Mapping the Experiences and Struggles of Un(der)employed Afro-Caribbean Black (ACB) Young Men in Toronto, Montreal and Ottawa.

by

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Abstract

This dissertation investigates how first- and second-generation Afro-Caribbean Black (ACB) male youth utilize youth employment training programs (YETPs) in three Canadian cities. ACB male youth are often marginalized through their encounters with racial discrimination, their lack of social capital, and their lived experiences which are significantly different than those of white, middle class young men in mainstream Canada. My study found that these young people are consistently met with racism, sexism and classism from employers who partner with YETPs, who presume ACB male youth are ‘not good for business.’ The study also found that YETP counsellors unintentionally reinforce class, race, and gender-based exclusions for ACB young men, which lowers their likelihood of finding success in the job market. Young ACB men both recognize the social exclusions they experience in these settings, and also take responsibility, as neoliberal subjects, for their own so-called ‘failures’ to find meaningful paid employment. I suggest that this reinforcing constellation of experiences leaves young ACB men in marginalized positions that are strikingly similar to those that ACB men have been forced to inhabit historically in Canada – that is, low-paying and menial labour that ultimately degrades their humanity and sense of self. Theoretically, I utilize the work of Franz Fanon as a way to encapsulate how Canadian social norms -emerging from Canada’s existence as a settler-colonial nation-state and its long history of racial discrimination -continue to affect the social development of young ACB men. I draw on phenomenology to understand the social experiences of ACB male youth and their use of employment training programs while considering the intersubjective ideologies from other people who work with these youth in YETPs. The study also uses an intersectional approach to appreciate the heterogeneity of Black male youth, which is particularly important when studying racialized groups who are often treated as homogeneous. This study considers the lived experiences of marginalized ACB young men and the perspectives of YETP counsellors, employers, and funders of YETPs. The research approach allows me to understand how better to support young ACB men and their socio-economic development while challenging misconceptions about Black masculinity in Canada.
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Chapter One: Mapping the Experiences and Struggles of Un(der)employed ACB Young Men in Toronto, Montreal and Ottawa

As a young man of African descent growing up in Toronto, I experienced marginalization and encountered many obstacles throughout my formal education and search for employment. The social barriers I faced included anti-Black racism, classism, and gender-based discrimination, because as a young Black man, my intersectional identity was considered subordinate to that of young, middle class, white men. These multiple forms of discrimination impacted my chances of gaining employment, even with employers who were supposed to be “youth friendly.” My low socio-economic status did not allow me to insert myself into mainstream society without feeling financial pressures, which complicated my family’s living situation. I was reminded by white employers that I represented the image of marginalized young Black men who are undeserving of employment opportunities.

The reality for many marginalized Afro-Caribbean Black (ACB) male youth is that our lived experiences are homogenized by greater society. The homogenization of our lived experiences is a social understanding that leads many people to think all young ACB men experience the same sets of social oppressions. For instance, first generation immigrant Nigerian male youth have markedly different experiences than Black Canadian male youth whose families have been in Canada for multiple generations, as there are cultural differences between them. The only legitimacy in this position is that all ACB men experience anti-Black racism, as race-based discrimination disrupts the livelihood of all people of African descent. However, marginalized ACB young men experience a cascade of social oppressions which distance them from a sense of social power. As a young man, I not only experienced anti-Black racism and gender-based discrimination, but because of my family’s low-income status, I was perceived by
mainstream society as underprivileged, and treated accordingly. My lived experience reflects that of many marginalized young ACB men in the contemporary moment, who are discriminated against based on socio-economic status, which heightens their experiences of anti-Black racism. Although Loic Wacquant (2009) speaks from an American perspective about Black people, his arguments are relevant to our Canadian experiences. Wacquant (2009) argues that the urban poor of African descent are seen as tainted bodies who represent the outcasts of mainstream white society. They are perceived as lower class, as criminals, as uneducated, and as such, are perceived as deserving of poorer social conditions. Wacquant (2009) encourages us to be mindful of the additional social oppressions that marginalized young ACB men experience, shaping and compounding their experiences of anti-Black racism.

As a working class Black man, I have not lost sight of my lived experiences as a marginalized male youth. Previous to my academic trajectory, I was committed to working with youth in programs such as Youth Employment Training Programs (YETP), while keeping in mind the hardships I encountered. In doing so, I strategized ways to cultivate meaningful mentorship and support programs that accommodate the race and ethnicity of ACB marginalized youth, particularly young men. My efforts sought to account for the way that socio-economic hardships impacted their ability to gain a sense of belonging in formal education and employment opportunities.

1.1 The Relevance of This Research

The concept of Blackness is a complex one among African descent people. The many ethnicities within the race category, such as African and Caribbean ethnicities, contain different cultural and social experiences. To incorporate the many nationalities that people of African Black descent in this study identify with, such as Jamaican and Ghanaian, I respectfully use the
acronym ACB (Afro-Caribbean Black) in the fieldwork and throughout the dissertation. This term includes people of African and of African-Caribbean descent. Although nomenclature is complex, I believe the term is suitable to capture the social and cultural differences among all people of African descent (Hutchinson & McKenzie, 1995). By acknowledging African descent in this manner, I am attempting to incorporate the many ways people of African descent identify themselves.

I conducted this research to explore and explain the mechanisms by which Canadian white settler colonial social settings, particularly in employment, serve to “marginalize and racialize” (James, 2012, p. 470) ACB young men with low socio-economic status. The present study focuses on YETPs that serve ACB young men (15 – 29 years of age). I chose this age range because this is the targeted population of young people generally served in YETPs. This study does not conflate working class identity with low-income status. The research is only concerned with low-income ACB youth who are unemployed and seeking employment through YETP. This study purposely focuses on Black youth who are of a low socio-economic status, male, and are ACB. I use the word marginalized throughout the research to mean low-income and underprivileged. This study does not suggest that all Black youth share the same lived experiences. Along with experiencing racial discrimination, marginalized young ACB men lack social capital, resulting in different lived experiences than middle-class young men in mainstream Western societies. For instance, as was clear in my fieldwork, many marginalized ACB male youth are consistently met with racism and classism from employers who presume ACB male youth are ‘not good for business,’ and can negatively impact operations. The perceived universal truth about Black masculinity is that it is a subordinate gender expression to general masculinity, which is made exclusive to white males (Connell, 2005). However, the
application of this subordinate Black masculinity to all ACB young men fails to account for and appreciate the multitude of lived experiences among ACB young men, particularly in the area of employment. As such, researchers need to investigate how youth employment training programs (YETPs) serve marginalized ACB young men. The present study focuses on how different aspects of YETPs, including employment counsellors, employers, and funders, support young ACB men as they seek employment, while considering the general societal understanding that young ACB men are undeserving. My inquiry through this study maintains a particular focus on the ways that YETPs serve young ACB men within the context of colonized nation-states, such as Canada, where the perception of Black masculinity remains negative and discriminatory.

This research builds upon previous studies on Black masculinity. Like the work of David Austin (2013), this study illustrates how the historical contexts of Black masculinity are also “pressing issues of today” (p. 3). I discuss how YETPs respond to the stereotypical notion of Black masculinity when they are serving marginalized ACB male youth. This study builds in particular on other Canadian work that focuses on Black masculinity from a Canadian perspective, such as that of Carl James, Wesley Crichlow and Rinaldo Walcott.

1.2 Contending with Blackness

In studying the experiences of ACB male youth in YETPs, it is necessary to contend with the concept of Blackness and consider how this racial category is situated within mainstream Canadian discourse. According to Charles Mills (1998), Blackness is not a timeless category, and the origin of Blackness is not natural but “sociogenic, the result of social forces” (p. 26). Based on the stranglehold white supremacy has on the narrative of Blackness, people of African descent and their Black skin have been villainized in comparison to white European people, impacting their way of living in Western societies. For example, this villainization plays out in
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police brutality, as Black Torontonians are “nearly 20 times more likely than a white person to be involved in a fatal shooting by the Toronto Police Service (TPS)” (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2018, para. 1). The implications of Blackness have been imposed on Black people to create a sense of inferiority, while also creating challenges to their bodily schema (Fanon, 2009). Through the white gaze, Blackness is withheld from being considered beautiful. Instead, Blackness encounters a refusal of a consideration to beauty and is fixed as a troubled and unappreciated racial category (Harney & Moten, 2013). In other words, Black people are not considered beautiful, solely based on their skin colour.

