnold acknowledges the social factors, such as racism, that impact the lives of children, as evidenced by the disproportionate numbers of children in care of child welfare and the relegation of more African Caribbean children to special schools. She also illustrates the lack of attention paid to acculturation challenges that impact parent-child relationships. Arnold’s (2006) later work focuses on the separations and difficult reunifications between women and their mothers and sheds light on the strain and pain of those experiences in the context of the United Kingdom through a lens of psychiatric social work. This retrospective qualitative study interviewed 20 African Caribbean women who had been left behind when they were young children by their birth mothers. The participants were divided into two groups of 10 where one group had experiences of therapy and the other had no experiences with therapy as a comparison group. The study found that all women in both groups had difficulty with trusting others. Utilizing an attachment theory lens for understanding the experience of separation and reunification, Arnold attended to the provision of counselling in her work with African Caribbean families. Her concerns about the need for supportive counselling services for African Caribbean immigrant families came together in her 2012 book, *Working with families of African Caribbean origin: Understanding issues around immigration and attachment*, which looks at immigration and attachment through a combination of two of her studies.

These studies have touched on the issues of protracted separations that negatively impact reunifications of children and parents, but the approaches of all of them tend to locate the analyses of the struggles of families and the interventions aimed at addressing these struggles in a deficit-based lens that emphasizes an individually oriented locus for change. The context, even when mentioned, is presented as if it were neutral; the context is not critically analyzed or taken into account. Furthermore, there are some studies, such as Arnold’s (1997), that are spurred on by issues related to the overrepresentation of Caribbean populations within the child welfare or the criminal justice systems; these overrepresentations indicate that there are issues of structural inequity in the system. These studies highlight the need for social work to critically attend to the impact of race, racism, and serial migration involved for these families in a political, economic, historical, and sociocultural context. The studies do not address the context and conditions of the lives of African Caribbean immigrants.
Some clinicians in the United States have examined issues of adjustment in relation to families from the Caribbean (Baptiste, Hardy, & Lewis, 1997), while other clinicians have more directly hypothesized that African Caribbean women immigrants with avoidant attachment are more likely to be the ones to immigrate (van Ecke, 2005). Additionally, a few clinicians in Jamaica have also started to highlight the challenges for children and families in separations related to migration (Pottinger, Stair, & Brown, 2008). However, social workers in Canada are not necessarily prepared to deal with African Caribbean children and families, and do not necessarily question the application of attachment theory to these families.

There is an apparent gap between what social workers know and what they do in relation to African Caribbean immigrant families. For example, in the context of child welfare, social workers are on one hand implicated in the overrepresentation of African Caribbean children and families in the care of Children’s Aid Societies, as indicated in the recently released statistics from CAST (2015), while, on the other hand, there is an expressed need for social workers to know more about African Caribbean children and families’ perspectives in relation to child welfare (Clarke, 2011). In terms of advancing knowledge and action in relation to social work with African Caribbean families, attachment theory is limited in its application, despite its grounding in separation and loss and its concern for the safety and security of the child. The major issue is its epistemological and ontological footings, which are firmly planted in the valuation of individualism and Euro-patriarchal-heteronormative constructs of family and their accompanying child-rearing practices. Attachment theory still lacks conclusive application across cultures, especially cultures that are dissimilar to the dominant North American culture and its child-rearing practices. Van Ijzendoorn & Sagi-Schwartz (2008) argue that “attachment theory does have cross-cultural validity when applied to various cultures in different studies where child-rearing practices are unlike Western models” (p. 901). However, Neckoway, Brownlee, & Castellan (2007) assert that attachment theory’s relevance is questionable for cultures that are collectivist-based. Since social work draws on the discipline of psychology, especially in its adoption of attachment theory as a base to frame its child welfare practice of child-rearing assessments, the profession is in danger of decontextualizing the lives of African Caribbean immigrant families.

The profession’s long standing adherence to cultural competence (Abrams & Moio, 2009) combined with the use of attachment theory further compounds the problem of avoidance of
institutional racism. Additionally, when social work uses cultural competence to address the concerns of African Caribbean families within the framework of “diversity and difference,” there are several important concerns that are raised, particularly in relation to issues of effectiveness. The lack of clarity and measurability of cultural competence objectives and outcomes in social work direct practice and education are significant critiques of this multicultural approach (Abrams & Moio, 2009; Pon, 2009; Williams, 2006). Sakamoto (2007) further argues that, without addressing the issue of power, culture is assumed to be neutral, and cultural competence is thus depoliticized; the prominence of the reality of oppression, which spawned the demand for cultural competence in the first place, is thus erased. Social work’s continued investment in cultural competence is subjected to the withering critique of Pon (2009), who contends that cultural competence is the new racism and that it attempts to erase the history of racism and colonization in Canada.

The overrepresentation of African Caribbean families in data released by CAST (2015) reflects the need for social workers to account for the issues of race and racism as an example of the various systems of oppression that cultural competence models are often ill equipped to address. Social work practices that use a cultural competence model supported by attachment theory do not and cannot adequately account for the historical, political, social, and cultural contexts of race and racism in the context of colonialism, as it relates to African Caribbean immigrant families.

In the literature reviewed, there was limited discussion of the issues arising from the environment, and there was an overarching assumption that all things are equal for the participants in the study. Additionally, all of the literature analyzed here used a clinical population and focused on those in treatment rather than on the general population. In contrast, Rousseau and colleagues (2008), in their investigation of the conduct disorders of 252 Filipino and Caribbean adolescents from school populations in Montreal (both communities that experience prolonged parent-child separation), found that these young people reported less problem behaviour than their Canadian peers reported. Moreover, the authors raised the question about whether an environment of discrimination may be the issue and not necessarily migration histories of separation and reunification.
3.3 Immigration and Acculturation

Psychology also informs social work’s understanding of post-1965 immigrants via immigration studies. Broadly speaking, in the literature in the United States, immigration studies in the field of sociology have tended to be associated with assimilation (Alba & Nee, 1997; Gans, 1997; Zhou 1997), and there have been calls for more contextual approaches (Jung, 2009; Stepick & Dutton Stepick, 2010). Despite its history of dealing with immigrants, the profession of social work is not considered a leader in educating helping professionals about theories of immigration (Lee & Hernandez, 2009). However, examples of social work’s exploration of the topic of immigration include the work of Engstrom & Piedra (2009) in their application of segmented assimilation to social work and the work of Park (2008), who offers insightful analysis about the historical skirmishes in US social work in relation to immigration policies. In Canada, immigration studies in psychology have tended to use acculturation (Berry, 1997). The two approaches differ as a matter of degree in terms of the words being used and in terms of relative power. They are espousing the same position regarding the centralization of the dominant culture as the standard to which all others are in relation without addressing the power differences in those relations and their structural components.

Berry (1997) has established the standard multi-dimensional approach to the study of immigration, using a cross-cultural psychological lens. This approach obscures the same assumptions about the position of power from which the questions about acculturation are being generated. He proposes that immigrants have four acculturation strategies: (a) assimilation, a combination of less interest in preserving one’s culture and more emphasis on interacting with the larger society; (b) separation, which involves electing to avoid interaction with others and to maintain one’s own cultural identity; (c) integration, when one holds on to one’s original culture and also seeks involvement with larger society; and (d) marginalization. Marginalization occurs when one neither preserves one’s culture nor seeks out relating to others. These four strategies are utilized in terms of two dimensions: (1) maintaining one’s identity and culture; and (2) maintaining relations with the larger society (Berry, 1997).

It is important that Berry (1997) claims that, when individuals experience major difficulties or conflicts in this process of acculturation, “then the psychopathology paradigm is the appropriate one” (p. 19). The shift to a focus on the individual does not eliminate the importance of the need
to account for unequal power relations and the ways they factor into which strategy is available and for whom. There is not only an issue of individual choice when one is faced with systemic oppression, and so the idea that immigrants are able to freely choose a strategy and then face the consequence of that choice as individual failure is pathologizing, homogenizing and discriminatory. From a critical decolonizing perspective, issues of race, gender, and class and the ways they intersect all factor into unequal relations of power, access to immigration, and the resulting issues surrounding settlement in a new country.

In one example, the concept of acculturation was taken up uncritically in social work to explore the mental health of Jamaican immigrant college students, who were prepared to acculturate, yet faced racism in the US (Buddington, 2002). However, recently, social work has offered more critical examination of acculturation theories, which has argued for the need to address issues of inequity (Ngo, 2008) and anti-oppression (Sakamoto, 2007). I agree with Romero (2008), who argues that mainstream sociology needs to take up immigration as a civil rights issue that addresses issues of race and immigration. Social work can employ CRT to support a move from the study of immigration in ways that perpetuate the normalization of white middle-class standards to study that addresses issues of race, racism, and power.

### 3.4 Immigration Policy and African Caribbeans

The immigration history of African Caribbeans to Canada has been marked by cycles of visible and disappearing policies and practices that reflect and reveal the needed yet unwanted African Caribbean immigrants. This section illustrates the need of upper class families for domestic workers and of business interests for access to cheap labour, and also the desire for a white Canada, which was exercised through immigration policies and practices designed to maintain that profile. I argue that values of racism, sexism, classism, and heteronormativity shaped the formulation and implementation of immigration policies and practices aimed at African Caribbeans. The avenues open for entry to Canada from the Caribbean have been generally temporary and precarious in nature.

Calliste (1994) reveals the temporariness of the status of Caribbean immigrants during the first three decades of the 1900s, when only 2,378 Caribbean Blacks were admitted to Canada, predominantly as labourers in the coal mines and steel mills of Nova Scotia and as domestics. She notes that these immigrants were deported at the highest rate, and that rate was one of many
reasons used to restrict and deny entry to Canada by Caribbean Blacks, particularly during times of recession in 1914 and 1930. Despite the lack of official policy at the time, immigration officials sought to exclude Caribbean Blacks from the status of permanent settlers in Canada.

At first, little was known about the women who immigrated to Canada under The West Indian Domestic Scheme that started in 1955; one of the first studies to explore their experience was conducted by Henry (1968). The restrictions placed on these women meant that they needed to be single, childless, between the ages of 18 and 40, and have a minimum of a grade eight education in order to participate in the program. She noted that they could send for members of their families and their fiancés, but that they had to marry their fiancés within 30 days of their arrival. Henry (1968) found that these women varied in class background and that they used the Domestic Scheme primarily as a way to migrate. Her study explored the ways racism, classism, and downward mobility contributed to the deterrence of domestic workers from assimilation into Canadian society (Henry, 1968).

The practice of immigration through the Domestic Scheme also placed these women in 17 cities across Canada and deliberately separated them from men from the Caribbean who were allowed to enter as students but who did not willingly mix with domestics (Winks, 1971). The immigration practice was a restrictive hierarchical system that had very limited avenues for migration to Canada as a woman. Despite the colonial privileges of men, who were able to travel to the Canada to pursue higher education, and the gendered oppression of women, who could access entry primarily through domestic work, both men and women were facing racism. Separation served to isolate the women from each other and from the men. According to Lawson (2013), the end of the Domestic Scheme in 1967 did not mean the end of the practice of immigration based on these discriminatory criteria, which continued and was exemplified by the case of seven Jamaican women in late 1970s. These seven women were facing deportation from Canada after they applied to sponsor their children to join them, and it was discovered that they did not acknowledge their children when they immigrated to Canada. These women faced the threat of deportation in spite of their landed status once they made claims for family reunification with their children in the Caribbean (Silvera, 1989). The familiar strategy of deportation of

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6 See an example of the guidelines in the handbook produced by a Caribbean government for women participating in the program. *Advice to West Indian women recruited for work in Canada as household helps.* (1950). Barbados: G.P.O.
African Caribbean domestics was met with opposition from the community through protests and legal support. By that time, there were enough people from the Caribbean in Canada to participate in demonstrations of support for the women (Silvera, 1989).

3.5 Re-Counting the Absence of African Caribbeans in Social Work – Purpose of the study

The presence of African Caribbean people as prisoners, immigrants, or settlers in Canada has been complex and moored to the long history of European colonization and slavery in both the Caribbean and Canada. The relatively short hundred-year history of professional social work is nested within this larger context of centuries of colonization and slavery. Social work’s use of theoretical and practice approaches from psychology that rely on attachment, assimilation, and acculturation helps to constitute what is known about African Caribbean immigrant families in transition. This approach contributes to keeping the focus of migration at the individual level. It also does not address inequity and the ways in which that approach contributes to exclusionary nation building. The salience of race, racism, and power is avoided by social work’s use of these approaches, and, instead, social work individualizes, pathologizes, dehistoricizes, and decontextualizes African Caribbean immigrant families’ experiences of success and failure in meeting the challenges of migration. Social work’s quest for professionalization, support for exclusionary nation building, and cultural imperialism towards Indigenous peoples have resulted in failure to meet the profession’s own standards of social justice.

A re-writing over the absence of issues of race and racism helps to (re) count the presence and efforts of African Caribbean community members who help each other out in Canada. Helping each other out in the African Caribbean communities in Canada during that same time frame was necessary, since turning to professional social work was inhibited by exclusion. For African Caribbean immigrants to Canada, helping was done through informal and formal organizing that included addressing individual needs as well as fighting against racism exemplified in the exclusion from full participation in society and in immigration policies (Gooden, 2008). Additionally, Gooden (2008) notes that Toronto had organizations such as the Home Service Association and the West Indian Federation Club, along with churches that helped African Caribbean immigrants meet their needs socially, politically, and practically. Este (2004) tracked the efforts of the Black church in Montreal from 1907 to 1940 and found that the Black church also played a significant role as a social welfare institution that provided a meeting space for
political gatherings, recreational uses, and social support that offered aid around issues of unemployment and discrimination.

My study highlights the need to incorporate the centrality of oppression. Specifically, the intersectionality of race, anti-Black racism, and power must be integrated into social work’s understanding of and interventions with African Caribbean immigrant families. This study will contribute to a more complex understanding of the ways African Caribbean immigrants (re) construct family in the context of oppression in Canada and their implications for social work programs, policies, and practices. In order to move on to the specificity of discussing the issues of race and racism for African Caribbean immigrant families in Canada, it is important to recognize the larger historical, political, economic, social, and cultural context of Canada and its contested relationship with the Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island.
4 Chapter Four - Methodology

4.1 Introduction - Significance of original concepts

The acknowledgement of history, politics, individual and social responsibility, and the economic and sociocultural context as ever present in research provides a way to bring forward my decolonizing critical constructivist grounded theory. The acknowledgement means accepting and recognizing that the research is co-constructed and that the voices of African Caribbean immigrant families are centered, valued, and contextualized. In addition, this approach provides space for the researcher and participants to have a consciousness about being racialized, and for the researcher to acknowledge being an insider to the experience being researched. The social construction of race, racism, and intersecting oppressions, and the ways they are interpreted and used in this research are included in the ways participants’ experiences are understood and shared. Moreover, this research is in line with the social justice values of social work, which require the application of theory to practice. My decolonizing critical constructivist grounded theory is informed by my application of CRT, BFT, and Decolonizing Approaches to the use of constructivist grounded theory and restores race consciousness back into this qualitative research. My modified constructionist grounded theory addresses the lack of knowledge in the social work field, which erases the experiences of African Caribbean people when they attempt to (re) construct their families in Canada.

4.2 Framing the Research

Classic grounded theory uses an inductive way of understanding data, and the explanation generated is “grounded” in the views of participants (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The analysis of the data in grounded theory involves line-by-line coding of sections of texts from an interview. In my study, I am choosing to work with and to modify Charmaz’s (2010) constructivist grounded theory. Constructivist grounded theory stands in contrast to the positivist orientation of classic grounded theory, which assumes a kind of neutrality and objectivity on the part of the researcher and the research process.

I used my decolonizing critical constructivist grounded theory to conduct this qualitative study. This approach provided a conceptual framework from which to explore and understand the complex associations among the experiences of African Caribbean immigration, nation building,
and family relations. This method offered participants an opportunity to share their lived experience of immigration to Canada and the impact on their families’ (re)construction, to have it documented, and to create new knowledge that will inform social work practice with African Caribbean communities.

The important maintenance of the context of the data, despite its fragmentation in the coding process, is achieved through the use of focus groups; within the groups, people’s individual experiences are shared in a group and can be understood as a collective experience. In a group, individuals can both take responsibility for their actions and experience the ways their individual experience is shared as a member of a socially identified group. The concepts pertaining to social inequality do not need a special invitation, since they are not arbitrarily separated from the individual stories in the process of turning the stories into fragmented data during grounded theory coding. The context of the data remains embedded, even in its fragmented state, when the process of turning stories into data is no longer considered neutral or made invisible by way of constructing it as normative.

Within this decolonizing critical constructivist grounded theory, the narratives of the participants are valued as they are in CRT as counter-narratives to the dominant stories about African Caribbean immigrants and as they are in BFT as illustrative, self-defining voices of intersectional oppression. Through the lens of the decolonizing and Indigenous approaches, the stories are also valued, and they necessitate a change in grounded theory’s approach to data analysis. Some have argued that line-by-line coding in grounded theory breaks up the data. For example, Lavallée (2009) asserts that grounded theory’s method of analyzing interview transcripts by putting them into codes was found to be inconsistent with her Indigenous approach because of the way stories are valued in Indigenous cultures, and because of the way line-by-line coding can be experienced as a breaking up or tearing apart of the stories that were shared. Kovach (2009) also raises the problems with grounded theory’s line-by-line coding, claiming that decolonizing research that aims to account for Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies requires a modified approach in order to keep sight of both the berries (data) and the bush (context).

Social relations of power are reflected in research whether they are acknowledged or not, and the persistence of oppression and, specifically, of racial inequity does not disappear with coding. The use of line-by-line coding does not in and of itself disassociate the data from its context, since
this would mean that the everydayness of racism, for example, suddenly disappears from the experiences being shared when these narratives are coded and turned into data. The process of coding requires more than acknowledgement of a lack of neutrality and the existence of multiple perspectives in order to account for the presence of the social relations of power within particular historical, political, and cultural contexts. The use of decolonizing critical constructivist grounded theory provides for the unveiling of the potential bias of the coding process itself, which can employ a move to neutrality and to the cloaking of “othering.” In putting the data back together, the relationship between the individual experiences and structural conditions is bridged by the use of focus groups and subcategories.

4.3 Epistemology/Design

I used a critical decolonizing approach that foregrounds the issue of race consciousness throughout the research process. I believe that knowing is relational and constructed, and therefore the value of knowing that comes from participants’ lived experiences was prioritized. I also contend that reality is interpreted and thus attention is required to reclaim the importance of the counter-narrative expressed through the voices of POC. Consequently, I conducted individual interviews and focus groups in the community in order to gather heterogeneous African Caribbean immigrant experiences.

The study explores how African Caribbean immigrant families (re) construct family in the context of oppression in Canada. Thinking about research in relation to African Caribbean immigrant families in Canada requires attending to who I am as the researcher, because I am using constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2010) as a method of qualitative inquiry for my study. I am an insider based on my shared identity as African Caribbean and my experience of serial immigration from the Caribbean. I am also an outsider to the experience of African Caribbean immigrants in Canada; my experience cannot stand in as the standard for the group because the particular ways in which my social locations intersect inform not only the power dynamics as the researcher in relation to the participants, but also my interpretation of the data. Being an insider to the experience of oppression and a different history of immigration brings with it a voice of colour and a capacity to speak about race and racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).
Constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2008b) provides a way of proceeding that not only recognizes the contributions of symbolic interactionism already present within classic grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), but also encourages a move away from its foundations in positivism towards a relativist epistemology. Charmaz (2008b) rejects the epistemology and ontology of positivism, which she notes were unexamined in classic grounded theory, and embraces a constructivist grounded theory that is an interpretive inquiry tied to pragmatism. She challenges the modernist notions of objectivity and the idea that we can set aside our biases, and promotes the post-modernist awareness that we construct narratives about ourselves and the people who participate in our research.

According to Clarke (2008), Strauss for most of his career was silent on issues of sex/gender and race/ethnicity and further stated that “race/ethnicity had to ‘earn its way into’ an analysis” (p. 164). This silence on gender and race is particularly revealing, considering that it occurred during the most tumultuous time of the latter half of the 20th century. Clarke (2008) notes that the feminist movement and the civil rights movement were centre stage in the 1960s, which is also the period when grounded theory was developed for use in sociology. She goes on to reason that this silence on gender and race was part of Strauss and Glaser’s quest for recognition of the legitimacy of qualitative research methods in the era of quantification, which saw the rise of quantitative methods and subsequent demise of qualitative methods. The depth of the silence on gender and race indicates avoidance and serves as an example of the erasure of race and gender in qualitative research. Clarke (2008) uses Strauss’s grounded theory and social worlds/arenas theory to account for gender. However, I think that there is also a need to continue to challenge the silence in grounded theory about race (Draucker et al., 2014) and to address it more directly by being conscious of it.

With this contextualizing of grounded theory, it is hard to miss the presence and construction of race, class, and gender, for example, as the “other” that can so readily be sacrificed in the name of gaining legitimacy. There is also the presence of fear of accusations of bias, and of experience of the privileges associated with being marked as the norm that doesn’t have to “earn its way in” (Clarke, 2008, p. 164). The questions that arise then are: whose concerns about bias are being attended to in this move to legitimacy and whose are not? Additionally, is the quest for legitimacy happening within the communities objecting to being researched?
The issue that remains relevant for grounded theory is that of the researcher’s various social identities, which require ongoing reflectivity, especially given the current turn towards a constructivist grounded theory. Charmaz’s (2008b) review of the elevation of qualitative methods as systematic rather than unreliable and biased, which was brought about by Strauss and Glaser’s move away from data gathering to data analysis, acknowledges their revolutionary impact on the field. The move to a relativist epistemology in support of the constructivist grounded theory’s turn away from positivism addresses only part of the issue of race as a socially produced identity. Constructivist grounded theory’s treatment of race as one of many subject positionalities misses the specificity of race and the intersectionality of race, for example, with gender and class, which produce unique experiences and knowledge. When race is treated as singular and as if it is like any other socially constructed identity, then the nuances of the ways race intersects with other identities are lost. Furthermore, when race is treated as the same for everyone, this treatment begins to resemble the erasure of colour, or colour blindness, although, ironically, efforts to not see colour require the awareness of colour in the first place. Turning towards the relativism of post-modernism does not free constructivist grounded theory from the historical context of slavery and colonialism and also the need to deal directly with race and racism.

Decolonizing research and, specifically, constructivist grounded theory require grappling with the salience of race (Smith, 2012). Since race and racism are embedded in the very scaffolding of North American society, they cannot be overlooked without centring them (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). To be silent about race and to not take into account race in research is to take, intentionally or unintentionally, a colour-blind stance on race. This notion of colour-blindness to race does not mean that there is an absence of race or that the inclusion of race is necessarily in support of racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Colour-blindness indicates a lack of consciousness about race and does not take the trouble whiteness and its associated privileges. Constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2010) highlights the importance of being aware of our assumptions and biases in general, but also risks flattening out all oppressions as the same in the sense that the specificity of race is muted, and the reality of whiteness remains unaddressed. It is fitting that, as knowledge is constructed, it matters not only what is taken up as knowledge, but also how that knowledge gets taken up. Consciousness of the social construction of race is not enough, and neither is the relativist epistemology that disposes the researcher to be reflective and
to understand knowledge as partial. The process also has to account for consciousness of who
the researcher is in relation to race as socially produced.

Additionally, there still needs to be an accounting for the impact of the colonial underpinnings of
qualitative methods, which are not addressed by the relativist, post-modern turn of grounded
theory. Relativism on its own does not speak to the ways in which qualitative research and
researchers positioned themselves as normative in immigrant communities of colour and
Indigenous communities, and imposed a colonial agenda through their research methods (Smith,
2012). The realities of the past abuses of research and researchers require more than reflexivity
to repair the damage done and the mistrust in immigrant communities of colour and Indigenous
communities. Moreover, being a researcher from the community I am conducting the research in
and with often involves having to account for past research omissions and unethical
transgressions.7 Smith details (2012) the harms endured by Indigenous peoples internationally
and the need for decolonizing methodologies.

More particularly, there is also a silence about the differences between the people who are doing
the research and the people who are being researched and about their representativeness of the
“norm” and the “other” respectively. This silence amounts to making “whiteness” the norm and
“Blackness” the other. Race and racism cannot be seen as irrelevant, the same, peripheral, or a
matter that you can put aside as a way to manage racial bias. Race and racism are foundational
constructs upon which colonization has been built; therefore, they must be taken into account in
decolonizing research.

Research and researchers are not outside of the influence of the society’s socially produced
identities and categories; therefore, it is precisely the pervasiveness of race and racism that
signals the inherent need for consciousness and transformative approaches to the process of
addressing the issues of race and racism. The problem is that this consciousness of race comes
forward only in the application of grounded theory, rather than at the point of its epistemological
and ontological underpinnings. Pragmatism and symbolic interactionism are not inherently free
of bias and must account for the salience of categories such as race. The critiques by Smith

7 For example, government-funded nutritional research experiments on Indigenous children in Canada in the 1942 -
52 period recently highlighted by Mosby (2013), the standard research practice of taking and using tissue without
the consent of African Americans like Henrietta Lacks or her family in the 1930s, and the well-known Tuskegee
experiments, where African American men were given syphilis and left untreated to see how the disease progressed.
that have been brought to bear on Western research and researchers reveal race, epistemology, ontology, and methodology as all highly problematic. Specifically, the gap between how one is perceived by society and how one perceives oneself is a real concern for research. From a psychological perspective, Cardozo (2006) identifies the realities of having to confront a racial identity that are experienced by white students and the way their response of silence or of a lack of understanding of the salience of race reflects a particular place in the development of a racial identity. Cardozo (2006) argues that, since racism still exists, it is necessary to deal with racial identity. Constructivist grounded theory “assumes that researcher’s values, priorities, positions and actions affect views” (Charmaz, 2008b, p. 136) and therefore also needs to attend more explicitly to the racial identity of researchers and participants. In a society built on colonialism and a slave economy, it is necessary to examine and articulate the ways a researcher’s own relationship to racial identity impacts whether and how the issue of race is addressed in their research.

Constructivist challenges to the constructed nature of the social categories of race and racism also need to address the “realness” of how these categories of race and racism are “…interpreted and used in the social world” Fook & Garner (2007, p. 37). Fook & Garner (2007) reveal the limitations of pure constructivists who emphasize the social construction of knowledge, arguing that critical social theory’s concern goes beyond the issue of knowledge having an empirical reality to the importance of the way that reality is interpreted and utilized in society. Therefore, although constructivist grounded theory recognizes that race and racism are socially constructed, it needs to go further to address and account for the realness of race and racism in the everyday lives of those marked and managed by race and racism.

As a researcher from the community, both in the experience of migration from the English-speaking Caribbean and self-identification as African Caribbean, my insider status provided me with a familiarity and awareness about the shared experiences of migration from the region. I employed the use of continuous reflexivity about bias throughout the research process through the active use of memos and field notes. The attention to the issue of bias in the study necessarily included consciousness about the everydayness of race, racism, decolonization, and power and about the ways they intersect with multiple forms of oppression and influence the knowledge of POC both as the researcher and as participants. Addressing these concerns helps to build upon Charmaz’s (2010) constructivist turn and towards my critical constructivist grounded theory.
4.4 Methods

My study’s overarching question was the exploration of how African Caribbean immigrants (re)constuct family in the context of immigration and oppression in Canada. How are these families contributing to the building of the nation, or is the nation building on these families? I asked participants to share their retrospective narratives about what happened in their experience of coming to Canada, how they would describe their time of separation from and reunion with family members, and what their living arrangements were like. I asked them to talk about their relationships with reunited family members and the environmental conditions of their immigration, including about the city, child welfare, schools, and employment. Additionally, I asked them to share how they managed their new and old relationships in terms of ongoing ties or lost connections. The questions were general enough to allow the participants to begin their answers anywhere in the time line they wanted. I asked them about their experiences of racism and other intersecting oppressions in Canada. Finally, I inquired about what helped them during their experiences of separation and reunification in their stories of migration.

4.4.1 Recruitment and Sampling

All participants were from the general population, as opposed to a clinical population, and were recruited using snowballing and posting flyers (Appendix A and G) in relevant community centres and service centres, and on community information boards. Specifically, recruitment flyers were posted at Black CAP, Bob Abate Community Centre, Queen Street West Community Health Centre, Unison Community Health Centre at Lawrence Heights, Lawrence Heights Community Centre, Jamaican Canadian Association, Women’s Health in Women’s Hands, Tropicana, Taibu Community Health Centre, the Toronto Public Library (Parkdale and St. James Town Branches), and North Toronto Community Centre.

Potential individual participants had an opportunity to express an interest in taking part in the study by calling and leaving a message with a call back telephone number for me as the researcher so that I could return the call. When they were reached by telephone, I would explain the study, discuss the requirements, and answer any questions about the study. Interested potential participants who met the criteria were then invited to set up an appointment to meet in person for an interview or to participate in a key stakeholder focus group.
Participants for the individual interviews and the community focus group had to self-identify as African Caribbean from the English-speaking Caribbean, had to have migrated from the Caribbean after 1960s, had to have experienced separation from and reunification with their family members in Canada, had to be 25 years of age or older, and had to have been in Canada for more than 10 years to meet the inclusion criteria for the study. Focus group members were also screened for fit and selected, based on the study’s criteria for community members, as a way to complement the individual interviews and to explore structural issues of inequality in addition to individual experiences. For the key stakeholder focus groups, participants were recruited and screened via community agency contacts and could either self-identify as African Caribbean or as a person with knowledge gained through working within African Caribbean immigrant communities. These two focus groups were made up of service providers working in the fields of child welfare, education, and housing. All of them worked with immigrants from the African Caribbean community, and half of them were also African Caribbean. Although key stakeholders did not need to be African Caribbean, they had to have worked with and be knowledgeable about English-speaking African Caribbean communities. In total, I conducted 14 individual interviews and three focus groups, resulting in a total sample size of 27 participants. This is a justifiable number of individual participants for my qualitative study, according to the works of Sandelowski (1995) and Creswell (2007).

4.4.2 Procedures

Data were collected from 14 in-depth individual interviews and three focus groups involving 13 people. Each person in the study participated in either a single focus group or an individual interview. The individual interviews and focus groups were semi-structured and were between one-and-a-half and two hours in length. For the individual interviews, participants were screened for fit and selected on the basis of the study’s criteria and emerging questions. Before the start of the interviews and focus groups, each participant was given the opportunity to ask questions and have their questions answered about the research addressed; once they decided to participate in the study, they were given time to read, ask questions about, and sign the study’s information sheet and consent forms (Appendix B and E). They were also informed of their right to change their minds and withdraw their consent at any time before, during, or one week after the interview. After the interviews and focus groups, each of the participants was given an honorarium of $30 cash and two transit tokens.
The focus group participants, like all participants in the study, were given the option and chose to deal with confidentiality by using names that were either pseudonyms or first names only. This was especially helpful in addressing some of the limitations of confidentiality in the focus groups. The interviews and focus groups were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The interviews were conducted in spaces and at times that were mutually agreeable and accessible, such as public restaurants, university offices, workplace cafeterias, and community agencies. The interview guides for the individual interviews (see Appendix C) and focus groups (see Appendix F) were semi-structured since I wanted participants to be able to discuss their experiences of immigration in ways that would unfold as they wished. The interview questions for the individual interviews were only slightly altered for use in the focus groups at the start of the research, but were subsequently changed, as driven by the process. NVivo software was used to store and code the data generated.

4.4.3 Data Analysis and Interpretation - Critical Constructivist Grounded Theory

Data were analyzed on the basis of critical constructivist grounded theory, which enabled the interviewing of participants, transcribing, and coding to happen at the same time. Creswell (2007) outlines three phases of coding (open, axial, and selective) as the basic procedures for analysis in grounded theory, as forwarded by Strauss and Corbin (1990). However, Charmaz (2010) asserts and contends in her constructivist grounded theory that, when the positivist assumptions of classic grounded theory are discarded, these phases of coding can be modified. In her constructivist grounded theory she states, “I emphasize flexible guidelines, not methodological rules, recipes and requirements” (Charmaz, 2010, p. 90). I built upon Charmaz’s (2010) constructivist grounded theory and specifically changed how I conducted the data analysis. The first couple of individual interviews and their transcriptions were completed, and initial coding was conducted. In my initial coding, I put participants’ perspectives at the centre through the use of memos to help separate my assumptions from the content I was hearing in the data. I followed up in subsequent interviews by asking more about the context of participants’ experiences of immigrating, and by attending to the conditions of social inequity and the colonial context from which they emerged that continue to shape the life choices and chances of African Caribbean people, both in Canada and the Caribbean. Further interviewing, transcriptions, and coding allowed for more line-by-line coding accented by more focused coding (Charmaz, 2010).
An example of an early word-by-word coding was “hitting,” “beating,” and “licks.” which I then returned to with subsequent participants in order to further explore. In focused and theoretical coding, I had the category “violence” and used memos to reflect on this category and its consistency with a critical decolonizing approach. To this extent, it was necessary to maintain a critical consciousness about whether and how my analysis and theoretical understanding of the issues I had framed as “violence” would reinforce or disrupt stereotypes of African Caribbean immigrant families. Secondly, I had to further consider how my framing would account for the context of structural violence. With additional interviewing and the use of focus groups, this category was revised to “discipline” and finally placed under the higher theme of “Child Rearing.” In line with Charmaz (2010), my understanding of the data is reflected in my categories, subcategories, and the links among them. I used the constant comparison method, making comparisons at each level of data analysis, using information from the data, and comparing it to emerging categories (Creswell, 2007). In the constant comparison method I incorporated a relational approach that Goldberg (2007) suggests not only compares and contrasts, but also connects across difference and similarities. Thus, at the point of theoretical coding, I linked the possible relationship among the categories I selected in focused coding. The theoretical coding was supported by the use of focus groups, where discussion of structural issues and shared experiences expanded on and mirrored individual experiences in the interviews.

Charmaz (2010) advances processional analysis, but that can have a kind of linearity of moving from one phase to the next. This linearity assumes the separation of one experience from another. However, I assert that process is additive and is similar to the way oppressions are added together, as opposed to being thought of as intersectional or interlocking systems of power (Collins, 2000). Although Charmaz (2010) accounts for power in relation to the researcher’s interpretation, I contend that the interpretation needs to be more explicit in relation to oppressions in general; that is, she accounts for bias at the individual level from researcher to participant and within the researcher’s data analysis. However, I am accounting for intersecting oppressions at the everyday level. Therefore, a processional analysis is too limited and risks relying on analytical distinctions based on additives of oppression. My analysis happened at more than the individual level and also included the collective level. Hence, I used the focus groups to further illuminate structural issues.
Charmaz (2010) discusses using at least two phases of coding, open and selective, and integrates axial coding as part of open coding in the analysis because of its individual focus. This method addresses the issue of eliminating vestiges of positivism, but I believe that constructivist grounded theory has not answered questions about how to deal with racism and intersectional oppressions, as interlocking in research, theory, epistemology, and practice. Constructivist grounded theory accounts for the identity of a researcher who is co-constructing the research, while my decolonizing critical constructivist grounded theory accounts for me as an insider researcher with multiple intersecting oppressions and privileges. It was not possible or necessary to choose among my various social locations. However, I was reflexive about assessing the issue of safety for participants and for myself, since all social locations are not equally valued or positively received. Conducting the interviews, transcribing them, and writing memos provided layers of opportunities for my critical reflexivity and analysis of the data.