The reality for marginalized ACB male youth in Canada is that their identities are fixed into rigid categories that are tied to particular understandings of race (Davis, 2004). ACB male youth encounter social and systemic racist barriers that impede their capacity to operate as “normal” citizens. For instance, in 2018, The Ontario Human Rights Council produced a report on racial profiling by Toronto Police. The report notes that the Ontario Human Rights Code “prohibits discrimination against people based on race, ancestry, colour, creed, place of origin and ethnic origin” (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2018). However, Black Canadians, including marginalized ACB youth, face an extreme amount of racial discrimination, which is a systemic problem in institutions such as education and policing (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2018). There have been too many moments of systemic racism where marginalized ACB male youth encounter random, and in many circumstances, unnecessary interactions with police while operating a vehicle. These moments have a negative impact on Black identity, which “reinforces social exclusion and marginalization” (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2018). The concept and racial category of Blackness fixes the marginalization of young ACB men’s identity in Canada, socially delegitimizing them as undesirable, dangerous, and unwanted (Davis, 2004).
1.3 Recognizing the Problem - Grounding the Research

Many community programs do not adequately address the needs of ACB male youth, due in part to a lack of recognition of their lived experiences encountering institutional and structural anti-Black racism (Jones & Neblett., 2016). Studies have demonstrated that many youth service providers, who are predominantly white, are under-qualified for working with youth from a diverse range of social and/or cultural backgrounds (Gormally & Corburn, 2014) and are, at times, unwilling to recognize anti-Black racism and its impact on employment and social mobility (James, 2012). Research of this kind enables us to make sense of the racist, gender-based and socio-economic barriers that impact the ability of marginalized ACB young men to seek and sustain employment. Black men and their masculinities are forced to prove and obtain an achieved sense of manhood which is predicated upon white masculinity. In their attempts to move towards the general sense of masculinity, that is tied to whiteness, they “are reduced to their phallic aspirations for selfhood” (Curry, 2017, p. 10). Black men, historically, are also reduced by hundreds of years of hyper sexualization and the ties to the enslavement trade. Thus, it is important to consider the effects of culturally inscribed gendered assumptions and expectations about young Black men, especially in informal and extra-institutional settings, which can be anti-Black.

The present study explores how anti-Black racism is embedded in stereotypes and prejudices directed at young ACB men. This theme is discussed throughout the study to demonstrate how this type of racial discrimination is a main contributor in creating educational and employment barriers for ACB marginalized young men. In the Canadian nation-state, anti-Black racism is entrenched in institutions, policies, and social practices. This type of racism in Canada perpetuates historic forms of racial segregation and economic disadvantage, which
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directly impact Black people in Canada (Mullings et al., 2016). The reality for Black Canadians, particularly ACB male youth, is that experiences of anti-Black racism strip them of their dignity and self-worth to a point of degradation and sub-human status (James et al., 2010).

In addition to anti-Black racism, there are deep considerations regarding the social construction of masculinity. However, gender roles are often perceived as biologically determined. I discuss masculinity extensively in this study as I am maintaining a focus on the gender of the young people in this research. Generally, masculinity situates itself as natural because the social construction of this gender is based on the embodiment of “historical structures of the masculine order in the form of unconscious schemes of perception and appreciation” (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 5). Masculinity and its relation to biological determinism is a result of “modes of thought that are the product of domination” (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 5). The masculine gender role is viewed as “natural,” and is associated with androcentric views that are seen as indisputably universal (Bourdieu, 2001). This study benefits from the work of Pierre Bourdieu (2001) because he argues that masculinity’s “dominance, its rights and prerogatives, privileges and injustices ultimately perpetuates itself easily” (p. 1), and is perceived as natural within Western societies. Thus, the social construct of masculinity and its symbolic effect dominates the minds of people, creating a sense of the gender role as biological truth.

It is important to account for how the hegemony of white masculinity “serves to marginalize and racialize” (James, 2012, p. 470) Black young men. Masculinity tied to whiteness, in Western nation-states, is perceived as hegemonic, while subordinating racialized masculinities. The present study adds to existing studies on ACB male youth as it intentionally refrains from homogenizing all ACB male youths’ lived experiences. By recognizing that there are varying identities of ACB male youth, I demonstrate that I am paying attention to the
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diversity of youth cultures. There are many intersections of Black masculinities to contend with when taking into account the lived experiences of young ACB men. For instance, intersecting categories such as age, sexuality, social class, and ethnicity make up the many ways Black men identify themselves. My study makes use of an intersectional approach, as it is a useful theoretical framework for conceptualizing the “inter-relationship of race and gender” (McBride et al., 2015, p. 331). The theory adds value to this study as it allows for examination of “the experiences of discrimination and marginalization” (McBride et. al., 2015, p. 331) among ACB male youth during their employment seeking strategies. I find this theory beneficial when studying racialized groups despite it having rarely been employed in many previous studies. Usually there is a macro-level approach in research, which proves to empirically omit an assessment of the relationship among social characteristics, such as social class, race and ethnicity (Pyrooz et al., 2010). The present work accounts for the ways in which young people and their “identities continue to be defined through the material cultures of daily life. Neighbourhood networks, the institution of schooling, familial relations, local labour markets and place and locality continue to shape and fashion young people’s ethnicities” (Nayak, 2003, p. 177). As researchers, when we qualify all youth as possessing the same experiences we fail to take diversity seriously and may be falsely interpreting the lived experiences of many youth. In actuality, young people are shaped by “unequal relations to the flows and interconnections that cohere around their social worlds” (Nayak, 2003, p. 176). Young people, including ACB male youth, are tied to a socially manufactured hierarchal system that considers race, gender, sexuality, ability, age, social class, and education, categories of social location that stratify the identities and experiences of young people. It is this type of categorization that defines the social
status of youth, giving access to social opportunities for some youth, while creating barriers for others.

This research was conducted in three Canadian cities, Toronto, Montreal, and Ottawa, as a way to encapsulate the social experiences of marginalized Anglophone ACB young men, and their un(der)employment realities. My research took into consideration English speaking participants in Toronto and Ottawa and bilingual (French and English) participants in Montreal. The ACB male youth in Montreal spoke English as their first language and also preferred to speak English during interviews and focus groups. I have sought to strengthen my analysis by considering the similarities and contrasts between marginalized Black young men in different Canadian cities. I argue that stereotypical notions of ACB young men and their masculinities are also shared and understood among many YETP associates because they, too, are “subjected to colonization” (Fanon, 1967a, p. 9). The intersubjective views of YETP associates are subjected to the toxic notion of Black masculinities, which in turn can impact how many ACB young men receive services that “help” them seek employment through YETPs. My research investigated the following questions: (1) What are the experiences of young ACB men in Toronto, Ottawa, and Montreal when it comes to their engagement with employment training programs? (2) How do these youth apply the skills they learn from training programs in their employment-seeking strategies? (3) In what ways are Toronto, Montreal, and Ottawa-based YETPs attempting to anticipate and respond to the contemporary racialized ethnic differences and ethnocultural realities of young ACB men? (4) How do Toronto, Montreal, and Ottawa-based employers engage with young ACB men who seek employment with them? In the analysis of this study, I answer these questions through interviews with youth, YETP counsellors, employers and funders.
1.4 Youth Employment Training Programs & Young ACB Men

There are few scholars in the social sciences that study YETPs, particularly in Canada and the United States. The limited research on YETPs describe them as designed to educate many marginalized youth (between the ages of 15 to 29) on employability skills, such as resumé building and communications skills, opening up employment opportunities. Briggs (2018) observes that low-income Black males experience racist, classist, and gender-based barriers that complicate their efforts to learn and also secure employment. The limited scholarship that focuses on YETPs mention that providing mentorship and education to marginalized youth who are un(der)employed and encounter systemic barriers, such as racism and criminalization, is a strategy to connect them to employment opportunities (Gaetz & O’Grady, 2013; Green, 1993; Lafer, 2002; Robinson & Baron, 2007). The literature points to an assumption that if marginalized youth acquire employment skills through YETPs they will become “professionalized” and thus employable. However, scholarship does not focus on how YETPs misrecognize or ignore social oppressions, such as anti-Black racism, which can affect the learning capabilities of ACB marginalized young people. Instead, previous research discusses how YETPs work with low-income youth to create pathways to employment and reduces likelihood of entering into criminal activity (Modestino, 2019). Modestino (2019) suggests that it is feasible for racialized youth to be trained with employment skills and provided employment mentoring which would address the racial disparities in economic opportunities. There is no attention given to how YETPs will address the systemic barriers that many marginalized youth face, such as anti-Black racism. From the literature, it is clear that YETPs focus on giving an “opportunity” to young people who have dropped out of school or are struggling to find and sustain employment (Modestino, 2019). Although outdated, Couch (1992) mentions that there is
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no evidence that employment training programs offer effective, long-lasting solutions. Instead, these programs demonstrate a modest short-term impact in the lives of people to address the economic barriers that marginalized young people face. Consequently, YETPs only recognize the opportunity to find employment for job seekers. In doing so, they are not employment training centers that intentionally focus on long term solutions for the social tensions, such as anti-Black racism, which create barriers for marginalized ACB young people.

Only a few studies on YETPs claim that there are positive outcomes for young people who utilize these services. According to Kluve et al. (2016), YETPs as interventions ease un(der)employment for young people in middle- and low-income countries. Although Canada is considered a high-income nation, Canadian YETPs have proven to be helpful for youth (Kluve et al., 2016). Kluve et al. (2016) explain that certain programs are especially successful: “we find that programs that integrate multiple interventions and services are more likely to have a positive impact” (p. 238). Matsuba et al. (2008) mention that the success of these programs is based on their ability to provide positive psychological well-being, because unemployment causes poor psychological health, which is an extension of social exclusion. However, researchers stress that for YETPs to be successful, there must be individual follow-ups with young people, especially those who are marginalized and harder to serve (Kluve et al., 2016). Gelber et al. (2016) note that it is important for youth who utilize these programs to see value in building positive relationships with program administrators and counsellors because the young people will benefit from income support and an improvement in work skills. Kluve et al. (2016) mention that marginalized young people receive more labour-intensive employment opportunities through YETPs, including manual labour. However, because of their low-socioeconomic status, they “are
likely to face multiple constraints affecting their likelihood of getting a job, the types of jobs they get, and the associated earnings” (Kluve et al., 2016, p. 245).