Since my data analysis needed to continue to account for racism and its intersecting oppressions along with colonization throughout the research process, I reflected on what individuals were doing in the context of what was happening in their everyday lives. Furthermore, I considered the uniqueness of their experiences relative to their self-identified social locations. What was happening for participants was not considered to be the same for everyone. Specifically, this process allowed me to move beyond the level of comparing similarities and differences to exploration of the relationships between their individual and shared experiences. My coding and data analysis were intersectional and relational, not additive or linear. Specifically, my coding, while still focused on using gerunds\textsuperscript{8} to highlight actions, also included considerations about what was happening in the context of power relations and intersecting structural issues.

I do not use axial coding because, like Charmaz (2010), I do not believe that the data reveals something that is already there; I think rather that coding is about my interpretation of the data. Drawing on memos and codes and sensitizing concepts, I developed categories and subcategories and links among them that reflect my interpretation of these experiences beyond the individual level. My interpretations keep race present, acknowledge the voices of the African Caribbeans being interviewed, and reflect my voice as an outsider within.

\textsuperscript{8} Charmaz (2010) discusses gerunds, words ending with \textit{ing} that prompt thinking about actions.
Diagram B: Focused Coding – “Keeping Up” is being understood as a personal experience, but also at the structural level in terms of benefits to the nations.

Diagram C: “Cast Out”
The theme of “Cast Out” in diagram C reflected not only the process of comparing data to data in focused coding, but also the voices of the participants. “Cast Out” was an in vivo code that highlighted a difference in the way a participant understood his experience of being beaten by his father, as compared to my understanding. He thought it was normal to hit his son, given that his own father had hit him, and the participant’s grandfather had hit his father. However, my initial interpretation of the participant’s experience of being hit was that of intergenerational violence, but the interpretation did not address the importance of the participant’s understanding of being sent back to the Caribbean without warning or a chance for discussion, which left him feeling cast out of the family and the country. Moreover, my centring of race in relation to the sensitizing concepts led me to the theme “Cast Out” which highlighted the complexity of the individual and structural realities being experienced by the participant.

4.4.4 Ethics

The approval of the Research Ethics Board of the University of Toronto was sought and received for this project. As discussed previously, all participants volunteered, gave their informed consent, and signed a consent form (Appendix B for individual interviews, Appendix E for community members focus group, and Appendix I for stakeholder focus group) after they could clearly express that they understood what the research was about and before beginning the interviews and focus groups. Confidentiality was addressed in all the individual interviews and focus groups; participants were given the option of using a pseudonym, and I let them know that they would not be identified by name in the research. My decision to use numbers in place of their names is in line with maintenance of their confidentiality. The participants in the focus groups received additional discussion about the limits of confidentiality in focus groups and were also reminded of the option to use a pseudonym. Participants also had the option to stop their participation in the study at any time during the interview or focus group and to withdraw their interview up to a week afterward. The interviews were transcribed verbatim, and participants also had the opportunity to review the transcripts to ensure that their stories were accurately captured. The issue of trust was addressed in several ways; some participants needed a referral, while some others needed time and several phone conversations before they decided to meet to be interviewed. Others mediated the stress of talking about their experiences by bringing someone with them whom they wanted to share their stories with and who provided an increased sense of safety. It was also important that potential participants self-identify as African.
Caribbean and that their identification was not subject to my definitions or anyone else’s, since this definition would negate the complexity of the subversive ways in which race and racism operate.

4.4.5 Trustworthiness

I will build on the recommendations of Creswell (2007) and Charmaz (2010) to discuss credibility in my study. Creswell (2007) provides an overview of the variety of perspectives in qualitative research that challenge the idea of validation. However, he does recommend using a minimum of two strategies, from his summation of as many as eight, to achieve credibility. In my study, participants were asked in both individual interviews and focus groups to check the accuracy and credibility of my interpretations, codes, categories, and analysis. Specifically, I asked for discussion of themes that I understand from my coding of the interviews with previous participants and inquired whether or not it resonated with their experiences. I maintained transparency and self-reflexivity in the process of research as I regularly met with my thesis committee and peer support group and utilized memos as a way of accounting for my interpretations and findings. Additionally, I used multiple perspectives as sensitizing concepts to interpret the data, as well as multiple sources, including interviews and focus groups, to triangulate the data. I wrote self-reflexive memos to document my process and thinking as I conducted the research. I utilized visual imagery and flipcharts to document all the codes generated and to create a visual mapping of the movement of and between multiple caregivers in Canada and the Caribbean. Charmaz’s (2010) criteria for addressing issues of credibility in constructivist grounded theory are also applicable to my study. For example, my research has attained intimate familiarity with the topic, and my claims are supported by rich and robust data. When making my comparisons, I was systematic and reflexive about the ways in which my observations and categories were comparative, relational, and intersectional. Finally, meeting the criteria set out by Collins (2000) further enhances the credibility of my study. For example, the participants lived through the experiences they talked about. The research was not carried out in isolation, and the use of call-and-response was present in the individual interviews and focus groups. The participants were also given information about my experience of immigration from the Caribbean and had opportunities throughout the research process to ask me questions related to accountability.
5 Chapter Five - Findings

The three major themes in the collected data were “Keeping Up,” “Child Rearing,” and “Cast Out.” The (re) construction of African Caribbean immigrant families in Canada often included: having to navigate “Keeping Up” with family over long distances, “Child Rearing” of their own and/or other people’s children, and “Cast Out” from membership in the home, the job market, the educational system, or even from legal status in the country. These categories stand on their own, overlap, and converge in ways that illuminate the complexity of the ways African Caribbean immigrants (re) construct family in the context of Canada. These experiences were present throughout participants’ recollected stories of movement, whether as children or as adults, and during separations as well as reunifications. For these African Caribbean participants, separations from and reunifications with their families were continuous and often simultaneous, and they reflected larger economic, political, and social forces. These categories exemplify the strategies used by participants in their migration experiences. The findings of the study reflect the realities that:

(1) Families de-privatized their structure when they separated, and they relied on collective support in their family (re) construction efforts over time and distance. Families enacted “Keeping Up” when they had to organize the care of children left behind, often with grandmothers and aunts;

(2) Separation was a way to both minimize risk to and enhance the potential of collective family members. This separation was related to the “Cast[ing] Out” of children from the home as a way to protect the other members of the family from interactions with institutions; and

(3) Reunification was entangled with surviving the everydayness of oppression. The process of reunification highlighted the “Child Rearing” practices of the Other mothering and conflicts within the Canadian context of oppression.

5.1 Keeping Up

In addition to maintaining contact and connection, “Keeping Up” includes negotiating being able to send or receive financial and material goods. Another way “Keeping Up” gets expressed is through maintaining and/or increasing one’s status; participants described how important it
was upon return to the Caribbean for a visit that they were able to demonstrate their wealth to friends and family through the way they dressed, and the way they spent their money and time in the Caribbean.

5.1.1 Staying Connected – Goods and Money

“Keeping Up” is about staying in touch with relatives and friends internationally, whether in the Caribbean, globally, or nationally, across the country. Sending money and barrels of consumer items to family and friends in the Caribbean not only conveyed a sense of material gain, but also served to obfuscate the oppression experienced in Canadian society. For the following respondent, “Keeping Up” with friends and family in the Caribbean was different in a way from “Keeping Up” across Canada or Europe. Inasmuch as “Keeping Up” was about sending resources, it also facilitated ways to ask for support from friends and family living outside of the Caribbean. “Keeping Up” in terms of staying connected to family and friends internationally had the positive impact of creating and maintaining a support network. The network was important when it came to facing the difficulty of speaking truthfully about life’s challenges in terms of access to educational opportunities, finding employment, or struggling with poverty and overwhelming debt. “Keeping Up” actively enhanced the experience of being an African Caribbean immigrant in Canada when there was an acceptance of the reality of those hardships as a kind of shared experience and not just an individual responsibility.

Respondent 13: Yes I had to, I had to contact my uncles by my mom in the States who in England, Montreal. I had to connect everybody…I had to contact everyone just keeping up with the family, relatives making sure everybody is okay, even though I may not be okay… Yeah that’s just my way. They always call me and ask me if I’m okay. If I tell them I’m not working then maybe they send me a little change if they have extra… Yeah it helps me to feel connected and feel good that you’re not lost from your family or relatives or stuff, yeah…I can only do the best I can. She understand because, if I’m going through a little problem, I’ll let her know, and she’ll say, “well don’t worry, mommy. When you have it, you send it for me, don’t worry,” like I’d say. “I don’t have change now to send you money.” She’ll say, “don’t worry, mommy. When you have it, send it. I’ll understand you know.”

This support for family members back in the Caribbean also created ways for her separated family to participate in “Keeping Up” with each other’s lives by having frequent contact through a variety of methods, from phone calls to letters to her daughter when she was younger and other technologies as she grew up, depending on access and comfort of use. This participant started a
new family in Canada and maintained a long distance relationship with her now adult daughter, who chose to remain in the Caribbean.

Respondent 13: Yes, she know she still will talk I know what you’re saying yeah because sometime when you left there, they feel kind of disconnected in a way, but, no, we still because, when she was much younger, even though I talk to her on the phone, she will write me letters and she will draw up little things and send it for me…Well, I would say we still had the connection over the phone. Cause I called her all the time. I don’t know I used to just talk to her all the time talk until card run out. Every week, every week once a week…different times…as she get older, we don’t do the letter thing anymore, yeah just the phone and email, she’ll email me. I’ll email her like if I’m not talking to her on the phone, I would email her, and she would email me back.

Another participant revealed the complexity of her support system and ways in which “Keeping Up” involved sending money that contributed to and complemented meeting her baby’s basic needs. She had to deal with adjusting to Canada on her own and being separated from her baby, with no certainty that she would even be able to reunite with her. Under these conditions, she was parcelling out her income to send money to take care of her daughter.

Respondent 8: So you know I gradually kind of tried to adjust to the Canadian system. I didn’t have family support, but I had some friends, and my daughter is in Jamaica. Her dad is taking care of her, so any little money I had I had to send some of that back home. I was responsible for buying her clothes, and her dad would provide the shelter and food because she was living with his sister.

Another mother voiced the emotional toll and economic challenge of “Keeping Up” and being separated from her young child. For her, pursuing a better life in Canada also meant that she was dealing with a precarious status, living with her sister and brother-in-law, and managing the strain of keeping in touch with her parents, partner, and daughter in the Caribbean. The emotional impact of being separated from her daughter made “Keeping Up” necessary yet challenging, and it informed her decision to bring her daughter to live with her in Canada.

Respondent 4: But I know I couldn’t take care of my daughter at the time, so I had to leave her with her father and come here and I, oh the struggle talking to them at night. Oh, I used to talk with my mom and dad once a week and talk to my fiancée once a week and get to talk to my daughter. Man it was tough… Oh gosh, I got so depressed, so lonely, but at the same time getting into the winter…I told my fiancée that I have to, my (name of child) has to come up. She has to stay with me…

Staying in touch was an expectation that family, especially the children left behind, came to have of their parents who were abroad. The expectation would suggest to themselves and others that
things were going well for them despite their separation from a parent. One man remembered receiving telephone calls from his mother and sometimes missing them, but not being concerned because she would call regularly or write letters. Any money she would send for him in the Caribbean he received with joy and excitement. He shared the experience of receiving money from his mother with his friends and created an event out of spending the money. The benefit of receiving money was something of a public experience for him and his friends, as he would go shopping with them when the money came.

Respondent 12: Every Sunday, basically like almost every Sunday… When I’m home every Sunday, she would call sometimes she would call, and I’m not home, and at that time people didn’t have cell phones… Yeah she wrote letters, she sent stuff, money. When family was coming down she send them things. Yeah, so like that helped. I would always tell my fellas them when I get the money, and I go on a shopping spree.

Sending money and clothing was not just to young children, but to dependent adults too. The following participant’s brother is dealing with mental health issues in the Caribbean, which he believes is a safer environment for his brother because their aunt makes sure he receives what is sent, and everybody knows him and looks out for him.

Respondent 10: Definitely, I know for me, I feel better that he’s home, and he’s amongst people that love him and care about him, its warm all the time so we don’t have to worry about whether he’s going to freeze to death or starve to death anything like that, and he’s in a town where people know him, and people care about him, so we don’t have to worry too much about him being abused by anyone really, yeah… I think it’s a good thing honestly, and we just send him clothing and money and stuff like that you know well. We send it to my aunt who he lives with there, and she will give him a little money every day so he just has money to do whatever he needs to do.

Being able to spend money freely in the Caribbean gives the appearance of financial well-being to both the sender and receiver of remittances. How the money is earned or the type of work being done has been of less importance to parents than the immediate impact of the ability to send home much needed resources, making sure to include something for everyone in the household, and thus maintaining contact or connection.

Respondent 13: I send money most of the time, now and again I send a barrel, but not too often, but mostly money… Yeah the barrel is still good, you still send barrel. It’s not like they don’t have the same thing. It’s just that it’s a little more expensive, you still send the stuff down, yeah.

These expectations can become even more challenging for reunited families when children struggle to deal with the differences between the jubilation of receiving material and financial
support in the Caribbean and the reality of living with a parent in Canada in conditions of poverty instead of imagined wealth.

5.1.2 Skewed Expectations and Not “Keeping Up”

The pressure to take care of the economic and emotional needs of the family in the Caribbean, whether the care is for the children left behind with relatives or for the family as a whole, supports my concept of “Keeping Up” and staying in touch. However, the complexity of “Keeping Up” and the myth of the better life are revealed through the kind of expectations experienced by the family members living in Canada, who are negotiating their relation to family in the Caribbean. Despite the expectations to maintain contact and connection, for the following participant below, “Keeping Up” did not seem to include placing an emphasis on sharing with loved ones or friends back in the Caribbean the reality of living with oppression in Canada. Indeed, not “Keeping Up” was as positive in managing the challenges of being an African Caribbean immigrant family in Canada through the creation of some time and space free from anticipated judgment and gendered expectations. Specifically, a complication in the ability to stay in touch was the challenge of how to respond to a change in status in Canada. The participant went from being a full-time employed professional and traditional parenting as the secondary caregiver in the Caribbean to being underemployed in survival jobs and becoming the stay-at-home dad in Canada. His fears of being seen as a failure and his feelings of bitterness were eased by not “Keeping Up” with people back home in the Caribbean and having to deal with the assumed expectations of sacrifice for the children.

Respondent 14: Well they were teenage, so I would be home with them and my wife would be out working. That was for some periods a time because she was at university studying, so I would do the housework, which is not common for West Indian men you know…The nice thing about it is we were far from everybody, and nobody back home knew what I was doing, so I didn’t have time to take it on… I just did it, I didn’t consider, you know, you have to just look beyond you know she was at university studying, hopefully when she finished she would have gotten back into her field, and I would continue looking for employment. It didn’t create stress in the household, I just flowed with it.

It was more acceptable to keep up by staying in contact and acknowledging personal struggles about not having money or needing money with others who were also living in Canada. “Keeping Up” became difficult for another participant when she had to deal with her family’s expectations that she sponsor them to come to Canada. The challenge of not meeting these
expectations and being seen as a failure were deeply felt, but conflicted with the challenges involved in raising her children and not wanting to take on the responsibility of sponsorship.

Community Focus Group R4: Because it was what was bred inside of you, right so for me to survive, but it was that always outreaching from home to the ones that are up here, but the ones that are up here never reach back home because then you’re here, and you’re ashamed because you’re supposed to be doing certain things. There’s an expectation from you so when you don’t fulfill that expectation, right you’re, don’t want to say you’re a failure, but let’s say it, you’re a failure because then for me not bringing my mom, my sisters, and my brothers up now, its like well, why you, what’s wrong with you, and today it’s like that’s a responsibility I don’t want. I don’t mind helping to support, but I guess it’s a responsibility I don’t want because they don’t get that not in my adult life growing here. I’m a different person. I have my kids I have my own responsibility, they are not my responsibility in that sense, and so it’s hard in that sense.

An unintended complication of “Keeping Up” and not acknowledging the reality of oppression is that, for some children left behind in the Caribbean, there exists a kind of disconnection between what it takes for their parent to send material goods and money, on one hand, and the expectation of the children that they will receive goods and money on demand, on the other hand. Upon reuniting with their families, they are confronted with the differences between their expectations of wealth and the reality of poverty. In this regard, there is a gap between what reunited children and teenagers expect and assume about their parent’s ability to provide for them, based on having received money and barrels back home, as compared to the reality of living with their parent in Canada.

Respondent 8: When you haven’t been raised with your parent, you know she was raised with my mom, but my mom didn’t have all the resources. My daughter didn’t have responsibilities. She didn’t do chores she, so even though my mom didn’t have all the resources, my daughter had a lot of things. So like I would send her things, and I have a sister in England who would send her things, my aunt would send her things, so she grew up having things not earning anything and so and she’s not used to well no, you know, and so she’s come to me who I will say “No I will set boundaries,” so I think that was a difficult transition for her and for me too because you know, for me, no means no, and that’s because of my experiences…

Key Stakeholder Focus Group #1 RP: Another element to the children is that sometimes when they’re home, the mother would send money and nice clothes and so on, so they think this is a rich person in Canada sending things to me right. So when they come up as a teenager, and the circumstances are not good, they live in a small apartment sometimes, you know, too many people in there, and they have to go out and get a job, and they’re coming thinking, oh you know, my mother is rich, and I’m coming here and I might get my own car or whatever, and then they face the poverty that you know and you know, and so they don’t really understand what they’re coming into because they had these expectations, and so that’s part of the conflict that occurs as well.
Their reunification quickly becomes further complicated in the context of “Keeping Up” with their peers in Canada when their skewed sense of expectations about being given what they ask for combines with their new understanding of Canadian rights, which challenges the authority of their parent. In addition to the issue of being misinformed about what it is really like to live in Canada, there are further difficulties in not knowing how the system works and not having any help with the process of learning about how things work. For these next respondents, this process of figuring out the system takes a long time and involves making mistakes while they are trying to build their lives.

Community Focus Group Respondent 4: You’re coming to something better, but nobody talks about struggles, and nobody talks about what it is to remove from everything that is familiar to unknown.

Community Focus Group Respondent 3: This life in this western world is totally different. It’s filled with corruption, it’s a the image that we have of foreign, that’s what we call it in Jamaica, “you going to foreign.” This image of foreign in our minds is a place where you could get rich, and you can move on and live that fantasy life right, but when you actually get here, you realize you don’t know the system right, and you’re behind because you don’t know the system and now you have to figure things out, and you make a lot of mistakes in figuring things out cause there’s no one there, there’s no mentor there sitting with you saying “Let me walk you through and show you exactly what’s going on.” So you make tons of mistakes, you starting all over again, you make a lot of mistakes in your life, and it’s like you know when you finally realize from making all those mistakes what you really supposed to do, its maybe 10,12 years, 15 years later, you know sometimes longer before you really get things figured out you know, and then now you trying to get established and grow your stuff, and by then you have your own family now and like exactly what (name) was saying, you’re responsible for a certain amount of people.

The ability to meet family obligations, the expectations about not forgetting those left behind, and the desire to be perceived as generous and successful in gaining material wealth are entangled in enacting “Keeping Up.” The return visits to the Caribbean of those who left add yet another layer to what “Keeping Up” entails.

5.1.3 Returning Visits

Returning to the Caribbean to see children and caregivers can be an experience full of emotional conflict, in addition dealing with the expectations about having money. The performance of returning often involved displaying wealth by: (1) being able to afford to visit, (2) wearing new and fashionable clothes daily, (3) bringing lots of material goods and making sure not to forget anyone, and (4) spending money freely. The visit is the performance of the dream of a better life in person and is accompanied by the expectation that personal material things will also be left
behind for family and friends. The expense of returning to the Caribbean can be prohibitive, as was the case for the next respondent, who recalled returning as a young teen, but also reported that he could not afford to visit as an adult.

Respondent 11: I went back when I was still young, but I would say maybe when I was must have been probably must have been maybe around 13, 14, or 15, maybe that age I did went back home one time so I’ve never been back now for a long time…Mostly everybody I would say did go back a lot of time before me. I’m the only one just never went back for a long while. I guess when you’re I guess working and money situation, and it’s not it’s not easy man…

The expectations about money, the ways this expectation was enacted, and the feelings of bitterness expressed about dealing with being treated differently upon return to the Caribbean were all part of “Keeping Up.” An explanation by this participant addresses the issue of constant appeals from people in the Caribbean to send money or goods because the people in the Caribbean think those returning have money to spare. The following respondent points out the gap between what people returning to visit the Caribbean say about their lives and what is actually happening in their lives in Canada.

Community Focus Group Respondent R7: You know why plenty of them do it, cause a lot of us go down there and show off a lot. {R4: yes, true} They give away, they brag oh they can do this, they can do that, so when you, me and he say we don’t have it, it’s like we, its nonsense you talking, you see, so it’s a lot of we suffering because of the ones that feel they’re better than us, which they come back here suffer, the rent don’t pay the rent man licking down the door, everything doing that, them down Jamaica, and your country don’t know that.

For the next participant, returning was focused more on rebuilding her family when her own efforts to reclaim and sponsor her daughter were stalled in Canada. Returning to the Caribbean was about reclaiming her daughter, who she left behind as a newborn, and bringing her family together in the Caribbean, even for a short time. Returning made a difference to her ability to stay connected with her daughter and to have all her children together in the same place.

Respondent 8: …And I have had two other children of my own, and my daughter was in Jamaica for 16 years, and so that really took a toll on me. I moved back to Jamaica because I couldn’t handle the fact that she was there, and I was here, and the reason why she stayed there for 16 years was because I didn’t feel I was informed enough. Because what ended up happening was that I left her off my immigration papers…so she came after 16 years, but it didn’t take very long for the process. I hired a lawyer which I saw in the paper, and she helped me so, within a year, my daughter was here, but that was because I kept going back to Jamaica, so I had enough evidence that she was my child and I was taking care of her, and so they allowed me to sponsor her…
Another participant’s response to “Keeping Up” in relation to returning was a conscious attempt to break the distance between who he is perceived to be as someone has lived away and is returning, and the reality that people are still having to deal with financial struggle in Canada.

Respondent 12: I think for me it’s just about me breaking the ice because sometimes, the thing is that I’ve been on the other side. I’ve been on the other side in the sense of seeing people go away and coming back and feeling like a kind a way like how you speak to them, and a lot of my friends have that same experience when they go back home because I understand it. So I just tend to break the ice when I go home. I have a little reunion everybody come like (his name) is still stupid (his name) cause they might see me doing…like various, for instance, social media they might see me doing certain things in social media, going to conference, speaking at certain stuff so it’s like they might have a certain perception of me, you know like I try to break it—Yeah because I understand it. You know I’ve been on the other side, and I think a lot of the things that I understand them. So like yeah like okay I know certain things, and I say how would I react to this, and people have shared stories with me too—I understand it…people go overseas, and they come back, and they think they better, and you know I just have to laugh at them you know like you know, when you go in Canada, you struggling boy, so you try to pretend like.

Returning as an adult was also about a rest from racism for this respondent, who left the Caribbean as a teenager. He not only knows the country and his way around it, but he is also known by the people who still live there. He remains in touch with friends and family and also with what’s happening in the country.

Respondent 12: …I said I have escapes like I think I can just go to the Caribbean and sit in spaces and escape and it helps me, a lot of people can’t go back home…

For the next respondent, an unintended impact of leaving the Caribbean as a child was the inability to recall what people looked like. For example, he forgot his grandmother. He experienced the gap of not remembering the people he left behind when he came to Canada, since many of the people he had known as a child no longer lived in the Caribbean. He talked about how bad it feels to deal with being remembered and acknowledged by people when he does not remember them at all. In contrast his to the previous participant, his return visit became an opportunity to begin his “Keeping Up.”

Community Focus Group Respondent 3: In speaking about myself, it’s like I forgot about my grandmother, like now that I was here, it’s like I was so young, and you know I forgot about everyone, like I should, literally forgot. I don’t know what anyone looks like, and my grandmother got sick, and she passed away before I could even go to even visit her, so like I understand exactly how you’re feeling, like everyone is either gone or went to England or went to the States. So me going back to Jamaica, now it’s like August will be my very first time ever going back since I left, so me going back now, it’s like I won’t know anyone, but people will
know me because, for some strange reason, they never forget you (agreement from the group),
you know so it makes you feel so bad, cause everyone oh (his name and being hailed up), who
the hell are you? I don’t know who you are.

5.2 “Child Rearing”

The reality of African Caribbean migrants to Canada is that “Child Rearing” includes being
raised by aunts, grandparents, parents, and other family members. It means having multiple
parents as a child who is left behind in the Caribbean, and sometimes it means acknowledging
differences in “Child Rearing” practices between the Caribbean and Canada. For example,
dealing with violence in the home in Canada was a particular experience that multiple
participants highlighted as one of the many challenges they faced.

5.2.1 Disciplining and Violence - Licks

Addressing intra-family violence within and outside of African Caribbean communities comes
with risks. An example of an outside risk involves dealing with the police, and inside the
community, there is the risk of normalizing the intergenerational violence of being beaten. In
disciplining her child, this mother unknowingly put her family in harm’s way. For her, being
separated from her child was so painful that she decided to bring the child up before she herself
attained legal status, hoping that it would be only a matter of time before her application would
be processed. She did not expect to have her application denied, nor was she prepared for her
child to be sad and unhappy about living with her in Canada. The mother remembered how
stressful it was to worry about being deported and at the same time to try to rebuild her life and
her family. Her child was enrolled in school, where she was given the message to call the police
for help if she was being hit. Her daughter called to the police, but ended up being chastised by
them and told what conditions were acceptable for a call for help; the child was subsequently hit
harder because she had made the call.

Respondent 4: Yeah because she was, yeah, yeah she was kind of, yeah she had a tough time too
because she wanted to, grandma on both sides were back home so it was, she became rebellious,
she wouldn’t eat. She learned a new system, if your mom spank you call the cops, which she did,
she did once… I think she was at the restaurant, and she was being rude, and I just smack her
with my hand on her butt, and she called, then the phone rang and the cops came on and they
said, “Is everything okay?” I said, “Yes.” And they asked me to identify myself and I did and
they said, “Your daughter just called that she is being abused.” I said “What,” so I explained
exactly what happened. And they said, “Okay, let me talk to her,” so they spoke to her and tell
her not to ever do that again, only unless such a situation, and when I hang up from them, I gave
her another one… This is just after she came, she came up at five, at five that’s the first thing
they learn in school. She was in grade one or is it kindergarten, grade one and she learned that, after I smacked her again, I gave it to her good this time, and she didn’t call them. It was frightening, it was frightening because I was scared because at that time we weren’t landed. So can you imagine if they had come and realized she is not landed, and she is beating her child, you know, I would have been in big trouble.

The violence meted out at the home of the next participant touched everyone in the home. As the next participant recollected what it was like to be raised by her aunt in Canada, she revealed the general conditions of violence in the home. She described the various ways violence was experienced and enacted in her home and described the violence in relation to each person in the home.

Respondent 6: She withheld food from me, she hit my sister, and then her and her husband was always fighting. There was violence in the home.

For the next participant, hitting is described as a behaviour passed on from father to son across generations. He recalled that his grandfather disciplined his uncles, that his father beat him, and that he hit his son. He used to think hitting was a normal thing for parents to do. He described the experience of being beaten with the strap by his father, which would happen when he and his sister were punished for getting in trouble. He began to understand his experience as abuse only after getting counselling and being arrested for hitting his son. He then made changes in the way he parents his children.

Respondent 2: I just heard her say, “I don’t know anything about it so I don’t know anything about it,” and then he would say, “Well, both of you somebody knows so both of you are gonna get it,” and then he would, he had this piece of leather belt which was like at least a quarter of an inch thick and like two and half inches wide I think and he would even tell us, “Go get it in my room, meet me in the basement” right so go get it meet him in the basement, and he would tell you, “kneel,” he would make you kneel down in front of him and he’d be talking to you, I tell you “di da di,” whack and you “di da di,” whack and, “Sit, get back down, get back down, you got to kneel down,” and this is how he’d beat you right… Well yeah like I went for counselling years later with my son, and they asked me questions about my parents and this kind of stuff, I discussed this stuff with them. They told me, “You were abused.” I wasn’t aware. I thought it was normal…You know I try to live differently with my kids, and I think to some degree sometimes you repeat some of the things that happen to you with your kids. I don’t think necessarily but I had a period of time when I was pretty frustrated and stuff like that too, so I think for a wee bit I probably did the same with my son … Yeah cause I ended up, I hit him with a wire coat hanger one time because he hid the belt, he tried to take it away from you coming to hit him, so you found something else, right, and, another time, he grabbed the belt, and I had a skipping rope, and I hit him with that too, and he went, with the skipping rope incident he went
and told one of his classmates’ mother, and he went there and he didn’t want to come home, I guess something like that, and she called the cops for me so yeah.

For the following participant, the side-by-side presentation of the book with the belt effectively communicated what to expect in his lesson. He did not want to go home to his mother’s way of teaching him to read. The threat of being beaten by his mother made reading a less-than-enjoyable experience for him and something to avoid. He got involved in extracurricular activities as a way to not have to go home.

Community Focus Group Respondent R3: …I like learned to read at a very late age right because when I was in Jamaica my grandmother, I could go to school if I want to go to school, right. So I remember my mom trying to teach me how to read and her way of teaching me how to read was anytime I come home there’s a book on the bed with a belt beside the book, right. Yeah like reading was never enjoyable for me I was like, oh boy, every time I see a book, I’m like, whoa, you know, you looking cause you gonna get beaten. It was just it was just terrible just terrible experience.

Similarly, being afraid of his mother, not knowing her, and reuniting with her and a stepfather were not easy adjustments for the next participant to make. He too did not want to come home to face yelling and being beaten. He notes that having trouble with school and attendance was another source of strain in their relationship that influenced his decision to skip school and avoid going home.

Respondent 11: Yeah I didn’t really grow up with my mother, like actually knowing her too much. I didn’t know her, but I did live with her. I guess maybe it is because of the time that she leave and the age, whatever, I didn’t kind of connect with her too much and know her. So when I came here to Canada, I had a lot of problems with my mom didn’t know her that much, and I was scared of her because, well, I’m not going to say it was the best kind of life living when I was here it was my mother was strict, and there was times I used to get licks for nothing sometimes. Sometimes too it’s going to school, you know, I do my best and you know I don’t want to come home, because I was just afraid of my mom, you know. So I used to just skip off and go in downtown area that was my last school, I went to downtown area with friends, and I didn’t want to come home…

5.2.2 Separating – Raising Children

Serial migration generally means that families are separated and that children left in the Caribbean must navigate other parenting. When these family separations happen, some respondents who were themselves left behind describe their aunts and grandmothers as their principal mother figures in place of their biological mothers, whom they were separated from. When the respondents are the parents who immigrated to Canada, they describe the roles of their
mothers and sisters as helping to raise their children. There is not only a recognition by aunts and
grandmothers of the shift in who is acknowledged as the mother or a stranger by the children
they raised, but also an adjustment by parents to not being able to raise their own children; that is
to say, that raising grandchildren or nieces and nephews provides aunts and grandparents another
chance at parenting.

Precarious status and the threat of deportation are backdrops to this next participant’s narrative
below about separation from his mother and his subsequent experience of being raised in the
Caribbean. For him, separation from his mother happened in Canada when he was a few months
old. He explains how he ended up spending his childhood in the Caribbean despite being born in
Canada. He was raised by his aunt and then by his grandmother when his mother was not able to
raise him. He recalls growing up and not knowing his birth mother until he was six years old,
when she returned to the Caribbean to bring him back to live with her in Canada. The
reunification path back to Canada and his mother involved separation at birth from his mother,
who he then related to as a stranger, from his aunt at a few months, and from his grandmother at
age six in the Caribbean, who is the person he actually relates to as his mother.

Key Community Respondent R3: I was actually born here in Canada, but like I was sent back
home in Jamaica when I was like a couple months old, and I lived in Jamaica for like until I was
six then I came back up here…my story is kind of strange because my mom came to this country
as an immigrant, so the reason why I had to go home in the first place is because they were
trying to deport my mom right when she gave birth to me in the hospital. The only way for my
mom to stay in the country, she had to leave me in the hospital and flee, and then my aunty came
to pick me up, so when my aunty had me for a time, immigration officers kept on coming to her
house like the only way that I could. She already had kids, and she was struggling already, so
she sent me to my grandmother, home to live with my grandmother…I didn’t grow up thinking
that was my grandmother. I actually grew up thinking that was my mom right so there was no
explanation to me …so it was crazy cause when my mom actually came to get me…this lady
shows up, and then my grandma turns to me and says, “You know, I’m not really your mom,
and that’s actually your mom, and she’s coming to take you back home.” So right, that was that
separation from my grandmother was very traumatic for me because it’s like ripping you away
from your mother and introducing you to a stranger and saying that’s your mother, and it was
like it was very difficult, so like that strained the relationship with my mom from the very get go
because now I had to try to love somebody that I didn’t really think was my mother, right, so it
was very it was very tough…

The experience of being raised by many people was also happening for another participant as he
was raised by an assortment of family and friends, including his aunt, grandmother, neighbours,
and a cousin so that he might have access to education. Like the previous participant, he
describes his moving on from his aunt’s home as being related to her responsibility for her own children, among other factors.

Respondent 10: So I was with my aunt for a bit for a majority of the time, probably five years of the time I was with my aunt, but she was growing older, and she had her own kids and that sort of thing, so for her you know after a while it was about time that we sort of moved on. Then, from my aunt’s place, I moved to my grandmother’s but she was too far for school (laughter), so we came back to my neighbourhood, and we stayed with two different neighbours within the neighbourhood, and, within the Caribbean, like, it’s not a big deal, like your neighbours are like your family anyways. So we stayed with two different neighbours there, and then I moved to my cousin’s afterwards cause it’s just better to be at family. And my cousin was like at a good place for me to still be able to go to school, you know. It was family, it was centralized everything, so that’s pretty much how it went, and I finished school that way.

The experience of the whole community raising children in the Caribbean and the expectations about being fed or disciplined by neighbours were recollections shared by many other participants. For example, for the following participants, the notion of “family” was described and experienced as the community, that is, a group that went beyond the multigenerational members of their immediate family.

Community Focus Group Respondent 3: I felt like back home was more, the foundation was better, the family supports was better. Like you actually had a complete family, you could go anywhere in the neighbourhood and get something to eat, like I don’t have to go home to eat. I could just go to one of my friend’s house or something, and I’ll get treated just the same way. I’ll get beaten just the same way if something happens, so the family was the entire community, and everyone was looking out for everyone, so you did something by the time you got home. Your parents knew already what was going on.