Despite the documented successes, the existing literature on YETPs provides only vague understandings about how well these employment programs are able to support marginalized youth. Although many YETPs are connecting marginalized youth with jobs, some scholars suggest that the programs are assisting youth with “long-term careers” (Bridgeman, 2001, p. 779). The ambiguity within the literature illustrates that there is no one concrete understanding of the success rates of YETPs, or whether they are assisting youth with obtaining ‘jobs’ or ‘careers.’ The literature also lacks information surrounding the application of meaningful mentorship and support services for racialized youth, particularly young ACB men. What seems to be consistent in the literature is that marginalized youth in high income countries, such as Canada, “remain overrepresented among the unemployed and shaken by the changing patterns in the labour market” (Kluve et al., 2016, p. 4).

Generally, YETPs involve a combination “of job readiness, job training, and job placement services” (Visher et al., 2005, p. 296). Despite the efforts made within these programs to ready Black young men for employment opportunities, they face a heightened reality of racial stratification in Canada’s labour market which is colour coded (Teelucksingh & Galabuzi, 2009). Regardless of the amount of training and mentorship that a YETP offers, young, marginalized Black men are still discriminated against and are dismissed from many employment opportunities. Many employers still hold misconceptions, shaped by negative historical underpinnings, about marginalized young Black men, including the idea that they are suitable only for unskilled labour. Consequently, the amount of training offered by a YETP may be insignificant to employers due to their stereotypical perception of young Black men.
1.5 Deep Notions of Neoliberalism in YETPs

YETPs are associated with deep notions of neoliberalism. Even though YETPs are perceived to be the substitute or a secondary learning space, they do follow “broader educational reform efforts aligned with privatization and competition” (Baldridge, 2019, p. 6). YETPs seek to generate “measurable and quantifiable outcomes” (Baldridge, 2019, p. 6), emulating a for-profit business. Baldridge (2019) notes that the approach with many, if not all, youth programs is that they are more business-like with a corporatizing approach to servicing marginalized young people. Many young people barely benefit from the services as the programs are not designed to respond to all of their social and cultural needs. Within capitalist societies, neoliberalism seeks to privatize public services, dismantle welfare programs, and criminalize the urban poor (Brenner & Theodore, 2002).

Ontarians currently face a Progressive Conservative provincial government that aims to make substantial cuts to the education system. The Conservatives see the need to save money by promoting more e-learning while cutting 3000 full-time teachers (Tasker, 2019, para. 3). Because of the defunding of public schools, there is a need for youth programs, such as YETPs, to substitute where public education is lacking. The cuts to formal and public education are detrimental province wide. Still, racialized and marginalized youth in low-income areas face a burden as their access to education is in jeopardy. These young people face the risk of failing and/or dropping out of school and are more likely to be criminalized. Ontario’s marginalized youths’ opportunities are being stripped away from them in public learning settings due to government cuts. In response to the need to support these youth, youth programs purposely establish their operations in these areas while keeping racialized and marginalized young people in mind as primary users of their programs (Baldridge, 2019).
1.6 Structure of The Dissertation

In the next chapter of this dissertation (Chapter Two), I detail the core concepts and outline the theoretical framing used for this study. The two core concepts I draw upon are masculinity and intersectionality, which I conceptualize through an interdisciplinary framework. Through the work of Pierre Bourdieu, I develop the central concept of masculinity and how it is socially afforded to white men without question. The use of masculinity as a concept is discussed to illustrate gender as a social construct. I explore how men are defined in either hegemonic or subordinate categories by society. I discuss youth identities and how marginalized ACB young men’s lives are shaped by their social environments. It is in this chapter that I bring attention to how marginalized youth experience social barriers, complicating their political, social, and economic lives. The work of Anoop Nayak and Loic Wacquant guide my analysis of how ACB male youth are marginalized and experience a lack of social opportunity.

In Chapter Two I also discuss my utilization of intersectionality. Ignoring the impact of social class on young, marginalized ACB men while assuming that all people of African descent have the same lived experiences discredits the many intersections that shape their identities. I focus on social class in this study to make sense of marginalized young men and their low socioeconomic status. I employ social class to make sense of how ACB male youth from low-income backgrounds are significantly financially disadvantaged and have limited access to employment opportunities because of their marginal conditions.

Finally, Chapter Two is where I elaborate on how the work of Pierre Bourdieu and Frantz Fanon have provided useful analytical and conceptual tools throughout my research. The work of Frantz Fanon mobilizes this study to bring the voices and everyday experiences of young ACB men to the forefront, highlighting the multiple social truths about young, marginalized ACB
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men, their masculinities, and their use of YETPs. I am aware that Fanon’s work is situated in France and Algeria, particularly in the 1950s. I agree with Lewis Gordon (1995) as he suggests that Fanon’s work is an attempt to understand and make sense of how to forge a better world for people. Gordon (1995) further suggests that Fanon was aware of the stagnation and the ossification that solidified itself through the measures of colonization and created a barrier among the colonized. Fanon’s work primarily focused on how the Black man and woman were translated into colonial subjects specifically under French imperialism (Young, 2012). Although my work is not concerned with studying French imperialism like Fanon, my research does remain aligned with how the conditions of colonization continue to impact Black male youth. In doing so, my study uses Fanon’s work as both a “description and prescription” (Gordon, 1995, p. 85) for bettering the lived experiences among marginalized Black young men, and their employment seeking strategies through YETPs. Coupled with the work of Fanon, I utilize French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu, and his concepts of symbolic capital, doxa, habitus, social capital and sociodicy to make sense of the homogenization of Black male youths’ lived experiences, and the differences that exist between ACB male youth. Although Bourdieu is a French sociologist, his work highly influences the social sciences, such as Anthropology, Sociology and Education in English-speaking countries. I discuss the interplay between Fanon and Bourdieu while showing how their ideas are relevant to my study. Finally, I bring attention to neoliberalism and how the concept shapes YETP programming, while discussing how ACB male youth are impacted within these neoliberal-informed informal learning spaces.

In Chapter Three, I discuss how previous literature on Black young men has unintentionally homogenized their lived experiences, demonstrating that marginalized ACB young men have different social experiences than those of middle class ACB young men. I bring
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attention to the homogeneous nature of Canadian studies centered on Black people, focusing specifically on how it manifests in research exploring the lived experiences of young Black men. My commitment to work differently shapes both my theoretical and methodological approaches to my research. In this chapter, I outline the methods and methodology I employed in this study to conduct the research. It is in this chapter that I detail how I accessed participants and how I applied my methods to the study. Phenomenology is employed as my methodological framing. I demonstrate the efficacy of phenomenology to discuss marginalized ACB youth masculinities, particularly the importance of leading with a heterogeneous approach when discussing their lived experiences. I pay attention to how phenomenology can be useful to discuss the historical undercurrents at play, to help make sense of the contemporary lived experiences of ACB male young men.

In Chapter Four, I discuss the current and relevant literature that identifies Canada as a settler colonial nation-state and highlights how Black people’s lives have been shaped by settler-colonial thinking. I pay attention to how whiteness operates in the Canadian nation-state, while discussing this country’s colonial history, employing and defining what I call the white settler ideology. It is in this section that I discuss how whiteness as a social construct shapes and influences ACB men’s social practices. I discuss the historical impacts of Canada’s connection with slavery and how that narrative shaped the public image of ACB men. I highlight how Canadian Black men were defined in the past, demonstrating that mainstream Canadian society continues to utilize these past narratives to describe ACB men today, particularly marginalized Black males. I bring attention to one of colonization’s most insidious forms, internalized colonization. Through this concept, I demonstrate that marginalized ACB young men continue to encounter colonization, both internally and through external sources. This chapter utilizes the
work of Frantz Fanon, Barrington Walker, Vincent Woodard and Eva Mackey. I also discuss
Canada’s relationship to the racial category of Blackness, drawing particularly on the work of
Eva Mackey, Sunera Thobani and Yasmin Jiwani.