Focus Group Respondent 7: My story is just like his story, my mom, my aunt, grow me, my aunt, where you go now, my father died when I was a baby… my mother couldn’t afford certain things, my mother grow me my aunt, so it’s like my mother my aunt and everything in one so it’s like, whatever life you talk about, it’s the same thing I go through, but everybody love each other you know, and, as I said, you never hungry, one cook today, you don’t have to cook. You just say, “Miss Jane you cooking today, leave it dinner for me, it’s there, somebody pass what you’re cooking today,” you know you…

These participants shared their connection to community life in the Caribbean and its importance in terms of meeting their needs. These are examples of people in the community who helped to raise the children around them whether or not the children were related. Although they spoke about community living and the many people who took care of them in positive terms, their recollections also included toleration of being disciplined by community members.
5.2.3 Reuniting – Emotionally Speaking

The range of experiences for participants of reuniting with family members after extended periods of time away from each other included joy as well as pain. The processes of separation and reunification were not necessarily set apart from one another; instead, separation and reunification overlapped in the context of multiple parenting.

Respondent 10 was separated for seven years, from 10 to 17 years of age, and was excited and joyous about being able to reunite with his mom in Canada. He recalled that they kept in touch with each other during their separation through letters. Every couple of weeks, he would get a letter from her. He remembered that he missed her, that he cried when he read her letters, and that he was making a plan to reunite with her once he could earn his passage.

Respondent 10: It was amazing because, I’ll be honest, by the time I was 17, I was tired of not seeing my mom. Like I would read her letters and cry honestly and just be like, yo man, I just miss my mom being here, and I had gotten to the point where I was just like, no matter I don’t care what it takes, I’m going to go live with my mom. I had gotten to that point…But I was already tired of not being with my mom, and I was just like, I need to be with my mom, so when I reunited with her I was just overjoyed. I was so happy to finally be living with my mom after so long, you know.

For the following participant, separation from his mother at age nine was combined with his parents’ separation from each other. His mother migrated to Canada, and he was left with his father, siblings, and stepmother in the Caribbean. He recalled that, in a middle class family, the expectation was for parents to send their children to study in the United States or Canada after they graduated from high school. Reuniting with his mother for him was an expectation that coincided with his pursuit of education. He reunited with her at 17, and he was distressed about not being able to go to school right away.

Respondent 12: To be honest, I loved it because I missed my mother and thing but then, at the same time, I was going through the whole legal issue, the paper stuff, and I think like I’m someone like I just wanted to go to school, I wanted to go to school right, and it’s like okay I had to go to high school again…

Respondent eight, below, was raised by three different women, with her aunt being the third caregiver and the one she relates to as her mother. Her birth mother ended up physically raising the respondent’s daughter, and the respondent financially supported both her daughter and her mother. The respondent raised her other children in Canada and spent 16 years trying to bring
her daughter from the Caribbean to join her. She shared the experience of not being raised by her mother with her daughter and the experience of not raising her daughter with her mother. The mother-daughter relationship has been distant after their reunification. Her story also exemplified how there are many possible configurations of family, which are revealed in the multiple separations and reunifications that occurred before her migration to Canada. Reunification is not automatic or even necessarily desired, and this reality shows up here in who is claimed and unclaimed for reunification in the family. The (re) construction of family can happen, even reluctantly, before immigration to Canada.

Respondent 8: …You know my life is very colourful in terms of my upbringing. You know, not having consistent parenting from my mother, that didn’t exist really, so I wanted, I think I wanted the years that I had left with her cause she was 16, so I’m thinking, between 16 and 18, I could make an impact in her life, but she couldn’t see the benefit or she it was difficult for her to grasp, like you know maybe even making the transition from there to here. I think it was hard for her and so for me now I, the fact that we don’t have a relationship. I’m not happy with that in the sense that I wish we could talk. However I give her that freedom to do make her choices, yeah.

The losses of separation can show up in reunification, as in the case of this next respondent. His grandmother raised him until he was reunited with his mother at the age of seven. He shared the experience of losing his grandmother, who he related to as his mother, with his mother. When his mother received the news of his grandmother’s death, he was home with his mother, and he recalls how hard it was for him and for his mother because he also felt as if he lost his mother. Both he and his sisters regarded his grandmother as his mother.

Respondent 11: I took it hard when she passed away, but I wasn’t the only one. My mother took it more because that’s my mother’s mother. I was at home at the time when from mom passed away, that’s my grandmother so when she got the news, she dropped down I had to take her up from the ground because she was crying, because that’s her mother, and I know what it’s like losing your mother. I took it hard because she raised me, I was left with her, she and my grandfather too raise me and it was tough.

The adjustment from a collectivist family structure to a nuclear structure was the context for what made adjustment difficult for respondent one below, upon reuniting in Canada. For both the child and the parent, this adjustment affected the experience of reunification. The family was in motion across countries and challenged to deal with the impact of the changes.

Respondent 1: Yeah, so it was kinda strange when you get here, and then it’s different because it’s just you, your sister, and your Mom and your Dad, it’s like what? There a whole different
scene right, so that was something that we had to get used to, cause we weren’t used to just being with Mom and Dad and in our own place because we were always with people.

Respondent four also described the challenges of reuniting with her daughter, who was struggling to adjust to the change of being away from her extended family, to the change in the weather, and to the change in living arrangements.

Respondent 4: Yeah, but he wasn’t staying because he was a teacher back home…Yeah, so he came up and spent six weeks, and then he went back down at the same time, and then I had, you know, my daughter and myself there and for her too she was, she was so depressed and she wouldn’t eat, and she because she is used to her family structure back home…she’s used to that, you know, living together with them, and on weekends she would have gone over to my mom and dad’s home to stay. So she had that community, you know, back and forth. So now when she comes here, it’s just myself and her and school and the darkness. She used to complain it’s dark, she was around 5, she’s crying she wanna go home the place is too cold, she wants to go back.

In addition to talk about the unintended consequences of reunification and the ways the context of reunification impacted the lives of African Caribbean immigrant families, there was also discussion of race and racism within institutions like child welfare.

5.2.4 Child Welfare

The following participant points out the need for African Caribbeans to become fluent in the child welfare systems and how they work. The participant also notes that racism affects the ways child welfare is carried out with African Caribbean families and the assumptions about their choice to immigrate, which are tangled up with blame in the application of attachment issues without attention to context.

Key Stakeholder Respondent 1: I found that there have been Afro Caribbean families that have come with different cultural understanding of child rearing, whether its you’ve left the child behind, and you’ve carried the child with you, and its viewed within child welfare organization as something is wrong with you in terms of your attachment that, if you’ve left a child behind, there’s a problem with the attachment within the family, and also there’s the context within for that particular, usually it’s the mother that I’ve experienced anyway, that there’s a problem with you, how could you leave your child, as opposed to what is the context which you chose and maybe thought was best for your child, to do it that way in terms of immigration, in terms of policy, in terms of setting yourself up here first…The navigation of the systems here the parents may not even though mom is here, she may not understand the fine nuances of all the institutions and the expectations of how to function within them, right how to not come to the attention of child welfare right…It matters on the stereotypes the prejudices towards the Black community like you don’t know if they’re aware of all of that and if they’re aware if they can navigate all of that so that they don’t get penalized unfairly right, and that’s a level of controlling the family dynamic and functioning not unfortunately functioning within systemic racism, sexism, and all
of that stuff, right so on top of all this breakdown, you’ve got a child who doesn’t know how to function in that maybe mom and stepdad don’t know how to function in that.

“Child Rearing” is an issue that is also raised by the next respondent, who questions child welfare practices and the ways children are treated when they are in foster care with different families. The participant’s question is about the number of different foster care homes, as a reflection of poor treatment of children, and there is also a challenge about what constitutes a little mistake for child welfare. She also raises the concern about both the movement of the children in foster care from one home to another and the treatment of the parent as garbage.

Community Focus Group Respondent 7: And yet still they take the kids from you and the kids is not treated better the way you would hope, they take the kids to ten different homes and in ten different homes they don’t get a good treatment, very seldom they gets a good um whatever people look after them right, and you the parents to them is garbage, one little mistake you make with your kid, as according to them is a problem, right.

5.3 “Cast Out”

The injuries of losses endured by participants from being “Cast Out” impacted the ways they (re)constructed family in their own lives and in their relationships with family. The threat of eviction was a constant for participants who were in conflict in relation to: family, the criminal justice system, education, employment, and social services. There was also a kind of permanence to the experience of being “Cast Out” of these spaces, institutions, and markets.

For some participants in the study, the experience of being “Cast Out” reflected literally being thrown out of the home by force or being escorted out to the airport and onto a plane back to the Caribbean. For others, it meant being forced to leave the Caribbean in order to have better access to education and economic opportunities. Casting out also included being unclaimed as a child by a parent or being unclaimed as an entire family by their father. Still, for another it meant being put out of the classroom. Sometimes “Cast Out” experiences were represented by a community and its members who were being marginalized from employment opportunities and living with the threat of being permanently relocated from their neighbourhood.
5.3.1 Home - Kicked Out, Thrown Out and Threatened

Some participants who were sponsored as children to come to Canada described experiences of being kicked out or sent back to the Caribbean without an opportunity to discuss or clarify their side of a story. They had to behave as expected regardless of the abuse they endured at home. If they had crossed the line of expected behaviour, knowingly or unknowingly, that crossing was all that mattered; they were decisively kicked out of their homes by their parents onto the streets or put on the next available plane back to the Caribbean. There were no second chances given in their or their siblings’ experiences of being kicked out and no opportunities to discuss the situation that would include the young person’s point of view. The problem of not behaving as desired was addressed by permanently casting out the teenagers from their homes and from their lives in Canada.

Participants recalled their feelings of surprise and shame about what happened when they were thrown out of their homes and lives as they had come to know them in Canada. The pain of being returned abruptly to the Caribbean speaks to the importance of “Keeping Up” with parental expectations for life in Canada. For respondent two, being in conflict with the law was not “Keeping Up” with parental expectations about what it meant to have the opportunity for life in Canada. He remembered that, as a 16-year-old teenager, he had a brush with the law. The decision about being sent back to the Caribbean did not include any discussion or time for preparation. He was sent back on his own and had to fend for himself. He remembered that his father would discipline him and his sister directly, swiftly, and without a discussion as a matter of course in their basement, and also that he was sent home in the same manner.

Respondent 2: Yeah so after that, he says so I’m buying you a ticket and sending you back to Trinidad. So I went to school Monday, and oh I came home, and he says I got a ticket for you, pack your stuff. You’re going back to Trinidad. That was it, no time or nothing like that to just pack me up and take me to the plane. It was faster going, than I was, than I came.

The experience of being “Cast Out” was literal as well as figurative in nature. For some young people, being “Cast Out” could mean being physically pushed out with their belongings into the streets in front of other people and creating a scene. Etched into their memories are the day and the event of being thrown out from their home, into a life of survival on the streets, never to return. For respondent nine below, the path into adult life started with being evicted from his home to a life on the streets. The reunification with his dad was short lived, and rebuilding
family for him meant a permanent separation from his siblings and his mother, with whom he grew up struggling to make ends meet in the Caribbean. Struggling to make ends meet was not new for him as a child. However, being on the streets in Toronto, isolated and separated from family, was a new and difficult challenge to face.

Respondent 9: On January 27th at 3pm, my dad, I love the Salvation Army. I went and I bought a luggage cause we called it a grip, and it said Gladstone on it cause that was the maker, and I bought it because it reminded me of Trinidad and my grandfather, and it had straps, yeah so and my dad took it, and he threw it out of the second floor window, and it hit the top of the veranda, and it went rolling and it split, and my clothes were all over the street, and then he grabbed me when I came from school. He grabbed me by my arm, I can still feel it when I talk about it, he grabbed me and pushed me out the door. And my mom was screaming. Yeah, I don’t know if I’m saying it’s a good thing or a bad thing. So I ended up on the street.

Homelessness was also the result of being “Cast Out” for another participant, respondent six, who recalled what happened and was caught completely off guard by her aunt’s readiness to throw her out. She spoke about her aunt, who sponsored her and her sister to come to Canada after her mother died in Jamaica. The strictness of the parents was often noted, and, for this respondent, her aunt’s strict religiousness also included the withholding of food from her and being physically abusive to her and her sister. She stated that she was 17 when she got kicked out for going to the movies. There was finality to the decision to cast her out from home, and the decision was not rescinded, even when she asked for help with Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) forms that would allow her to continue to pursue her education. Reunification with family for her and her sister involved abuse and separation.

Respondent 6: I had these two little geeky friends, (names of friends) went to a movie with them, a movie, I got in trouble, my bags were packed and I was put out. Had to go to a youth shelter. … I had eight garbage bags and went to (Name of Shelter) with eight garbage bags.

Her sibling was also kicked out for being pregnant, and the impact that decision had on her was that she was not able to complete high school. Nothing seemed to be expected from the father, who was young man who was having sex with a minor at the time. However, his presence in the criminal justice system was noted as part of his trajectory.

Respondent 6: She got kicked out, unfortunately she didn’t finish high school. She only went to grade nine. I don’t think she finished grade nine. I think she was looking for love, so she was involved with an older 20-odd-year old man, 23 years old, getting pregnant so she’s got her son from that now, 15 or 16 around there, pregnant at 14, so she kicked her out. He was the daddy didn’t stick around. The jailbird, he’s a jailbird now.
For another participant, respondent eight, the reunification with her father, stepmother, and siblings did not end in their staying together. She remembered being an independent teenager at the time of reunification with her father, and feeling threatened and pressured by him within a few months of living with him in Canada. She was in fact a new mother who made the difficult decision to leave her baby behind in order to take up the opportunity to come to Canada. Given the challenges in the circumstances of living with her father and the fact that she was still in high school, she decided to leave her father’s home and to live independently on her own.

Respondent 8: So I felt he threatened me at one point, and I said, “You know what, this is it. I’m leaving cause I knew people here.” So yeah I just took the first opportunity and I left. So I moved around a little bit and I found myself into a youth program, and from there I went to high school, so I completed my high school…So I did that, and I would call myself what we would call now at risk. I was at risk, but there was enough in place for young people at the time, like I said, I was in a program for you know young people and that gave me stable housing.

However, for respondent 10, getting support or asking for support did not necessarily prevent his brother from being “Cast Out” of the country. Despite the desire and struggle by him and his mother to keep their reunited family together in Canada, there was confusion about what happened and why his sibling ended up being pushed out and returned to the Caribbean. It was especially confusing for him because his family was trying to receive support in order to deal with his brother’s situation in relation to mental health issues and conflict with the law. He and his brother experienced a staggered reunification with their mother, who sent for them one at a time, such that their reunifications with her resulted in separation of the siblings from each other.

Respondent 10: Like you know, she didn’t get the service that she went for, with the lawyer, and my brother is still, essentially got sent home, and I don’t know if it counts as a deportation or a willing whatever, essentially whatever he signed gave him a ticket to just go home, so now he’s home.

5.3.2 School - Pushed out of Education
The group participant R6 below, remembered that, as a child in school, he was literally placed in the hallway outside the classroom because his teachers thought he was bad and had issues with anger. The response of the school to conflict in the classroom was to “Cast Out” a student into the hallway. This penalty then escalated to suspensions, effectively pushing him out of the school. Moreover, the efforts of the school to engage with his parent, who spoke patois and had a hearing impairment, created more distress for him, since the teachers did not take into account the ways those intersecting factors would impact communication with his mother. The school’s
casting out response compounded the everydayness of being singled out in school as having non-conforming behavioural issues. The singling out started at a young age and became the norm for him during his time in school. His experience of being placed in the hallway and then suspended from school was individualized as his personal difficulties with anger. The continuous ineffective response and labelling he endured during his time in school did not meet his learning or his emotional support needs. From an early age he was left on his own to cope in the hallway - isolated, excluded, and stigmatized.

Key Community Respondent R6: I don’t really think it was more so like racism I experienced in school, but it was always just like behavioural stuff, like they were just like, he’s bad he’s bad special class, he’s bad, he’s bad like special program, like anger management, like till I was probably like grade 8, like I got, I remember I had the most suspensions in the school like a hundred and something, from grade one my desk was in the hall like every single day, I don’t know why I just felt like, I don’t know, I felt like the school environment was much different from home, and I just always got angry all the time so like they always put me in anger management classes, anger management programs, and that’s basically what I had to experience….Just mainly with school, always being singled out as he’s the kid that’s always angry, and he’s the kid that has the anger problems, and let’s put him into the hallway or let’s suspend him, and then it was like when my mom came to the school it was already, cause she wears a hearing aid nobody like they would listen to her, but not as much, and then she’s already from somewhere. Her English is not as good too, so it was kind of like they would need somebody else to help them and that would make me mad more, because they wouldn’t treat my mom properly so a whole bunch of stuff like that.

In addition to the way parents might be treated, there is an issue about a lack of information and knowledge that was discussed by another group participant R3, in relation to the challenges faced when families deal with and respond to school practices and policies regarding suspensions.

Community Focus Group Respondent R3: …I think if we shift that focus and parents get a lot of those supports, it would assist them in raising their kids in this new world, right because then they will understand things a little bit more, because, if you look at the school system and parents, there’s a big separation and division between the two because we come here, we don’t understand the report cards and way they’re set up. We don’t understand the suspensions and the power that we have, and we could actually challenge a suspension. There’s a lot of things us as parents we just don’t know, so if we don’t know how do we get that information right.

Having access to education is a significant factor in the migration experience for African Caribbean immigrants and very much related to talk about a better life. A stakeholder from the group, respondent two, with experience as a worker in a low-income housing complex, discussed concerns raised by parents about losing their children due to streaming in the school system.
Key Stakeholder Respondent 2: Well some of the stuff I heard from residents was that it’s a huge, the cultural difference right a lot of them. I have heard some complaint about the school system, they feel sometimes fear right because there’s that idea that maybe they’re afraid that their kids are going to be taken away or something along those lines. They feel that they, they put trust in the school system, but many times the school system has failed by making assumptions. I’ve heard a lot of residents where they know their child has so much more potential, and they will like stream them into you know like applied for example instead of academic, right, those are some of the things I’ve heard a lot from residents.

For some participants, education was their path to reclaiming the life they had before immigration to Canada. The need to regain the equivalent class status they had in the Caribbean here in Canada meant they had to upgrade with further education in order to have a chance in dealing with the barrier of racism embedded in the need to meet the criterion of having Canadian experience.

5.3.3 Employment - Left Out of Job Market
A further complication of being “Cast Out” from family, home, or country for some participants was their experience of various degrees of lack of access to employment opportunities in Canada. This was described as the lack of “Canadian experience” or a lack of recognition for their credentials or work experience from the Caribbean. Although this exclusion was not necessarily anticipated, especially the request for “Canadian experience” and the discounting of their credentials, the response to the exclusion was to persevere. Respondent four’s response below was to try to meet the new criteria by acquiring more education and acquiring Canadian experience. She managed the stress of returning to school as an adult with a child in order to acquire additional Canadian education. The path to acquiring Canadian experience for her was working for free in order to gain an opportunity to access employment in her field of interest. For Respondent 14, the impact of not having his credentials recognized was work in survival jobs and separation from his family a second time, in Canada, while he searched for better employment opportunities. The respondents coped with the gap between their expectations of access to better opportunities and the reality of oppression and exploitation that was embedded in the requirement for Canadian experience or in exclusion from their field of knowledge.

Respondent 4: Finding jobs, that was a terrible thing, I could hardly find a job here because, with my experience back home, they want me to have “Canadian experience,” how am I going to get Canadian experience, you tell me… I need to get Canadian experience. I applied to many legal firms, could not get in because I don’t have Canadian experience. You know what I had to do as a single mom and a single parent, I had to volunteer in a law firm. So I wrote back the same
people who I wrote applying for jobs, the same firm, and this time I said, “I am volunteering to get so I can get the legal experience,” and I got a call. I said, “Yes, they want cheap labour, okay, they are gonna get cheap labour.” So that was just to get my foot in right.

For Respondent 14, persistence through the humiliation, bitterness, and anger of the experience was related to being older and more mature. The decision to come to Canada as a professional and then the inability to enter the job market in his field meant loss of his dream as well as a difficult challenge for him and his family to confront. Both he and his wife had to start over to enter the job market because their credentials were not recognized. His wife got into the job market after returning to university. However, their need to earn money to support their family meant that he became trapped in short-term jobs.

Respondent 14: No I was just working at temporary short-term jobs, and about two years ago I realized that my dream would never be able to fulfill, so I’m just doing a survival job now as a security officer…No I would not have known that, it was humiliating to not get a job in my field and to wonder what else could I do. I didn’t want to go back to study full time, I didn’t know what to do, so I just kept going from short-term jobs to short-term jobs until I decided to do this type of employment. …My wife she is very supportive cause she knows in other families too that problem exists so she was very supportive, but, with the children, it was sort of they felt I was lazy, I wasn’t getting a job. They were respectful about it, just suspect that they felt I was lazy and not looking for job…At first I was bitter. I was really bitter and angry not getting back into my field, and I read somewhere that, as you get older, you can deal with stress better than when you were younger, and I think I’ve dealt with it because of being older, more mature, looking beyond what you see around you.

Being “Cast Out” from their homes and from access to education and employment were all long, life-altering challenges for the participants experiencing them. These participants described the emotional toll of dealing with exclusion and marginalization as extremely challenging. They all responded to these challenges with perseverance, and respondent 14 decided to take up the non-traditional role of stay-at-home dad.

5.4 Understanding the Themes in Relation

These themes of “Keeping Up,” “Child Rearing,” and “Cast Out” are being experienced in the context of intersecting subject positions. African Caribbeans who make efforts to navigate any one of these challenges face dealing with the other two since they are interrelated, overlapping, and converging with each other. For example, participant 6’s experience of immigration involved: (a) sponsorship by her aunt, which reflected both of their challenges of “Keeping up” with her
brother, who was left behind in the Caribbean; (b) “Child Rearing,” since she was expected to take care of her aunt’s younger son; (c) being “Cast Out” onto the streets by her aunt when the situation became difficult. The voices of the participants provide direction to these themes and help to provide a deeper understanding of the experiences of African Caribbean immigrant families in the context of oppression at both the micro and macro levels, as these families attempt to (re) construct their lives in Canada.

Diagram D: Relationship among Themes

Through my framework of social injury, the provision of remittances points to the complicated relationship between “Keeping Up” and “Child Rearing”. The dynamics between the themes of “Child Rearing” and “Keeping Up” highlight the need for a family network and for maintaining contact with each other, being in relation with each other, and not being in isolation. Moreover, the theme of “Keeping Up” is a kind of proxy for a collectivist model of “Child Rearing.” For example, when resources are removed, African Caribbeans enact collectivist models of childrearing. The provision of remittances can be seen at the micro level as a measure of a family’s network, but, at the macro level, the provision is a kind of interest convergence that
supplements the economy of the nation’s involved. Specifically, the Canadian Domestic Worker Scheme or the more current Seasonal Worker Program, provide limited avenues for immigration from Caribbean, where excessively high unemployment rates exist, to Canada where there is a need for cheap labour in these precarious service industries. It is in the interests of the Caribbean economies to secure employment for people outside of the country as a way to manage high unemployment rates and to encourage “Keeping Up” in transnational family networks as remittances inject millions of dollars of North American currency into their economies. Simultaneously, the development and acceptance of these types of immigration policies in relation to the Caribbean situates Canada as a liberal democracy with opportunity not restriction and expulsion.

My analysis of the relationship between “Cast Out” and “Child Rearing” employs BFT’s concept of Other mothering as part of the experience of childrearing, and AOP’s concerns about multiple intersecting oppressions as part of the experience of being “Cast Out”, CRT’s critique of colour-blind approaches to dealing with race and racism as related to immigration policy and the specificity of ABR in the context of the lives of African Caribbean immigrant families. The complexities of childrearing points to the importance of attending to the pressures faced at the level of daily parenting that are also connected to the fear of the involvement of institutions at the structural level, in the context of oppression for African Caribbean families and the ways any one individual’s negative involvement (for example with child welfare, educational system, criminal justice system) can not only jeopardize the survival of the family as a whole but reflect the structural level of being “Cast Out” of school, home or country. In effect the themes reflect my interpretation of the participants concerns of being in relation at both micro and macro levels.

While I am accounting for my use of these theories as sensitizing concepts in my data analysis and providing examples of the kinds of contributions that they have made in understanding the experiences of participants, it is necessary to clarify that these theories together compose an intersectional lens through which I interpret the data and theorize the relationship between the themes, such that my findings are not simply a sum of the individual contribution of these theories.
6 Chapter Six - Discussion

My discussion of the study focuses on the process of the ways African Caribbean immigrant families (re) construct families in the context of oppression. The study contributes to a more complicated understanding in the social work field of African Caribbean immigrant families and their experiences. I utilize a critical decolonizing perspective that historicizes, depathologizes, politicizes, and decolonizes by centralizing African Caribbeans. Additionally, the ways that experiences of oppression influence the participants in the study is theorized through the themes “Cast Out,” “Keeping Up,” and “Child Rearing,” and links to the existing literature. Areas of family support, homelessness, education, harm/violence/criminalization/deportation, remittances, and poverty are also covered in this discussion. My theorizing is partial, and it is a co-construction consistent with the limits of constructivist grounded theory. Charmaz (2010) herself asserts that “neither positivist nor constructivist may intend that readers view their written grounded theories as Theory, shrouded in all its grand mystique, or acts of theorizing. Instead they are just doing grounded theory in what ever way they understand it” (p. 148). My study is an exploration of an understudied area. As such, I am offering theorizing as opposed to Theory, recognizing that this area of study in social work requires further inquiry.

6.1 Theorizing

“The acts involved in theorizing foster seeing possibilities, establishing connections, and asking questions.” (Charmaz, 2010, p. 135)

Theoretical sensitivity in grounded theory refers to the researcher’s ability to theorize and how he or she accounts for lived experiences. Charmaz (2010) notes that acquiring theoretical sensitivity in part requires focusing on gerunds and processes. I view this way of constructivist grounded theory theorizing, which highlights the researcher’s experience of knowing from doing over time, as being somewhat consistent with aspects of CRT and BFT, such as knowing from experience and acting as a voice of colour through which to theorize. The importance of recognizing that racism is ordinary and deeply embedded in everyday experiences, and the subsequent imperative to be conscious of race also support the need to take action for change. The researcher as the instrument in constructionist grounded theory comes with bias, knowledge, and awareness of oppression. Therefore, the researcher needs to be critically reflexive about social justice. However, a conclusion cannot be drawn that the researcher’s consciousness about
race and racism is necessarily problematic and needs to be given up. That line of thinking is race-based in the sense that it assumes that the absence of race is neutral and superficial, and it also demands that the researcher eliminate race; this is an example of colour blindness. A more complicated and deeper route to theorizing is to take race and racism into account as pervasive presences that provide insight and knowledge to POC, and that require reflexivity, intersectionality, and movement beyond binary thinking in ways that are consistent with CRT and BFT.

When African Caribbean immigrant families are measured against a Western model of the nuclear family or as a private unit separate from the community, as is apparent in Arnold’s (2012) work, such measurement does not capture the complexity of their possible configurations of family and continues to pathologize families. Additionally, a focus on mother-child dyads, as a reflection of a family’s state of health or place of distress, also does not account for constructs of African Caribbean immigrant families that are extended or collective. I realized that this issue of family configuration and what constitutes family was influencing my understanding of the construction of family. My research specifically explored how African Caribbean immigrants (re) construct families in the context of immigration and oppression in Canada. However, I assumed a child’s separation from and reunification with a parent, usually their mother and siblings, as the standard family configuration. The reality for participants was that family configurations were varied beyond the nuclear or extended family. Predominantly, in the Caribbean, grandmothers were key family members in the (re) construction of family. With the exception of grandfathers and uncles, extended family members also factored broadly into family (re) construction, especially aunts and cousins. In addition to the above family members, neighbours and friends and, to some extent, the broader community, were also considered as part of this new (re) construction of family. Family was expanded to deal with the particular needs of the members of the family left behind, in the face of restrictive immigration policies, which limited all but a few pathways to Canada from the Caribbean.

CRT, BFT, and AOP/anti-racism have influenced and contributed to a broader understanding of the importance of context and intersectionality. My findings speak to the relevance and need for information and knowledge about African Caribbean perspectives in Canada, not as a representative single narrative, but rather as unique and specific among Black experiences. The similarities and differences among Blacks in Canada highlight the ways that oppression is
enacted towards and experienced uniquely by African Caribbeans. Given the dearth of knowledge in this area, particularly in the field of social work, my findings are important in helping to contextualize and begin to theorize about the experiences and current social conditions of African Caribbean families in Canada. My research builds on the work of Henry (1968, 1999) in her initial and subsequent examination of the presence of African Caribbean immigrants in Canada by expanding the conversation to contextualize the roots of racism in the colonial policies and practices exercised in both the Caribbean and Canada. This further historicizing and contextualizing supports my interpretations of the results through my incorporation of anti-colonial perspectives in order to de-naturalize racism and resist its reduction to a matter of interpersonal interactions. My use of an anti-colonial lens integrates anti-racism, along with the specificity of ABR, into my theorizing.

Entry to Canada for the majority of immigrants from the Caribbean has been permitted predominantly through the domestic worker program and/or as seasonal farm workers. Other avenues for entry have included those for students and the even more restrictive option of being sponsored for family reunification. None of these routes of migration support the easy establishment of large collective family networks across Canada and the Caribbean. Recreating a village structure that would support collective ways of surviving the conditions of oppression proved virtually impossible in Canada because of these kinds of restrictive exclusionary immigration policies and practices. Key stakeholders in the focus group who themselves were African Caribbean discussed their efforts to provide additional help and support to African Caribbeans, efforts that went beyond the duties of their work and revealed a kind of hidden ad hoc social support system championed within the social institutions. The combination of the limitations placed on the number of immigrants from the Caribbean permitted entry into Canada and the family reunification immigration policies have served to interfere with the creation of larger collective family configurations, and of the safety and social support net such networks afford.

Participants found the lack of family support networks in Canada to be challenging. The stretching of relationships to create family in the Caribbean acted like a bridge across the distance of the separations that were endured. The Caribbean-style family network structure in Canada may have helped to mediate the extreme disciplining responses, which have included children being beaten with a strap, unceremoniously kicked out of the home, or hit in retaliation
by parents and aunts. Without family and community support, parents and aunts resorted to the
exercise of power over family members when children and youth faced adjustment issues, risk-
laden decision making, or the creation of uncertainty about their whereabouts. Their actions, in
the context of both responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of family members in conflict with
the unfamiliar institutions of the legal, educational, and child welfare systems and the fear of
deporation and further marginalization, was to discipline family members into submission or to
cast them out of the family.

6.2 Family Support

With parents in Canada, sisters and grandmothers shared in the collective raising of children in
the Caribbean. In my study, sisters and grandmothers played a consistent role in taking care of
their siblings’ children or their daughters’ children respectively when needed or asked.
Collectively, they worked together to orchestrate the children’s movement back and forth
between Canada and the Caribbean. These women also organized the movement of children
within the Caribbean from one home to another. AOP is employed to interpret the reality of
oppressions generally, but it is BFT that contributes a way of understanding the knowledge that
comes from Black women, and specifically African Caribbean women, in terms of responses to
oppression. Other mothering (Collins, 2000) was a prevalent option used and taken up by women
in relation to caring for children in their de-privatized family structures. What became invisible
to those left behind in the Caribbean at times were the ways that the mothers and fathers in
Canada struggled to provide financial support and to live with extended separations. Decisions
about whether children were placed with family in the Caribbean or in Canada were related to
the distribution of resources; that is, if Other mothering would either jeopardize or enhance their
ability to care for their own children, then the length of time that women could be Other mothers
would be affected. For some participants in the study, the quality of the relationship between
Other mothers and children also had an effect on the amount of time they would stay together
before moving on or being “Cast Out.”

When it became possible to create and live in a “homestead” family structure in Canada, sharing
mothering and other responsibilities, one participant and her adult sisters did exactly that after
experiencing the end of their partner relationships. This style of shared family life allowed them
to thrive and to pool together their financial and emotional resources. They could share housing,
food, and emotional support, and also create stability for their family members until they would once again be ready to venture out separately as their children grew up. This is one example of (re) construction of an African Caribbean immigrant family in Canada that also provided stable housing for its members.

6.3 Homelessness

The homestead stands in stark contrast to the ways that some participants experienced being “Cast Out” from home by fathers and Other mothers. One consequence of being “Cast Out” from their homes is how permanent it was for those participants who experienced it. Although Springer, Roswell, & Lum’s (2007) study on homelessness among Caribbean youth in Toronto points to family breakdown as a pathway to homelessness, their research does not capture the severity or irrevocability of this kind of separation from family. In addition, the study does not show an understanding of the context of oppression in the lives of African Caribbean immigrant families as a contributor to the casting out of family members. My study reveals some specificity to the experience of homelessness for some African Caribbean immigrant family members. The finality of the casting out into the streets of participants in my study underscores the ways that the collective resources needed to raise children, including the contributions of fathers and Other mothers, have been depleted. What will contribute to recognition of the needs of and to support for the African Caribbean families of fathers and Other mothers as they reunite in Canada, before they resort to casting out? I offer my concept of social injury as a way to account for more than a micro-level understanding, which individualizes the available choices, opportunities, and barriers faced by African Caribbean families responding to the legacies of colonial violence, and which is embedded in restricted access to resources.

6.4 Education

Evictions from home and school are part of the landscape of oppressions faced by participants in the study. African Caribbean immigrant families also face the impact of policies at educational institutions. For participants in my study, the racism experienced at the institutional level was also present at the individual level within the schools. Provincial government policies set up to address issues of safety have had negative impacts for African Caribbean students. The Ontario government enacted the 2001 Safe School Act, which set up a zero tolerance approach to school discipline. Only a few years later, the Ontario Human Rights Commission’s report by
Bhattacharjee (2003) raised concerns about the disproportionate impact that this approach was having on students with disabilities and on Black students, especially those from the Caribbean. The soundness of CRT’s criticism of the colour-blind approach is evident in policies like the Ontario Safe School Act, which treats everyone the same without addressing the different histories of oppressions. Such legislation is inadequate in dealing with racial inequality. The high push-out rate of African Caribbean students remains an important issue, given their current overrepresentation, that is, the almost 40% drop-out rate reported by Toronto’s Board of Education (Anisef, Brown, & Sweet, 2010). African Caribbean immigrants have to deal with zero tolerance in the education system, which snags Caribbean youth, with immigration policy that restricts entry of African Caribbean immigrants to seasonal and service work, and with the deportation of Caribbean immigrants in conflict with the law. African Caribbean immigrants face the intersection of anti-immigration and anti-Black racism, which bridles them into the managed arenas of marginality and poverty (Ornstein, 2000), into a life of a colour-coded employment (Block & Galabuzi, 2011), and into the captivity that comes with incarceration (Sapers, 2013).

6.5 Harm/Violence/Criminalization/Deportation

These evictions from family and home life without an opportunity to appeal mirror the larger society’s treatment of African Caribbean immigrants. Deportation has been treated as a form of punishment for Caribbean nationals who make up the majority of danger-related removals from Ontario under the federal government’s Bill-C44. However, the majority of these deportees had drug related offences (Barnes, 2009).