1.7 Breakdown of Analysis

Chapters Five, Six, and Seven present the key findings of the study. Chapter Five details
my time spent at various YETP programs, speaking with YETP counsellors and funders of
programs supporting marginalized ACB male youth. We discussed their relationships with
marginalized ACB young men who access YETPs and the types of employment training
practices used to support their social and economic development. Here, I illustrate how YETPs
inadvertently reproduce the white settler-colonial doxa as well as promoting the tenets of
neoliberalism, which downplay racist and structural inequalities and ignore marginalized ACB
young men’s lived realities. In Chapter Six, I explore the experiences, struggles and barriers
faced by marginalized ACB male youth in education systems in Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal. I
highlight how anti-Black racism experienced by ACB youth correlates with structural violence,
impacting their comprehension skills. This pattern of oppression results in further barriers to
their attempts to secure employment and impacts how they receive services from YETP
counsellors. The learning difficulties exhibited by many youth make it difficult for YETP
counsellors to effectively provide educational and employment training. Chapter Seven discusses
how stigma surrounding ACB young men interferes with the support and job training provided
by YETP counsellors. I discuss in this section that the negative perception of the young
marginalized ACB men’s masculinity is an embodiment of oppressive historical social
understandings of Black masculinity. Additionally, these historical underpinnings are fixed
within our contemporary moments, making young ACB marginalized men’s political, social and
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especially their economic development stagnant and underdeveloped. The general perception of marginalized ACB young men in this study shows that they are commonly homogenized. Many people generalize the experiences of ACB male youth, resulting in an inability to recognize the unique set of economic barriers faced by marginalized ACB male youth. The final chapter concludes with my practical recommendations to better support marginalized ACB male youth in YETPs.
Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework & Relevant Concepts

In this chapter, I detail the core concepts and outline the theoretical framing used to analyze the lived experiences of young African, Caribbean and Black (ACB) men and their use of Youth Employment Training Programs (YETPs). The study primarily draws upon two key concepts to interpret lived experiences of young ACB men and those who work with them in YETPs. The theoretical concepts in this study are masculinity and intersectionality. The use of masculinity as a concept is discussed to illustrate the role of gender as a social construct. In this section, I explore how men are defined in either hegemonic or subordinate categories by society. I not only outline the general concept of masculinity but demonstrate how society socially assigns a hegemonic concept of masculinity to white men without question. Further, I employ masculinity as a concept to define Black masculinity, while exploring its social construction in a Canadian context. This section grounds the study, making sense of Black masculinity and its impact on marginalized, young ACB men.

To make sense of the lived experiences of young, ACB men while accounting for their unique socio-economic realities, this chapter also defines how I will be utilizing the concept of intersectionality, an important addition to the concept of masculinity. Ignoring the impact of social class on young, marginalized ACB men while assuming that all people of African descent have the same lived experiences erases the many intersections that shape their identities. I employ and define social class in this study to make sense of these young men and their financial hardships, which results in their limited ability to seek and sustain employment.

Pierre Bourdieau and Frantz Fanon both contribute useful analytical and conceptual tools with which to approach my analysis. The work of Frantz Fanon mobilizes this study to bring the voices and everyday experiences of young ACB men to the forefront, highlighting the multiple
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social truths about young, marginalized ACB men, their masculinities, and their use of YETPs.

The work of Frantz Fanon is rooted in the impacts of colonization on people of African descent and the effect of ongoing white settler colonial discourse. As such, his work aligns with the present study, which acknowledges Canada as white settler colonial terrain.

Pierre Bourdieu’s work has helped me develop a deeper understanding of masculinity while making sense of the masculine order of marginalized ACB male youth. I employ Bourdieusian concepts, such as doxa, sociodicy, social capital, symbolic violence and habitus throughout the thesis. Doxa is defined as a dominant, generally state-sanctioned social discourse that defines thought and speech while creating perceptions of truth. The concept of doxa is also known as ‘common sense’. It is what we all take for granted. This is especially true when we think about masculinity. Bourdieu’s concept of sociodicy in this dissertation is set out to discuss the combination of biological and social constructions as one, resulting in the formation of social concepts such as manhood as biologically determined in our social world. Bourdieu (2001) explains that sociodicy “legitimates a relationship of domination by embedding it in a biological nature that is itself a naturalized social construction” (p. 23). Pierre Bourdieu (1986) defines social capital as “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition—or in other words, to membership in a group” (p. 21). I draw upon Bourdieu’s concept of a form of domination that is symbolic violence, where the dominated are unwittingly compelled, through the wide distribution of doxa, to take dominant notions and apply these notions to themselves, even at the risk of harming themselves. Finally, I employ habitus to discuss the disposition of participants in this study and how this shapes their perceptions of and reactions to their social realties. Bourdieu (1977) suggests that social structures that are produced
through dominance govern the practices of the individual by the mediation, limits and orientations that belong to the habitus and its operation, felt bodily and emotionally by the individual. Bourdieu (1977) reminds us that “the habitus engenders all the thoughts, all the perceptions, and all the actions consistent with those conditions and no others” (p. 95). Bourdieu’s work allows for a consideration of masculinity that simultaneously thinks through how men are defined in either hegemonic or subordinate categories in society. Employing both Fanon and Bourdieu in this study illuminates the need to pay attention to how they both fundamentally and similarly understand violence and social order, but with different emphases (von Holdt, 2013). Both Fanon’s and Bourdieu’s work provide conceptual tools to make sense of social order, resistance and domination, and the need for social change in post-colonial settings (von Holdt, 2013).

Finally, in this section I also pay attention to how neoliberalism manifests within youth work, particularly how it functions within YETPs. The term neoliberalism, not to be conflated with neoconservatism, is used to describe the ideology that posits the free market ought to be allowed to shape all aspects of human society, and a removal of the welfare state. In doing so, neoliberalism encourages individuals to interact with one another as consumers and not as citizens. To apply the concept of neoliberalism in the context of YETP, I use the work of Bianca Baldridge, as she employs the concept in her study of youth work. Although Baldridge’s work is from an American perspective, it fits well to discuss not only how the concept fits the YETP but also how it implicates Black youth within these youth centered spaces (Baldridge, 2019).

2.1 Masculinity & Black Masculinity

Throughout history, masculinity has been socially constructed through both personal identity and social interactions (Lober, 1994). Masculinity has been perceived on both individual
and societal levels as a cognitive, recognizable feeling that is acknowledged by either the
dominant or the dominated (Bourdieu, 2001). The natural and social constructs that combine to
create perceptions of masculinity can be better understood using sociodicy and the concept of
doxa (Bourdieu, 2001). The notion of masculine sociodicy is also related to the “paradoxical
character of doxa” (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 2). Doxa is responsible for the “transformation of history
into nature, of cultural arbitrariness into the natural” (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 2).

Doxic understandings of the world often shift social or cultural constructs so that they are
accepted as biologically determined and perceived as social truth. Bourdieu and Eagleton (1992)
suggest that the social world works from the perspective of practice and not through
consciousness. The use of doxa operates as a given through opinion or belief, and the
“naturalness” of beliefs become unquestionable. For example, in Canada, Black young men have
historically been categorized as uneducated in comparison to their white counterparts, making
their lived experiences of formal education more difficult. Moving on to post-secondary
education is perceived as unattainable for young ACB men because of society's doxic
understanding about Black young men and formal education. They are often categorized as ‘at-
risk,’ and in many instances, their educational abilities are (negatively) attributed to their Black
cultures (James, 2012). Within Canadian education systems, many Black young men are
pressured to take less advanced courses in high school, limiting their ability to qualify for post-
secondary academic institutions and leading to dead-end jobs or no formal employment for
many. This doxa about Black Canadian young men as universally having poor educational
outcomes homogenizes all young Black men. Consequently, both the gender and race of young,
ACB men in Canada are regulated through a doxic societal understanding of their manhood.
2.2  Learn to Be A Man

Manhood is inscribed through learned behaviours, which impose what men ought to be (Bourdieu, 2001). For instance, hegemonic masculinity is tied to patriarchy and its prescription of masculinity as normal. Within patriarchy, men who do not appropriate hegemonic masculinity fail to gain membership into the coveted, heteronormative category of “manhood.” Those who do not gain membership are thought of as ‘lesser,’ and are associated with subordinate masculinities (Jordan, 2011). Men who have attained masculinity in the hegemonic sense are empowered to feel that they have achieved manhood (Arnold & Brady, 2011). Those who are perceived to embody subordinate masculinity, in comparison to hegemonic maleness, often feel out of place. Like any gender role, masculinity “is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time- an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts” (Butler, 1988, p. 519). Men who practice diverse forms of masculinity reproduce the meaning of their own masculine identities within society, while society applies socially constructed forms of masculinity to men, either hegemonic or subordinate. For example, gay men are often perceived to carry subordinate masculinity, as their identities contradict the doxic ideology of masculinity, which embodies heterosexuality, dominance, and social practices that are hostile to same-sex desire (Connell, 2005). Gay masculinities are perceived as subordinate, tied to an unnatural sociodicy, a gender role that does not align with the dominant view of masculinity.

Within the confines of hegemony, white, heterosexual masculinity has been deemed normative and is articulated as such through social discourses (Berger et al., 1995). Hegemonic masculinity is intimately related to patriarchy and whiteness. This gender role is associated with a “White, Western, rational, calculative, individualist, violent, and heterosexual configuration of
practice” (Demetriou, 2001, p. 347). This type of masculinity is continuously reproduced and gains currency and power through everyday social practices, all of which complicate the process of challenging the status quo (Arnold & Brady, 2011). In Canada, both whiteness and the related hegemonic masculinity are dignified and valued over other types of socially determined masculinities (Connell, 2005).

Dominant social discourses define masculinity differently for various types of men, providing a social advantage for some men, and creating barriers for others (Ferber, 2012). bell hooks (2004) argues that “when race and class enter the picture, along with patriarchy, then Black men endure the worst impositions of gendered masculine patriarchal identity” (p. xii). The societal perception of Black men and their masculinity is that they are incompetent, especially when compared to the masculinity of white men.