Without status, the worry about deportation added to the stress of raising a child for participant four, who had to deal with her child calling the police about being spanked. The child reached out as she was taught to do by her teachers in school, but her mother overrode her calls for help because the calls would jeopardize their life in Canada. The involvement of the police was unwanted. At a basic level, the child’s request for help was not met, and she instead got smacked even harder. It is important to acknowledge the request for help made by the child and at the same time understand the mother’s fear of deportation. The conditions of life for this African Caribbean immigrant family included dealing with family violence and the reality of systemic racism inherent in immigration policies. These conditions point to the need for robust responses from police or child welfare that would go beyond surveillance. Competing needs and
precarious conditions can be addressed by moving away from the individualized approaches of attachment theories towards a more collectivist community approach that provides support for the whole family as a unit. The child’s adjustment needs and her right to be free from being hit fall right through the cracks when placed in competition with her mother’s need for safety from the threat of deportation. Hassan et al.’s (2008) study in Montreal about the attitudes of Caribbean and Filipino parents and adolescents about physical punishment found that Caribbean parents felt that they have a right to use physical discipline, whereas their children disagreed with their parents’ use of physical discipline. A more complicated and nuanced understanding of parenting is offered in Mullings & Mullings-Lewis’s (2013) presentation of her counter-narrative of discipline as an African Caribbean family. They highlight the differences in parenting strategies used in order to account for hostile conditions in Canada that challenge social work’s majoritarian notions of appropriate parenting.

There are other risks for African Caribbeans that are involved in speaking out about violence. For example, the larger society may take that knowledge and use it as evidence to support racist portrayals of the African Caribbean community as violent. This is the kind of danger that Cheng (2001) reveals in exploration of the move from grief to grievance. This is not a reason to stay silent, but an example of the way that speaking back or speaking out can be used to perpetuate oppression. Highlighting the damage experienced collectively at the individual level in order to demonstrate the impact of racism and call for structural change creates a risk that this information can be used by those who oppose structural change as a justification for maintaining inequity. Implicit in this framing is the belief that the risks involved in speaking out against violence make speaking out not only dangerous, but also ineffective in terms of making any change.

Fook and Gardner (2007) argue that the personal and the collective are linked and, as such, the individual can be a site for social change. I assert that, when the participants shared their experiences of family (re)construction that included violence, the sharing reflected the conditions under which individual family members and the communities live. My study helps to create an understanding of the lives of African Caribbeans at both the societal level and the individual level.
As discussed above, the issue of violence in the family is integrated into the experiences of separation from and reunification with family. The important ability to speak about the violence experienced in these families is accompanied by the risk of being seen as airing dirty laundry. Questions about speaking out are embedded in the shame narrative, which treats family troubles as private and belonging in the home. The privatization of violence makes it possible to focus on interventions at the individual level and to avoid the recognition of violence as a public, structural issue that requires intervention and advocacy for social change. This way of proceeding locates responsibility for change with the individual instead of acknowledging the social responsibility that is required to respond to structural violence and social injury. The ordinariness of the structural violence that accompanies race and racism are attached to narratives about African Caribbean immigrant families’ experiences of intra-family violence and about anti-Black immigrant violence. The ordinary quality of the violence supports those narratives as expressions of the experience of race and anti-Black racism.

The specificity of this experience creates uniqueness in the voices of African Caribbean immigrant families in the arena of understanding the presence of structural and intra-familial violence in their lives. Immigration policies based on race, points, family reunification, or the need for seasonal migrant labour differentially impact the immigration of African Caribbean immigrants to Canada precisely because of social identities such as race, class, and gender. African Caribbean immigrants face both the anti-immigrant narrative of being unwanted and the anti-Black racism that constructs them as particularly violent, such that their active deportation is tolerated, despite their landed status in Canada.

The involvement of child welfare is another example of structural violence endured by African Caribbean families, who are framed as the most violent in social work literature, yet about whom very little is known. For example, violence has been associated with Black communities in contact with child welfare and discussed in terms of “culture” (Lavergne, Dufour, Trocmé, & Larrivee, 2008). Violence in the family cannot be extracted from the anti-Black racism and anti-immigrant narratives embedded in other forms of structural violence. The family violence enacted in the African Caribbean immigrant families is not only an expression of cultural practices, but also a reflection of social injury and of the legacies of colonialism and slavery. Current conditions of structural violence, such as discriminatory policies and practices in
immigration, educational institutions, the criminal justice system, and child welfare contribute to
the stress in their lives.

There can be a short distance between experiences of violence and experiences of being “Cast
Out.” Individual members of African Caribbean immigrant families are at risk of being “Cast
Out” by child welfare workers who make assumptions about the family on the basis of a lack of
knowledge about the context of the conditions that these families are tolerating on a daily basis.
The lack of emphasis on the context of their lives allows child welfare to intervene in ways that
are not based on an understanding of intersecting oppressions such as racism, sexism, and
classism; instead, the interventions are based on inappropriate applications of attachment theory.
The combination of a misapplied, culturally bound, attachment-based assessment tool and a
failure to account for context may result in child welfare practices based on assumptions about
African Caribbeans and European family structures rather than of practices that promote the best
interests of the child, the family, and the community.

Crenshaw (1995) exposes the unique ways that the issue of violence is differentially experienced
by women of colour within their communities and in the larger society by considering their
intersecting multiple identities of race and gender. The effort to address the issue of violence in
the context of anti-Black racism and anti-immigrant sentiments is compounded by the various
ways that the dynamics of these intersecting social identities play out within families and
communities and complicate the issue of intra-family violence.

When African Caribbean families reunite with their children, “Keeping Up” matters in terms of
the parents’ expectation that their children will take up the opportunities for education and
employment, and stay out of “trouble.” If the expectations of parents and children are too far
apart, the (re) construction of family can involve being disciplined. Parents use discipline for
keeping children in line with their expectations and for survival. As participant two noted, he
thought it was normal to be beaten with a strap, since beating had happened to him and not just
to him at home and at school as he grew up in the Caribbean. Corporal punishment is currently
legal at home and in schools in most Caribbean countries. He also did not understand it as abuse
until it was framed that way for him in the context of counselling he was receiving about
carrying on the practice with his own son here in Canada. He was carrying on the family practice
of corporal punishment as his grandfather had disciplined his father, who then disciplined him,
and he disciplined his son. The ordinariness of violence in the narratives of families is woven in and through legacies of colonization and histories of slavery. The use of corporal punishment has its roots in the colonial history of slavery in the Caribbean (Antoine, 2008). The Supreme Court of Canada ruled that corporal punishment was unreasonable in the classroom in 2004, but maintained the 123-year-old law that allows for corporal punishment of children by their parents (Fraser, 2015).

Contextualizing the use of violence within the family related the violence to the structural violence of institutional policies directed at African Caribbeans. There is an abdication of social responsibility and a violation of families’ rights in the demand that African Caribbean families separate from each other in order to earn a living. These layers of structural violence facing African Caribbean immigrant families, from failed immigration policies to the failure of child protection agencies, contribute to the separation of families. When the management of intra-family violence is falsely separated from the larger structural forces, then it is treated as merely a private issue by social work agencies. For instance, the downloading of responsibility to children to reach out to the police for protection if they are being hit raises ethical concerns and does not acknowledge the danger involved for the children if the practice of child protection fails or does not proceed as expected. The problem is that, when the child calls for help, the child may not receive the help requested and the support the whole family needs, but instead may set in motion his or her separation from the family and/or the separation of the members of the entire family from one another. Given the overrepresentation of African Caribbean families in the Children’s Aid Society of Toronto (2015), the separation of children from the family has not been effective or necessarily justifiable. Trocmé, Fallon, Sinha, Van Wert, Kozlowski, & MacLaurin (2013) have come to a recognition of social factors, such as poverty, in relation to the overrepresentation of Aboriginal children in cases of child neglect. They are also aware that the differentiation between physical abuse and corporal punishment, which require different responses, needs to involve measures beyond child welfare, such as educational campaigns. What would be the outcome if the families overrepresented in child welfare received meaningful help instead of the predominant response of separation?

When the issue of violence is taken out of context, it is possible to focus on blaming and shaming individuals and communities, or even to move towards silence. However, the experiences of violence that participants shared were manifestations of anti-Black racism in the
larger society. These manifestations occurred within education and social services institutions and communities, and also among family members. These various levels of structural violence provide an important context that is needed for the discussion of the issue of violence in the stories of the participants in this study. The reality of structural violence does not remove responsibility from the individual perpetuating violence, nor does it ameliorate the harm inflicted on the person being violated. Understanding the specificity of violence in the lives of African Caribbean immigrant families through a critical decolonizing lens that is relational does provide an opportunity to move beyond the essentialist limitations of cultural explanations. Addressing the micro, mezzo, and macro levels of violence experienced by African Caribbean immigrant families helps to contextualize their experiences of “Child Rearing,” “Keeping Up,” and being “Cast Out.”

6.6 Remittances and Poverty

“Keeping up” is demonstrated by the consistent ability to send remittances back to the Caribbean, by the expectation of receiving money or goods to take care of children left behind, by the use of phone calls, emails, and Skype to check in, and, importantly, by return visits. However, there is a silence about struggling with poverty, racism, and intersecting oppressions in Canada or about feeling like a failure because there is no way to stay connected without dealing with the expectation of being asked for money or goods, and having to say “no.” The expectations attached to “Keeping Up” signal a kind of maturity in terms of taking collective responsibility and moving beyond meeting only individual needs.

The experiences of family (re)construction by African Caribbean immigrants are at once products of their decision-making and of government policies. The layers and interconnection of the personal decision making occur in the context of political, economic, social, and cultural forces of austerity and globalization. The power of these economic and political influences on the lives of African Caribbean families means that they are not acknowledged as unusual or in need of attention. However, the conditions of austerity imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank on Caribbean nations serve to perpetuate the long and steady extraction of resources from the region. The adverse impact of these policies on the lives of African Caribbean people is minimized in relation to the revenue generated by remittances. Caribbean countries rely on the individuals sending remittances especially from the United States, given
that by 2000, annual remittances had reached 12.5 billion dollars (Sampson & Branch-Vital, 2013). This normalization of oppression and the everydayness of neglect and mistreatment of African Caribbean families constitute a kind of incremental choking - like being put to death by suffocation and at the same time denying the death grip of the invisible hand.

What forces are pulling families apart? Immigration is simply a symbol of all the things families do to keep their families intact and viable. These efforts and the imposed pressures of indebtedness do not count as being as severe or as problematic as war, but they are products of this invisible hand or of the unacknowledged economic and political capitalist agenda. African Caribbean families are bound by austerity policies that create unemployment, instability, political violence, indebtedness, and the devaluation of locally grown produce. One of the casualties of this social injury is the African Caribbean family, which is overburdened and exploited, but expected to endure the inhumanity and inequity without compliant.

The way that African Caribbean immigrants yield to the demands of these conditions of inequity and indebtedness is to nurture a hope for a chance to get out and go abroad for better opportunities. Economic hardship layered with a legacy of colonization, along with the racism of white supremacy, kept borders closed to African Caribbean immigrants. Reliance on the myth of meritocracy to support and justify the exclusionary, race-based immigration policies of the first half of the 1900s in Canada meant there were not many opportunities for permanent settlement, but instead chances for precarious migrant labour. The reality of being needed, but unwanted, shaped the systems in place to contain and constrain African Caribbean immigrants to the service industry in the fields of domestic and farm labour.

What was happening was that the austerity measures imposed on the Caribbean after the Second World War by the IMF and the World Bank resulted in casualties, i.e., families separated and reconfigured by distance in order to find employment. African Caribbean immigrants have become the very embodiment of national resources. They are the resources whose lives and labour are being simultaneously marginalized, bridled, and sold to the lowest bidder while a web of false hope is spun about bigger and brighter opportunities for education, employment, and a high quality of life.

The way African Caribbean immigrants (re) construct families in the context of life in the Caribbean is historically situated. The Caribbean was built on centuries of colonial slave
economies supported by sugar plantations (Williams, E., 2007), and the legacies of colonialism, slavery, and indebtedness inform the conditions under which African Caribbean families immigrate from the Caribbean to Canada. These conditions often demand family separation with uncertain reunifications. The policies of austerity imposed on the Caribbean are a constant and a mirror of the experiences of African Caribbean immigrants in Canada.

The condition of being “Cast out” from their country by the squeeze of austerity meant that families had to lose a breadwinner, who was willing to try out the uncertainty of getting work in Canada. When the Canadian government demonstrates its hospitality to some immigrants, it is clear that anything less than that kind of invitation defines the unwelcome immigrant. In some desperate situations, immigration officers travel to their countries, and the government covers the cost of flying the accepted immigrants into Canada. The government then processes their applications promptly, fast tracks sponsorship applications, gives them landed status upon arrival, and the Prime Minister himself welcomes them to Canada in person at the airport. Those are occasions when African Caribbean immigrants can be understood in stark contrast as unwelcome, unaccepted, and managed.⁹

⁹ A good example of the welcoming of immigrants is the recent acceptance by the newly elected Canadian Trudeau government of 25,000 Syrian refugees.
7 Chapter Conclusion

7.1 Needs, Rights, and Actions

Having a need is not inherently negative or bad, yet the narrative of “deserving and underserving” immigrant communities has been used by social work to justify exclusion from the nation and from distribution of resources (Park, 2008). This discourse forces people to make a case to support the reasons why they ought to be helped to meet their basic needs. The standardization of social welfare in Canada championed by social workers in the 1900s was guided by race and racism, as evidenced through their support for eugenics (McLaren, 2008). The development of social work and social welfare was directly related to urbanization, industrialization, and immigration, as social workers responded to the needs of children and families affected by social problems caused by poverty that saw children wandering the streets in need.

These expressions of social injuries were taken up as individual failings on the part of poor families and their children, who were criminalized for stealing food to survive. As social workers, we no longer need to discount the impact of economic and political crisis in our work with individual and communities. Instead, we make the connection to rights and thereby return the humanity to people that had been stripped away under those conditions. Lundy (2011) frames the difference between people’s situation in terms of needs and rights, and notes the ways that having a need implies being responsible for their circumstances. In contrast, speaking about rights illuminates the conditions under which people are seeking help. The solutions social work can then seek move beyond the individual into the political, economic, and social contexts. A focus on rights also makes it possible for family members to have a different understanding of the violence experienced in the family, not as a justification, but in the context of the violation of their rights.

In the context of being dehumanized through racism and colonization, the tendency in Western neoliberal societies is to focus in on the individual as the location of the problem and the site for solutions. Social work is perfectly positioned to move towards more complex and relational action that recognizes the humanity of the people we work with along with the political, social, and cultural context of challenging inequity. A human rights complaint filed against the government of Canada by Dr. Cindy Blackstock pursued the challenge of advocating for
equitable treatment of Indigenous children and families; the complaint took nine years to wind through the system toward a decision. The current human rights decision (The Canadian Press, 2016) recognized the inequity of the treatment of Indigenous children and families by the government of Canada, as compared to other children and families in child welfare systems. This outcome demonstrates the importance of shifting away from the blame of individuals for having a need towards the recognition of the long history of the violation of their human rights and the systemic change required in response (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). Returning the recognition of humanity and rights to African Caribbean immigrant families opens space for social work to begin to understand and respond to the conditions and context under which they are rebuilding family. The deaths of Melanie Biddersingh and her brother are examples of African Caribbean immigrant children who were simply not accounted for by the police, the school system, child welfare agencies, or the community. There was no system in place to protect them from the violence they experienced or from their ultimate deaths. Immigration from the Caribbean cost Melanie and her brother their lives, and no one would have known if a priest had not reported her stepmother’s confession.

7.2 Implications for social work

Social work has an opportunity to contribute to the turn away from a nearly exclusive focus on individual-level responsibility in relation to the conditions of inequity and marginalization experienced by African Caribbean families in Canada. Social work can more adequately address structural oppression by attending to social responsibility, social injuries, and ABR. Because of the danger involved of further damage that may be caused by talking about the injuries of racism, social work needs to more fully comprehend the damage caused by race and racism and to do so beyond the individual level. This comprehension would, for example, require active efforts to ascertain and include a critical context for the narratives of African Caribbean families by accounting for the historical, political, and economic realities.

Social work can support and engage African Caribbean immigrant families to address these issues at a collective level. Such an initiative would help to redistribute the impact of poverty and other adverse conditions, and work towards social justice and the promotion of equity. This work would also provide a path that could contribute to healing the injuries sustained by adverse conditions of intersecting oppressions at the community level. Given that social work is involved
in the institutions that enact normative government policies, including child welfare, criminal justice, education, health care, and social welfare, it is imperative that the profession more fully recognize the presence of African Caribbean immigrant families and the specificity of their experiences in context, at both the micro and macro level. When these communities articulate issues and concerns, social work can help to advocate for change at the policy level and implement responses that would demonstrate inclusivity and equity at the social, the community, and the individual levels. A critical decolonizing approach means moving away from blaming, shaming, and inflaming the community and its individual members for their responses to oppression and moving towards recognition of the ways in which the life chances and choices of African Caribbeans are impacted by racism, colonialism, and nation building.

Social work must address the variation of family structures and the specificity of family (re)construction for African Caribbeans who live in transnational family networks and relationships. Programs must include collective parenting support strategies that enhance the transfer of knowledge and information about the context and impact of oppression in Canada. Concretely social work can support African Caribbean families and communities, experiencing separation and reunification with knowledge and information before, during and after they immigrate to Canada. Social work must also provide programming to support African Caribbean community networks in concert with support for the individual and family. Additionally, social work with community networks enhances the opportunities to advocate for change in immigration, educational, and child welfare policies that adversely impact African Caribbeans.