Historically, the many structures of masculinity are consciously and unconsciously recognized within society. All types of masculinity can only be understood through applying modes of thought which are socially produced (Bourdieu, 2001). As a racial category, Blackness has historically been categorized as obscure, with “too many cultural differences and opposed agendas” (Alexander, 2002, p. 562) in comparison to whiteness, which is considered the dominant and normative race. As such, Black masculinity has been reduced “to a list of disadvantages and oppressions” (Alexander, 2002, p. 562). This substantiates Black masculinity as a lower class of masculinity, based on the degradation of Blackness. Thus, Black men encounter social disadvantages and are often met with negative stereotypes.

2.3 Black Masculinities

Blackness is more than a skin colour, it “is a reflection of mental attitude” (Biko, 1998, p. 360). Dei (2018) mentions that Blackness goes beyond skin colour as it is complex and diverse.
The complexity of Black people and their Blackness is reinforced by law or tradition, which generates discrimination politically, economically and socially. It is through these measures that Black people find themselves in constant mental struggle for their own aspirations (Biko, 1998). Dei (2018) argues that “Black and African peoples are continually asked to validate/legitimize our existence” (p.119). The challenge that Black people face with their Blackness is that they are attached to authoritative accepted meanings (Foster, 2007). These meanings are linked to stereotypical conceptions that subject Black people to subordinate roles. Biko (1998) argues that committing to Blackness is a “fight against all forces that seek to use your blackness as a stamp that marks you out as subservient being” (p. 360). For instance, Black youth experience moments of anti-Black racism which are directed at them not only because of their skin pigmentation but also what their skin represents. The mental attitude among many Black youth is one that encourages their awareness that they are different and can lead to a sense of unbelonging. This leads to Black people sharing “the experience of having been abused and exploited” (Manganyi, 2019, p. 23). This molds Black people’s consciousness to be based on the significance and negative reception of Black skin. Consequently, Black people are at the mercy of sharing a yearning to escape the suffering of what their skin represents, which is a reflection of how they experience their subordinate positions in society.

Skin colour is a subjective indicator used to categorize masculinities, regulating them to either a hegemonic or subordinate role. Bourdieu (2001) argues that “the dominated apply to what dominates the schemes that are the product of domination” (p. 13). In other words, the norms of dominant masculinities are imposed upon dominated masculinities, so that the latter come to see their subordination as their own fault or responsibility (Bourdieu, 2001). Symbolic violence has real, visible effects, although they may seem invisible. In the case of masculinity,
the dominated (subordinate men) victimize themselves while offering their infinite devotion to the dominant (hegemonic men) (Bourdieu, 2001). The concept of symbolic violence allows us to understand the nuances and complexities of the experiences of those who are dominated, while recognizing the contemporary circumstances of social inequality (Kennelly, 2017).

If Canadian society continues to promote misconceptions of masculinity defined along racial lines, Black men will continue to be portrayed as hypersexual, violent, and seditiously cunning (Clarke, 2012). Often, white men and their masculinities do not encounter the social, economic and political oppressions faced by their Black counterparts (Connell, 2005). Unlike Black masculinities, society perceives white manhood to be in alignment with doxic cultural scripts of what men are supposed to be. In turn, their masculinities inevitably invisibilize any negative traits about white masculinity. For example, when we see instances of white Canadian men committing violent murders, “the violence of white men is justified, excused and erased” (Bourgeois, 2020, para. 15). However, when Black men commit similar violent acts, they encounter harsh measures of police brutality that, in many cases, lead to their death (Bourgeois, 2020). Ironically, even when they are nonviolent, Black men are often met with police brutality.

The subordination of Black masculinities, when measured against white masculinities, restricts Black men from articulating “their selfhood both consciously and unconsciously to themselves and to others” (Walcott, 2009, p. 75). Due to social constructions of Black masculinity, Black men recognize that their masculinity does not “live up” (Walcott, 2009, p. 76) to hegemonic masculinity. The stereotypes about Black masculinity that demonize Black men harken back to slavery, which “continues to haunt our contemporary cultural moment” (Walcott, 2002, p. 132). Similar to stereotypes of Black men born into slavery, Blackness, when coupled with manhood, has been coded as dangerous within Canada (Walcott, 2002). For instance, in the
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Summer of 2020, even after international protests against anti-Black racism covered the globe, a young Black man in Ottawa named Ntwali Bashizi was accused of intimidating a white woman in a public park. The woman claimed that Bashizi was preventing her from crossing a public walkway. She called the police on Bashizi, and the 911 operator, over the phone, claimed that the Black man was intimidating the woman (CTV News Ottawa & The Canadian Press, 2020). In his own defense, Bashizi attempted to explain to police that he was “not doing anything. She approached me. She actually could have left me alone, and I wouldn't have said anything to her” (CTV News Ottawa & The Canadian Press, 2020, para. 11). After the incident, police discovered that Bashizi was not intimidating the woman, and according to the report, the Ottawa police “offered Bashizi a full apology” (CTV News Ottawa & The Canadian Press, 2020, para. 12). In Canada, Black masculinity continues to be criminalized and policed, both by the state and white Canadian citizens.

Throughout Canada’s history, the policing of Black men, particularly those who are marginalized, was justified as warranted to ensure that white society remained unthreatened by marginal Black men. Tommy Curry (2017), who has concentrated his work on the social plights of Black men and their masculinity in North America, suggests that “the prison is a coercive force constraining and recognizing the very being of the Black man within its walls. Contrary to the assertion of the hypermasculinity of prison, Black men lack the power to appeal to or access patriarchal masculinity in prison” (p. 86). The prison system serves as just one example of the ongoing remnants of slavery experienced by many Black men, as it continues to enslave and colonize their social experiences, restricting the ability of marginalized Black men to achieve a sense of respectable masculinity. Davis (2011) mentions that the prison system stands as an institutional presence in society and could not be unimagined. Although Davis (2011) speaks
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from an American reality, it applies to the Canadian prison system, as it too continues “to profoundly influence contemporary structures, attitudes and behaviours” (p. 24). Slavery and segregation are deeply intertwined into the prison systems and subject Black prisoners “to the tyranny of slavery” (Davis, 2011, p. 25). Today, “Black people are dramatically over-represented in Canada’s prison system, making up 8.6 percent of the federal prison population, despite the fact they make up only 3 percent of the population” (Morgan, 2018, para. 1). Together, marginalization and criminalization reduce many Black men and boys to slave-like conditions while creating economic and political barriers for them.

2.4 Fanon Analytic

It is unsurprising that white colonial settings, both past and present, position people of African descent as strangers who are denied a sense of belonging in white settler colonial nation-states, such as Canada (Thobani, 2007). People of African descent are represented as ‘evil’ and ‘up to no good’ in comparison to the white settler. Unlike Bourdieu, Fanon (1963) heavily critiques white colonial settlers and their control over the colonized, explaining that within the bounds of a colonial nation-state, “the colonist turns the colonized into a kind of quintessence of evil” (p.8). This phenomenon is observable in recent events in Canada. Inserting Fanon at this point, I will discuss how the physical violence that Fanon speaks about intersects with Bourdieu’s symbolic violence.

When white men engage in criminal behaviour, they are often perceived to be mentally ill or are excused from accountability for their behaviour by their passion for law enforcement. For example, Andrea Woo and Greg Mercer of The Globe and Mail reported on one of Canada’s worst mass shootings, which took place in Nova Scotia in April 2020. The suspect was a white man who shot and killed at least 22 Canadians, including one RCMP officer, leaving several
houses on fire (Palmater, 2020). Not long after the victims were killed, it was the RCMP\(^1\) who took down the suspect by shooting him, which led to his death. This tragic situation was outlined in The Globe and Mail, where it was noted that, “Nova Scotia mass shooter was a denturist with an obsession for policing” (Woo & Mercer, 2020, para. 2). Chair of Indigenous Governance at Ryerson University, Pamela Palmater (2020), publicly condemned The Globe and Mail as an example of “a need for the mainstream media to paint white men who do horrific things as nice people who suddenly snapped,” (para. 5). This characterization serves as yet another example of a white man who did a despicable act still being portrayed as an individual who has “been troubled or pushed to his limits by outside forces” (Palmater, 2020, para. 5). Consequently, the settler colonial ideology sustains dominance, ensuring that white masculinity is favoured and defended in Canada at any cost (Fanon, 1967a).

Consistently throughout Canadian white settler colonial history, ACB men are criminalized while their white counterparts are not. Wesley Crichlow (2014) notes that young Black men in Toronto experience excessive criminal profiling and as a result, must be prepared to encounter ongoing police harassment. Curry (2017) states that the tie between criminalization and North American men of African descent is based upon the strong image of Black masculinity that has been socially constructed over many years. This social construction is a result of colonization which, “imprison(s) him at an uncivilized and primitive level” (Fanon, 1967a, p. 15). For example, Dafonte Miller, a young ACB man, was subject to physical violence by an off-duty police officer. Dafonte lost one of his eyes as a result of this assault, in which the police officer targeted him as a criminal, despite the fact that he was not engaged in any criminal activity. While Bourdieu’s symbolic violence helps us understand how young ACB men might

\(^1\) Royal Canadian Mounted Police
unjustly blame themselves for their social conditions, Fanon’s work reminds us that physical violence continues to be one of the major modes of social control imposed by the state on Black men. Clearly, Black men in North America are burdened by their perceived close ties with criminality (Curry, 2017).

The loathing of ACB men and boys and their masculinity is based on the white colonial narrative and prevents society from recognizing their manhood as anything other than violent (Fanon, 1967a). Black masculinity is continuously made inferior to white masculinity as a result of common stereotypes and labels applied to Black men and boys. The use of a Fanonian lens allows us to understand marginalized, Canadian born, young ACB men and their use of YETPs in Canada, while paying attention to society’s perception of their gender and racial identities as “defective” (Curry, 2017, p. 3). The present work investigates how YETP associates can successfully direct young ACB men into employment within a white settler colonial country, which is anti-Black and exemplifies stereotypical and dangerous assertions about Black masculinity.

2.5 Fanon & White Settler Thought

The racist ideology embedded within white settler colonial thought is one that is “egocentric and sociocentric” (Fanon, 1967b, p. 31). Shamefully, white settler colonial thought is Euro-centric, failing to account for non-European cultures, while superimposing white ideology on colonized groups. As such, it favours white bodies in a way that is “rational, individual, genotypically and phenotypically determined” (Fanon, 1967b, p. 32). Applying Fanon’s work within the present study helps us to understand that Black men are not given the opportunity to thrive within the white settler nation-state because of its ideological beliefs about Black masculinity.
The negative stereotypes about Black masculinity, according to Fanon (1967a), are incredibly toxic to the well-being of men of African descent. Through harsh stereotypes, young ACB men are robbed of their youth (Maynard, 2017). If marginalized Black young men are perceived as savages in the wake of colonization, they are not able to gain a sense of liberation when compared to their white counterparts. Unfortunately, many young ACB men never rid themselves of the savage title, carrying this stereotype into their adult years. The use of Fanon (1963) in this study brings attention to the “colonial exploitation” (p. 6) experienced by young ACB men living in the Canadian colonial nation-state. Fanon (1963) acknowledges that the colonist forces the discriminatory notions and norms of white society into the minds of the colonized. With this in mind, the present work investigates the subjectivity of the colonial ideology that manifests among YETP associates, young ACB men, and the Canadian communities in which they reside while attempting to use YETP services to gain employment.

2.6 The Interplay Between Bourdieu & Fanon

Even if Black men make an effort to practice a white masculine ideology, they are never accepted because of the colour of their skin and the doxic representation of their maleness. Regardless of Black men’s efforts to adopt white hegemonic masculinity, they are “incapable of escaping [their] race” (Fanon, 1967a, p. 48). For example, Black men of high socio-economic status, such as athletes and entertainers, may be exemplars of hegemonic masculinity, but they are still outside the bounds of white hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005). Regardless of the degree of fame and fortune attained by Black men, they will always be seen as “outsiders” in comparison to white men (hooks, 2004). Men of African descent face a social tragedy because of the many negative stereotypes imposed on them by mainstream society (Hussey, 2003). Consequently, they face a “symbolic domination, resistance is more difficult, since it is
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something you absorb like air, something you don’t feel pressured by; it is everywhere and nowhere, and to escape from that is very difficult” (Bourdieu & Eagleton, 1992, p. 1).

Statistics Canada confirms that Black male youth are more likely than any other young men to lack formal education or employment training and to experience un(der)employment (Turcotte, 2020). These disadvantages are coupled with racial discrimination, adding a further barrier for young Black men and impacting their lived experiences in Canada (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2020). Young Black men are less likely to achieve any post-secondary attainment in comparison to their white counterparts (Turcotte, 2020). Likewise, a recent Ontario Human Rights report highlights that marginalized young Black men are more likely to be denied job opportunities, experience homelessness, and encounter a vast number of barriers to education in comparison to any other youth group (McIsaac, 2018). The inability of Black male youth to achieve “white respectability” (Nayak, 2003, p. 10) is tied to negative historical stereotypes and the doxic understanding of Black bodies as unworthy within the white settler colonized nation-state. This sense of unworthiness complicates their existence, making it difficult for them to detach from the dangers of anti-Black racism. It is here where Bourdieu and Fanon’s work complement one another in this study. Although Bourdieu’s work does not explicitly point to the impact of white supremacy’s colonial ideology on the colonized, his theoretical approach does offer insight into how the dominated can, and do, experience invisibilization and structural violence. Bourdieu’s stance signifies a “gentle violence of western society, which renders domination invisible, disarming the dominated and making the reproduction of social order something of an inevitability” (von Holdt, 2013, p. 116). From a Fanonian perspective, the colonial order is not only a form of domination that is overtly oppressing the colonized, in many instances it takes the form of physical violence (von Holdt, 2013).
The reality for marginalized Black men is that they are judged as “unproductive rather than productive” (Hall et al., 1978, p. 364) based on their socioeconomic circumstances and racial category. In combination, these realities set in motion a series of social barriers, ultimately reducing young Black men to an undeserving lower class. The urban poor, much like marginalized Black male youth, are contained within a punitive group of dispossessed categories, which define them as lower class (Wacquant, 2009). Even policy measures that are supposed to support marginalized ACB young men, in actuality do the opposite. Instead, the nation-state’s measures “aimed at vulnerable populations have at all times been limited, fragmentary, and isolated from other state activities, informed as they are by a moralistic and moralizing conception of poverty as a product of the individual failings of the poor” (Wacquant, 2009, p. 42). Owusu-Bempah (2014) suggests that Canadian cities, such as Toronto and Montreal, purposely concentrate their operations to marginalize young Black men’s social experiences, “to justify the ramping up of a law-and-order agenda that targets young Blacks, rather than dealing with the root causes of violence, such as poverty, racism and marginalization” (p. 6). Wesley Crichlow (2014) maintains that marginalized Black men in Canada experience state structural violence that originates “with children born into spirals of poverty, colonialist and racist child welfare systems, the school-to-prison pipeline, maladaptive interpersonal violence, disenfranchised communities, discrimination, physical and sexual abuse, paramilitary policing, hyperincarceration and everyday racism” (p. 2).

The interplay between Bourdieu and Fanon in this study suggests that there is not much of a separation between the two. Instead, it deepens understandings of post-colonial orders and an analysis of the social order (von Holdt, 2013). The repeated marginalization of Black male youth convinces many of them that there is no hope for upward social mobility, and that they
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must resign themselves to a doxic reality which convinces them that the only way of living as a Black man is through a dysfunctional lifestyle. The social script for low-income, racialized young people dictates that they lead a marginalized lifestyle and fail to view education, employment and health as priorities or even as possibilities. Many young, marginalized people living in low-income communities also accept street style and culture, which may reflect gang involvement, as ‘cool’ (Crichlow, 2014). The acceptance of this style as ‘cool’ contributes to an over-policing of their bodies, while attracting attention that is not conducive to their well-being. The precarious lifestyle of many marginalized Black male youth is destabilized, routinely criminalized and pathologized (Davis, 2018). Consequently, it becomes a social norm for mainstream society to legitimize “their ongoing exclusion as purposeful and self-inflicted,” denying “the urgency to identify shared solutions that might bring them into more engaged participation in Canadian society” (Davis, 2018, p. 736).

2.7 Social Class

In this study, social class is defined as a measure within society that is based on socio-economic status. Sayer (2005) argues that social class is different than race and gender, as the two are “primarily produced by ‘identity-sensitive’ behaviour” (p. 959). We are urged to be conscious that social class requires “a great deal more than an elimination of class contempt to erode, for they can be produced by identity in different mechanisms of capitalism, such as the unintended effects of changes in consumer spending on workers: they need a redistribution of resources” (Sayer, 2005, p. 959). The application of the concept of social class allows this study to refrain from producing “bland, alienated accounts which fail to make sense of why class is a matter of concern” (Sayer, 2005, p. 948).
In this study I mobilize social class to give an account of the economic challenges that marginalized ACB male youth encounter. In doing so, this study seeks to understand how their low socioeconomic status can cause a lack of self-esteem and confidence which many of them experience because of their marginalized positions. ACB men in this study discussed their struggle to obtain respectability even among some of their fellow Black people. The moral aspect of marginalized people’s class experiences are concerns of other people, which, at times, implicates the outward view of them negatively (Sayer, 2005). The Black males are measured among one another in order to determine “their worth by the achievement of others within their own culture” (Staples, 1978, p.172). In so doing, Black men who are positioned to strive for better social outcomes in comparison to their Black male counterparts are able to use the lower socio-economic status of others to boost their social status, while marginalized Black men lacking opportunities to make things better for themselves are socio-economically left behind (Staples, 1978).

2.8 Intersectionality

Intersectionality is a way of understanding social relations by examining people’s intersecting characteristics. By employing the concept of intersectionality, the present work recognizes and highlights intersections of inequality among young, marginalized ACB men. Walby et al. (2012) suggest that an intersectional analysis allows for more comprehensive ways to address social inequalities. Patricia Hill Collins (2012) notes that the use of an intersectional approach draws attention to the complexity of the lifeworld based on human experience. The theoretical framework allows for an analysis of the axes of race, gender, sexuality, disability, social class, religion, citizenship, and age, all of which distinctively shape the lived experiences of young ACB men and how they approach employment through YETPs. Kalwant Bhopal and
John Preston (2012) suggest that the use of intersectionality in research allows analyses to engage with difference. Further, intersectionality highlights the multiple relationships among people and how they work through social phenomena, creating facilitators or barriers. The present study examines how intersecting characteristics of identity impact the social location of young, low-income ACB men, permitting or restricting their access to employment through YETPs. This study illustrates how young, marginalized ACB men and their masculinities are “dynamic, rather than […] static” (Bhopal & Preston, 2012, p. 1).