In relation to the current crisis of overrepresentation of African Caribbean children in the care of child welfare, this study supports a need to move towards child welfare policies and practices that situate the needs and challenges of African Caribbean children, in relation to rather than in competition with, the needs and challenges faced by their parents, families and communities. Social workers in child welfare practice with African Caribbean families need to be able to account for the daily pressures of racism, the persistent effects of colonialism, particularly in the form of societal “Cast[ing] Out,” such as the constant threat of deportation, eviction from educational settings, and surveillance and incarceration by the criminal justice system. This would require child welfare workers capable of recognizing not only the impact of racism in the lives of African Caribbean families in Canadian society, but also the ambient threat and fear of racism within any interaction between child welfare workers and African Caribbean services.
users. Transforming child welfare practice with African Caribbean immigrant families requires a shift from an individualistic and child-focused response, to a collectivist and family well-being response. Additionally, transformative child welfare practice must also contribute towards depathologizing African Caribbean immigrant families by recognizing their needs, strengths and knowledge in navigating oppressions along with the impact.

Social work education needs to increase the presence of the African Caribbean population in the classroom in terms of both social work educators and students and to more explicitly and effectively address the impact of racism and colonialism within social work curriculum. Social work education will benefit from a greater inclusion of African Caribbean knowledge and lived experience, which includes the community’s knowledge of transformative helping practices as demonstrated in the stories of the study’s participants captured under the themes of “Keeping Up” and “Child Rearing,” such as collectivist child-rearing and community-based networks of support. Additionally, the theorizing of models for understanding and working with families must be broadened, beyond the centrality of whiteness and Eurocentricism, that are embedded in models that focus on attachment, assume the context of a nuclear family structure, and fail to actively account for the impacts of racism and colonialism in the daily lives of families.

Future research may include the continued development of the epistemological and methodological modification of grounded theory in order to address issues of racism and colonialism in research. Transformative research in social work would move on from using a colour-blind response to racism and directly address issues of racism and colonialism in research. Additional areas of future exploration arising from the study include dealing with the constant threat of harm and death, and also with gendered experiences of parenting, which would further help to inform critical decolonizing approaches to social work education, programming and practice with African Caribbean immigrant families.
8 References


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Appendix A

Research Participants Needed for study about African Caribbean Immigrants

- Are you an immigrant of African descent (Black) from the English speaking Caribbean aged 25 or older?
- Did you immigrate to Canada from the English speaking Caribbean after the 1960’s?
- Have you been in Canada for 10 years or longer?
- Are you interested in sharing your experiences of family separation and reunion as an immigrant of African descent from the English speaking Caribbean to Canada?

If you meet all the criteria and are interested in learning more about the project and would like to participate in an interview or a focus group, please contact me at name@utoronto.ca or 416-XXX-XXXX ext. 1.

Transportation (TTC Tokens) and Compensation of $30.00 will be provided.
Appendix B

INFORMATION SHEET and CONSENT FORM

Research Project Name: Families Building Nations or Nation Building on Families? How do African Caribbean Immigrants (Re) Construct Family in the Context of Immigration and Oppression in Canada?

Researcher:

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Tel: 416-946-8225

Email: charmaine.williams@utoronto.ca
My name is V. C. Rhonda Hackett and I am a PhD candidate at the University of Toronto and I am asking for your participation in this research project. I migrated to Toronto from the Caribbean in the 1970’s and have lived in Toronto ever since. The purpose of the project is to better understand the experiences of African Caribbean immigrants’ separations and reunification with their families in the context of immigration and of oppression.

To participate you must have immigrated to Canada from the English speaking Caribbean at least 10 years ago; experienced family separation as a result of immigrating to Canada; self identify as Black or African Caribbean; be currently 25 years of age or older. You must also be able to give informed consent to participate in the study. You must not be a student currently taught by the researcher. You must not have been a client of the researcher in the last five years.

If you decide to do this take part in this study, you will be asked to participate in an interview (approximately 1 hour and a half in length) about your experiences of migration. The interview will take place in a city setting suitably located that will work best for you and the researcher. At the end of the interview you will be given TTC tokens and if funding is secured a $30.00 honorarium.

You will not directly benefit from participation in this project. The potential benefit of this research is that it will contribute to a greater understanding of the experiences of family separation and reunion in the lives of African Caribbean immigrants.

Talking about your experiences of migration may make you feel uncomfortable. Should feeling of distress arise during the interview you’re participating in, you may stop your participation at any time without adverse consequences. You will also be provided with a list of available support services with their contact information for follow-up support as needed after the interview.

Your participation is voluntary. You may stop the interview at anytime and if you wish you may choose which questions you want to answer and which question you do not want to answer. Even if you give written consent before the interview begins, then change your mind, you may withdraw your consent up to one week after the interview has been completed. Additionally, if you withdraw from the study, both the audio recording and transcript of your interview will be
destroyed. You are able to withdraw your participation from the project anytime during data collection and prior to the start of data analysis (no later than one week after your participation in the interview).

You are invited to review the research tapes of your participation in whole or in part to ensure that the information shared has been accurately heard and represented. Your last name is never revealed during the recording of the interview, and you may also choose to use a pseudonym during the interview.

Your name will not appear in any of the variety of ways in which the knowledge from this research will be shared – as a research thesis at the University of Toronto, reports, community and conference presentations, and academic journals. The purpose of this study is to account for the family separations and reunions of African Caribbean immigrants and advocate for changes based on the information shared by you and other participants.

All data collected, digital files, paper or electronic form will be securely stored at the University of Toronto and accessible only to my thesis supervisor Dr. Charmaine Williams and myself. After seven years the data will be destroyed.

If you have any questions or concerns, and want to know more about this research study you can contact me, V. C. Rhonda Hackett, or my thesis supervisor Dr. Charmaine C. Williams charmaine.williams@utoronto.ca or 416-946-8225. You can also contact Daniel Gyewu, Research Ethics Manager, Health Sciences, Office of Research Ethics, d.gyewu@utoronto.ca or 416-946-5606.

If you have questions about your rights contact Daniel Gyewu, Research Ethics Manager, Health Sciences, Office of Research Ethics, d.gyewu@utoronto.ca or 416-946-5606.

You will get a copy of this consent form for your own records.

I, ____________________________________________,

(Name)

consent to participate in this study exploring the experiences of separation and reunification of African Caribbean immigrants. I understand what this project is about and what I will have to do
while volunteering to participate. I agree to participate in this project. I know that I can withdraw from the project at any time without consequence. My signature below indicates my consent.

______________________________________________________________________
Signature, Participant
Date

______________________________________________________________________
Signature, Witness
Date
Appendix C

Interview Question Guide

1. Can you talk about what your experience was like when you left the Caribbean to come and live in Canada?

2. What do you remember about your life when your parent(s) or other family left for Canada and you were separated from each other?

3. Tell me about that period of life when you and your parent(s) or other family were separated?
   a. Who did you live with when your parent left the Caribbean?
   b. What was it like for you to live separately from your parent?
   c. During that time were you separated from siblings?
   d. How long were you living separately from your parent and/or your siblings?

4. What was it like when you immigrated to Canada to reunite with your parent(s) and/or other family?
   a. The city, school, new relationships, old relationships, ongoing ties lost connections.

5. What helped you while you were separated and reunited with your parent(s) and/or siblings in the migration process?
Appendix D

RESOURCE SUPPORT LIST

Parkdale Community Health Centre

1229 Queen Street West
Toronto, Ontario, M6K 1L2
416-537-5133

http://www.pchc.on.ca

Regent Park Community health Centre

465 Dundas Street East,
Toronto, Ontario, M5A 2B2
416-364-2261

http://www.regentparkchc.org

Tropicana Community Services

1385 Huntingwood Drive
Scarborough, Ontario, M1S 3J1
416-439-9009

http://www.tropicanacommunity.org/main/home.html

Women’s Health in Women’s Hands

2 Carlton Street, suite 500
Toronto, Ontario, M5B 1J3
416-593-7655

http://whiwh.com
Appendix E

AFRICAN CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY MEMBERS

FOCUS GROUP INFORMATION SHEET and CONSENT FORM

Research Project Name: Families Building Nations or Nation Building on Families? How do African Caribbean Immigrants (Re) Construct Family in the Context of Immigration and Oppression in Canada?

Researcher:

V. C. Rhonda Hackett, PhD candidate, MSW, RSW

Factor-Inwentash School of Social Work, University of Toronto

246 Bloor Street West

Toronto, ON M5S 1A1

Tel: 416-XXX-XXXX

Email: valarie.hackett@utoronto.ca

Faculty Supervisor:

Dr. Charmaine C. Williams, Associate Dean, Academic

Factor-Inwentash School of Social Work, University of Toronto

246 Bloor Street West

Toronto, ON M5S 1A1

Tel: 416-946-8225

Email: charmaine.williams@utoronto.ca
Purpose

My name is V. C. Rhonda Hackett and I am a PhD candidate at the University of Toronto and I am asking for your participation in this research project. I migrated to Toronto from the Caribbean in the 1970’s and have lived in Toronto ever since. The purpose of the project is to better understand the experiences of African Caribbean immigrants’ separations and reunification with their families in the context of immigration and of oppression.

To participate you must have immigrated to Canada from the English speaking Caribbean at least 10 years ago; experienced family separation as a result of immigrating to Canada; self identify as Black or African Caribbean; be currently 25 years of age or older. You must also be able to give informed consent to participate in the study. You must not be a student currently taught by the researcher. You must not have been a client of the researcher in the last five years.

If you decide to do this and take part in this study, you will be asked to participate in a focus group (approximately 2 hours in length) about your experiences of migration. The focus group will take place in a city setting suitably located that will work best for participants and the researcher.

Procedures

If your decide to participate in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

I will ask you to participate in a focus group that I will facilitate a discussion among the group about your experiences of immigration. The focus group will last for two hours. This focus group will explore your experiences and knowledge about African Caribbean immigrants’ separation from and reunion with their families in relation to immigration and oppression and your thoughts about responses to those experiences.

In order to insure your confidentiality, after you provide consent and before the group starts you will be asked to choose a pseudonym (play name or nickname) to identify yourself in the group and not your real name. Other group members will only identify you by your chosen name. Also, each member of the group will be asked not to share the discussion outside of the group.
The focus group will be audiotaped and transcribed. No real names or other information that could personally identify you will be included in the transcript.

**Payment for Participation**

At the end of the focus group you will receive TTC tokens and if funding is secured a $30.00 honorarium.

**Potential Benefits**

You will not directly benefit from participation in this project. The potential benefit of this research is that it will contribute to a greater understanding of the experiences of family separation and reunion in the lives of African Caribbean immigrants.

**Potential Risks and Discomforts**

Talking about your experiences of migration may make you feel uncomfortable. Should feeling of distress arise during the focus group you’re participating in, you may stop your participation at any time without adverse consequences. You will also be provided with a list of available support services with their contact information for follow-up support as needed after the focus group.

**Participation and Withdrawal**

Your participation is voluntary. You may stop participating in the focus group at anytime and if you wish you may choose which questions you want to answer and which question you do not want to answer. Even if you give written consent before the focus group begins, then change your mind, you may withdraw your consent up to a week after the focus group has been completed. Additionally, the audio recording from the focus group you participated in will be retained and all your identifying information will be stripped from the data. You are invited to review the research tapes of your participation in whole or in part to ensure that the information shared has been accurately heard and represented.

**Privacy and Confidentiality**
In a focus group there are limitations, please consider what to disclose. You may know other participants in a focus group and there is no way to enforce focus group participant’s responsibility to maintain each other’s confidentiality. We will attempt to protect your privacy during the focus group by taking steps to ensure that your name is never revealed and that you are referred to only by a pseudonym. We ask that you agree to keep confidential any information you learn as a result of your participation in the focus group. Any specific identifying information that may be revealed in the focus group will be deleted from the focus group transcripts.

Your name will not appear in any of the variety of ways in which the knowledge from this research will be shared – as a research thesis at the University of Toronto, reports, community and conference presentations, and academic journals. The purpose of this study is to account for the family separations and reunions of African Caribbean immigrants and advocate for changes based on the information shared by you and other participants.

All data collected, digital files, paper or electronic form will be securely stored at the University of Toronto and accessible only to my thesis supervisor Dr. Charmaine Williams and myself. After seven years the data will be destroyed.

If you have any questions or concerns, and want to know more about this research study you can contact me, V. C. Rhonda Hackett, or my thesis supervisor Dr. Charmaine C. Williams charmaine.williams@utoronto.ca or 416-946-8225. You can also contact Daniel Gyewu, Research Ethics Manager, Health Sciences, Office of Research Ethics, d.gyewu@utoronto.ca or 416-946-5606.

If you have questions about your rights contact Daniel Gyewu, Research Ethics Manager, Health Sciences, Office of Research Ethics, d.gyewu@utoronto.ca or 416-946-5606.

You will get a copy of this consent form for your own records.

I, ________________________________,

(Name)
consent to participate in this study exploring the experiences of separation and reunification of African Caribbean immigrants. I understand what this project is about and what I will have to do while volunteering to participate. I agree to participate in this project. I know that I can withdraw from the project at any time without consequence. My signature below indicates my consent.

________________________________________
Signature, Participant

Date

________________________________________
Signature, Witness

Date
Appendix F

AFRICAN CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY MEMBERS

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Researcher:

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Purpose

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Procedures

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**Payment for Participation**

At the end of the focus group you will receive TTC tokens and if funding is secured a $30.00 honorarium.

**Potential Benefits**

You will not directly benefit from participation in this project. The potential benefit of this research is that it will contribute to a greater understanding of the experiences of family separation and reunion in the lives of African Caribbean immigrants.

**Potential Risks and Discomforts**

Talking about your experiences of migration may make you feel uncomfortable. Should feeling of distress arise during the focus group you’re participating in, you may stop your participation at any time without adverse consequences. You will also be provided with a list of available support services with their contact information for follow-up support as needed after the focus group.

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I, _________________________________________________,

(Name)
consent to participate in this study exploring the experiences of separation and reunification of African Caribbean immigrants. I understand what this project is about and what I will have to do while volunteering to participate. I agree to participate in this project. I know that I can withdraw from the project at any time without consequence. My signature below indicates my consent.

______________________________________________________________________
Signature, Participant                                            Date

______________________________________________________________________
Signature, Witness                                                    Date
Appendix G

Research Focus Group
Participants needed for study about African Caribbean Immigrants

- Do you provide services for or work with communities of immigrants of African descent (Black) from the English speaking Caribbean?

- Do you work in areas such as education, social services, criminal justice, employment and community organizing?

- Are you interested in sharing your knowledge and experiences of working with African Caribbean immigrants around issues of family separation and reunion?

If you meet all the criteria and are interested in learning more about the project and would like to participate in a focus group, please contact me at valarie.hackett@utoronto.ca or 416-XXX-XXXX ext. 1.

Transportation (TTC Tokens) and Compensation of $30.00 will be provided.
Appendix H

KEY STAKEHOLDERS FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW GUIDE

I will ask participants to be seated and introduce self. The group will also be asked to create a pseudonym and tell it to the group. To warm up the groups the researcher will ask group members to say something about themselves they would like to share.

I will thank the group for coming. Let them know that the group will last approximately two hours. Point out the locations of the restrooms. Prior to starting the group, the researcher will set the ground rules for group interactions to make sure its comfortable for everyone.

I will say the following to the group, “You may have been in groups before and have heard all this, but whenever we begin a group we like to review these things. While I am committed to maintaining your confidentiality, as members of the group, in order to respect your privacy, I am asking that the things that you hear in this group remain confidential. Since I cannot guarantee that everyone in the group will keep total confidentiality, I would suggest that if you have something to say that you would be concerned about others’ knowing or that might reveal something too personal, you do not say that in the group. I expect that you listen to and respect the opinions of others, avoid interrupting when someone else is talking, and that you will respond to the people here in a non-judgmental manner. There are no correct answers today. I value each of your opinions. I also hope that you will be honest and open with me, but please do not use the full names of other people you know outside of the group. If you want to give an example, and you need to use the name of someone you know, just use their first name.”

I have questions about African Caribbean immigrant experiences of family separation and reunion. You have all been invited to share your thoughts about these experiences in relation to immigration and oppression, from your perspective of working with and/or providing services to African Caribbean immigrants in your areas of employment and community work.
I want to make sure to get all your ideas. Our discussion will be audiotaped to help record what you say. Remember to use only the pseudonyms or first names and no one’s name will be on the tape label, only the date of the discussion. You are also free to leave at any time if you do not want to continue participating. Also you may skip answering certain questions and still continue in the group.

Questions:

From your perspective as a service provider or community worker:

1. Can you talk about what the experience is like for African Caribbean immigrants who left the Caribbean to come and live in Canada?

2. What do you know about African Caribbean immigrant’s life when their parent(s) or other family left for Canada and they were separated from each other?

3. Tell me about that period of life when African Caribbean immigrants were separated from their parent(s) or other family members?
   a. Who did they live with during the separation?
   b. What was it like to live separately from family members?
   c. What was the length of time of their separation from family members?

4. What was it like for African Caribbean immigrants to reunite with family members?
   a. City, school, new relationships, old relationships, ongoing ties, lost connections

5. What helped African Caribbean immigrants while separated and reunited?
Appendix I

KEY STAKEHOLDERS

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I, _________________________________________________,

(Name)
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______________________________________________________________________

Signature, Participant

Date

______________________________________________________________________

Signature, Witness

Date
Appendix J

Diagram E: Relational decolonizing approach in social work with African Caribbean immigrants (Hackett, 2013). It is important to look at the claims of African Caribbean immigrant families in a historical context that can account for the ongoing presence of Indigenous peoples, Canada’s immigration policies, and the project of nation building.