Ignoring the impact of social class on young, marginalized ACB men while assuming that all people of African descent have the same lived experiences discredits the many intersections that shape their identities. Previous studies have generally approached Black male youth and their masculinities homogeneously, grouping all Black male youth as one. Curry (2017) provides clarity as to why Black youth in research are positioned this way. He notes that the masculinities of North American young men of African descent are repeatedly characterized as criminal, marginalized, and even illiterate, all of which are associated with historical stereotypes of Black masculinity. Men of African descent and their masculinities are “denied the capacity of being a thinking subject. It is asserted that the Black male has no place in conceptual thought, since starting with the Black males as a thinking subject -as demanding thought- runs counter to his place in the background of other subjects’ thinking” (Curry, 2017, p. 141).

Scholars such as bell hooks (2004) contend that Black young men do have a diverse gender. Their gender ties to a facet of ways their gender is expressed, which is in concert with subjectivity. Research that seeks to control the narrative and root it in objectivity positions the researcher as a colonizing force, which reinforces stereotypes about marginalized ACB men and their lived experiences. Feminist scholar Joyce Ladner (1972) “equates the power relationship
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between the researcher and the researched to a colonial power relationship - the oppressor defines the problem, the nature of the research, and to some extent the quality of the interaction between him and his subjects” (p. 77). The present study aims not to “control, exploit, or manipulate the oppressed group” (Hesse-Biber & Yaiser, 2004, p.107). Instead, this qualitative study sets out to understand the intersectionality of identities among young ACB men and the YETP associates who support these young men. My recognition of the importance of intersectionality is indebted to the work of Black feminist scholars, who have long theorized the importance of diverse social positions within the logic of colonialism and how it employs hierarchal dichotomies (Collins, 2012; Lugones, 2010).

The contrast between young ACB men with high socio-economic and low socio-economic status is already significant in terms of social class. The number of young ACB men who access social opportunities, such as post-secondary education and employment, is dependent upon their social capital. People who share the same membership are provided "with the backing of the collectively owned capital, a "credential," which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 21). The relationships between those in the membership group allow for access to credit and facilitate the establishment of symbolic exchanges, whereby there is an irreducible relationship of proximity geographically and through economic and social spaces (Bourdieu, 1986). In the case of young, low-income ACB men who use YETPs, their social capital, tied to social, political and economic engagement, is already low when compared to young ACB men with high socio-economic status. The mere fact that many marginalized, young ACB men rely upon YETPs to gain employment highlights their lack of resources or capital that would enable their attainment of employment, or even education. Sabo et al. (2001) note that young men with higher social capital do not experience the same barriers as male youth.
who have lower social capital. Young Black men with higher socio-economic status experience limited criminalization, fewer barriers to educational attainment, and fewer employment barriers. Although there is a possibility for these young men to acquire street knowledge, I focus instead on the strategies that these young men apply through their involvement with YETPs in efforts to improve their economic realities and increase their social capital. Consequently, it is important to understand the differences among ACB men and their masculinities existing intersectionally with social class, particularly when it comes to employment.

The present study focuses on “analyzing the multiple ways that race and gender interact with class in the labor market” (Cho et al., 2013, p. 785), and how, if at all, YETP associates consider “what intersectionality includes, excludes, or enables” (Cho et al., 2013, p. 785), based on the lived experiences of young ACB men. Collins (2012) argues that “when it comes to social inequity, people’s lives and the organization of power in a given society are better understood as being shaped not by a single axis of social division, be it race or gender or class, but by many axes that work together and influence each other” (p.11). By acknowledging the intersections of social structure, the present work can uncover the complexity of the lived experiences of those who encounter social marginalization. Through an intersectional approach, this research explores “various sites of intersectional production both on their own terms and in relation to one another” (Cho et al., 2013, p. 785).

2.9 Neoliberalism

To contend with neoliberalism “it must be conceived of as more than a set of free market economic policies that dismantle welfare states and privatize public services” (Brown, 2006, p. 693). According to David Harvey (2006), “neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by
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liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade” (p. 2). Although neoliberalism comprises free markets and free trade, it also incorporates a political rationality which generates specific interactions between the state, the citizen, and the organization of capitalism (Brown, 2006). When the state is employed in neoliberal understanding, it refers to the integrity and the quality of money and the creation and preservation of the institutional frameworks and practices (Harvey, 2006). Through these practices, the state upholds “military, defence, police, and legal structures and functions required to secure private property rights and to guarantee, by force if need be, the proper functioning of markets” (Harvey, 2006, p. 2). Brown (2006) argues that neoliberalism’s “political rationality governs the sayable, the intelligible, and the truth criteria of these domains” (p. 693). In doing so, it articulates the nature and the meanings of policies, politics, social and the subject (Brown, 2006).

Recognizing the state has much influence, neoliberalism claims to maintain minimal state intervention in markets. However, it is common for the state to create markets in formerly state-run or public arenas such as education, healthcare and social security, through privatization. Harvey (2006) argues that “State interventions in markets (once created) must be kept to a bare minimum because, according to the theory, the state cannot possibly possess enough information to second-guess market signals (prices) and because powerful interest groups will inevitably distort and bias state interventions (particularly in democracies) for their own benefit” (p. 2).

Scholars have actively discussed neoliberalism’s approach as a destructive political game that only benefits those in power (Brown 2006; Harvey 2006). The political nature of neoliberalism also assumes that any subject practicing within the tenets of the framework will achieve a sense of positive human well-being and the maximization of entrepreneurial liberties
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(Harvey, 2006). It is a false notion that every subject will gain economic liberties. Instead, neoliberalism “develop[s] policies and promulgate[s] a political culture that figures citizens exhaustively as rational economic actors in every sphere of life” (Brown, 2006, p. 694). The citizen in this manner is forced through neoliberalism to align with being individuals who are measured based on their capacity to care for themselves and contribute to the economy. The citizen within the neoliberal state must “provide for their own needs and service their own ambitions, whether as welfare recipients, medical patients, consumers of pharmaceuticals, university students, or workers in ephemeral occupations” (Brown, 2006, p. 694). This neoliberal approach “effectively strips commitments to political democracy from governance concerns and political culture” (Brown, 2006, p. 694). Brown (2006) argues that neoliberalism offers a false sense of egalitarianism. Instead, it is a ploy to disenfranchise those who are marginalized, criminalized or non-citizens of the state, as they are perceived as inevitable costs to the neoliberal society, which undermines the state’s commitment to universalism. In the neoliberal schema, there is no place for citizens who are perceived to be dependant or disruptive of the welfare state.

Neoliberal logic goes hand in hand with capitalism. Capitalism is a social and economic system that is grounded in the means of production and tied to private ownership. Capitalism is a social system that is exploitative of the working class, and of the skills and labour power of people (C. Robinson, 2000). Racial exclusion was one of the foundations of capitalism. Trade in enslaved peoples generated enormous profit for white European capitalists as they exploited the free labour of African slaves. Neoliberalism is an extension of capitalism as it “produces governance criteria along the same lines, that is, criteria of productivity and profitability, with the consequence that governance talk increasingly becomes marketspeak” (Brown, 2006, p. 694).
There should be no surprise that “capitalism is performative: it is always engaged in experiment, as the project is perpetually unfinished” (Thrift, 2005, p. 3).

Capitalism was developed through “particularistic forces of racism and nationalism” (C. Robinson, 2000, p. 9). Black feminist theorist Angela Davis (1978) maintains that racist views have historically been at the forefront of determining human worth in Western capitalist societies. Davis (1978) notes that racism in Western capitalist societies is the most devastating and the most murderous function to prevent the upward mobility of racialized people; one obvious example of this is in the over-representation of Black men in prisons. Wacquant (2009) sees this as an operation of a symbolic punishment related to an ethnoracial divide, based on setting Black people apart from the social and symbolic space of white western societies. Paul Gilroy (1993) similarly argues that the inequalities Black people encounter in capitalist Western nation-states is a result of an “antagonistic relationship marked out by the symbolism of colours which adds to the conspicuous cultural power of their central Manichean dynamic-black and white.” (pp. 1-2). Davis, Wacquant and Gilroy all demonstrate how a sense of unbelonging for Black people is perpetuated through capitalism. This sense of unbelonging creates disadvantages for Black people, in comparison to white people, in white capitalist societies, because the system was strategically built for white capitalists.

2.10 Neoliberalism and Anti-Black Racism

Neoliberalism both employs and sustains racist ideologies, such as anti-Black racism. Baldridge (2019) suggests that neoliberalism seeks to erase the existence of racist and structural inequalities while ignoring marginalized and racialized people’s lived experiences. Institutions, under the gaze of neoliberalism, do not consider how race-based discrimination impacts those who are racialized. Instead, neoliberalism seeks to promote the individual, and white colonial
capitalist structures continue to create barriers for ACB people. Neoliberalism coincides with colonial structures, which promote anti-Blackness. As a result, neoliberalism neglects and oppresses ACB people as they continue to be ‘othered’ through colonial discourses.

Neoliberalism impacts youth-centred programs, which treat the day-to-day operations “as a business under a neoliberal framework which reifies and reflects racialized deficit discourses of individualism and pathological explanations for the experiences of minoritized youth in urban settings” (Baldridge, 2019, p. 195). Considering the neoliberal tactics at play, youth-centred programs are at risk of shifting accountability for failure and concrete responsibilities to individuals, creating racial segregation (Cope & Latcham, 2009). Neoliberalism shapes youth programs into “tactics of competition, individualism, and racialized control of youth workers and youth participants” (Baldridge, 2019, p.13). Marginalized Black male youth, who are perceived as the urban poor, are essential to neoliberal processes. They are regulated to control their otherness and how they access social services (Teelucksingh & Galabuzi, 2009). YETPs’ primary focus is to connect marginalized and racialized young people with employment opportunities. In doing so, there is little consideration given to how race, for instance, can complicate employment success for marginalized Black young men. These programs tend not to consider how many employers' hiring practices are racist and do not give equal opportunity to African descent people. In 2020, the Canadian government reported that Black Canadians averaged a rate of 9.2% unemployed, compared to 5.3% within the remaining Canadian population (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2020). With this said, mainstream YETPs may assume that their services are needed for helping Black youth find employment, without recognizing how frequently young Black men face employers who maintain racist and gender-biased ideologies, creating barriers for ACB male youth to access and sustain employment.
The misconceptions and stereotyping of marginalized Black men impact their ability to find suitable employment. Teelucksingh and Galabuzi (2009) note that racialized youth encounter a heightened reality of racial stratification in Canada’s labour market that is colour-coded and favours white youth. The reality among marginalized ACB young men is that they are “trapped at the bottom of the class and caste order, for whom incarceration, like chronic joblessness and poverty, becomes a banal event and a modal pathway through adulthood” (Wacquant, 2009, p. 207). How marginalized ACB male youth are framed apprises how policies and practices negatively impact their lives (Baldridge, 2019). In terms of employment, racial and gender biases regarding ACB marginalized male youth are inherent in hiring practices among employers. For instance, many employers see them as bad for business, which deters them from hiring young Black men. Unfortunately, neoliberalism tied to capitalism “projects notions of meritocracy, individualism, and the belief that everyone has access to the open market” (Baldridge, 2019, p. 18). However, “in reality, these notions fundamentally neglect structural violence and oppression inflicted on communities of color” (Baldridge, 2019, p. 18). As such, marginalized ACB male youth are subjected to an anti-Black capitalist economy that contributes to their limited access to employment opportunities.

2.11 Conclusion

To conclude, the core concepts and theoretical frameworks discussed above will be informing my interpretation of the lived experiences of marginalized young ACB men and their masculinities, and those who work with them in YETPs. I demonstrate that social class is important to this study as it refrains from assuming that all people of African descent have the same lived experiences and shows that this intersection does shape their identities. I explored how men are defined in either hegemonic or subordinate categories of masculinity by society. I
employed masculinity as a concept to define Black masculinity, while exploring its social construction in a Canadian context. The usefulness of Pierre Bourdieu and Frantz Fanon was discussed as part of the theoretical framework mobilized within this study. Finally, I illustrate how neoliberalism functions within YETPs and shapes understandings of the ACB males’ lived experiences in these programs. The use of the concepts and theoretical framings I have discussed will enable this study to better understand how to support young, marginalized ACB men who are utilizing YETPs. In the following chapter I outline the methods and methodology used for this research.
Chapter Three: Methods & Methodology

The present research was conducted in three Canadian cities where Youth Employment Training Programs (YETPs) are situated, Toronto, Montreal, and Ottawa. These three cities are home to sizeable communities of people of African descent (Ngue-No & Mckie, 2018). Toronto and Montreal are among the top three Canadian cities that “had close to three-fifths (58.6%) of all low-income neighbourhoods in Canada” (Statistics Canada, 2013, para. 17). Including participants from the three cities of Montreal, Toronto, and Ottawa was done for multiple reasons. Using three cities allows for a better understanding of the similarities and differences, if any, between the lived experiences of marginalized ACB male youth in terms of their urban location (e.g., different local practices or policies of YETPs). It also permits me to explore how participant encounters with anti-Black racism, classism, and gender-based discrimination are uniquely experienced in these cities, particularly in the setting of YETPs. This is an additional way in which to prevent my study from replicating the tendency in Canada to homogenize the experiences of Black male youth, especially when discussing their encounters with anti-Black racism. The present research seeks to set a new standard for how future research should approach studying Black young men in Canada.

While there is a good amount of literature on Black men in Canada, there is a paucity of empirical data regarding the lived experiences of first and second generation, Canadian born ACB young men (ages 15-29) with low socioeconomic status. I wanted to better understand the lived experiences of this particular subset of marginalized Black young men and how they utilize YETPs to gain employment in these cities. Importantly, in addition to young Black men who utilize YETPs, I recruited YETP counsellors, employers who work with YETPs, and organizational funders who provide monetary support to YETPs. Targeting these groups allows
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for deeper understanding of how these low-income young Black men, who are Canadian citizens, experience anti-Black racism, classism, and gender-based discrimination, complicating their ability to gain employment in the Canadian labour market. Working with these groups of people increases the impact of the study, as it directly addresses the multiple “pattern of activities, social roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by” (Hong et al., 2011, p. 886) ACB male youth. Through this approach, I gained a greater understanding of the political, social and economic barriers that these young people encounter and how YETPs can support or hinder employment success.

This study's overarching theme is to delve deeply into understanding the political, economic, and social discourses that frame Black masculinity and to identify the unique facilitators and barriers to employment for young, marginalized Black men who utilize YETPs. For instance, when unearthing the lived experiences of ACB Canadians in Quebec, I learned that there is workplace discrimination which causes “problems for French-speaking Blacks” (Wilton, 2015, para. 2). In Quebec’s neighbouring province, Ontario, Black Canadians encounter a lack of diversity and workplace inequality based on anti-Black racism. With these realities plaguing ACB Canadians across provinces, how do YETPs effectively support marginalized ACB youth as they seek and maintain employment? How do these youth-centred employment programs recognize the anti-Black racism, classism, and gender biases experienced by ACB male youth, and do they consider how their programs should respond to these unique needs?

This study allows for public and scholarly discussion surrounding classism, anti-Black racism and gender biases experienced by marginalized ACB male youth as they seek employment using YETPs. Considering the values of diversity and inclusivity espoused within Canada, these youth should not feel that they do not belong based on their social status or image.
Throughout the present study, I keep in mind my own experiences as a marginalized Black male youth who experienced barriers to employment, which impacts my analysis. My utilization of the young, marginalized ACB men's narratives, and the perspectives of the YETP counsellors, employers and funders, demonstrates that there is a different way of examining Black male youth in Canada.

Individuals do not experience the social world homogenously. One truth for an individual is not the same for another. Human experience within the bounds of western society can be complex, as there are many ideological contentions to deal with, which are rooted in differing approaches to truth. Some scholars argue that the most contentious issues include “inquiry aim, nature of knowledge, the way knowledge is accumulated, goodness (rigour and validity) or quality criteria, values, ethics, voice, training[...], accommodation, and hegemony” (Lincoln et al., 2011, p. 98).

In the present chapter, I bring attention to the homogenizing tendencies of Canadian studies centered on Black people, focusing specifically on how these tendencies manifests in research exploring the lived experiences of young Black men. The homogeneous nature of this body of previous research excludes the multitude of varied lived experiences among African, Caribbean and Black (ACB) men. This dissertation explores whether Black Canadian studies can incorporate and/or utilize a more deliberate heterogeneous approach that ensures inclusive analysis to account for the multiple lived experiences of young, marginalized Black men. Does the colonial white settler discourse homogenize all studies that discuss young Black men and their lived experiences? In the present study, I make an effort to extrapolate the many intersections among Black young men, specifically within the context of Youth Employment Training Programs (YETPs).
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In an effort to appreciate the multiple truths held by young Canadian men of African descent, I draw on phenomenology as a methodological framework. Phenomenology allows the present work to be “attentive to how individuals recognize and make sense of the experiences that characterize their everyday reality” (Dillon, 2014, p. 302). Through the lens of phenomenology, “experience” refers to “intentionality directed toward objects in individuals’ socio-cultural environment” (Dillon, 2014, p. 303). In the ensuing pages I will demonstrate my knowledge of phenomenology to discuss marginalized ACB youth masculinities and the importance of leading with a heterogeneous approach when discussing their lived experiences.

3.1 Challenging the Objective Stance

According to Bourdieu (1998), the gift of appreciating perception “becomes symbolically efficient, like a veritable magical power” (p. 102). Every person has the gift of perception, and based on this gift, individuals have the opportunity to perceive things subjectively. Bourdieu (1998) recognizes that “symbolic capital tends to present a rather great stability” (p. 104), offering a radical approach to how knowledge and perception are understood. When theorizing masculinities and the associated lived experiences, our viewpoint can never be objective. Rather, we develop an understanding of the varied perceptions of different subjects which are structured by a doxa that includes a colonial and white supremacist “common sense.” As Bourdieu (1998) argues, “one of the dimensions of symbolic capital in differentiated societies is ethnic identity which, with names or skin color (sic), is a percipi, a being-perceived, functioning as positive or negative symbolic capital” (p. 104). Consequently, the understanding of masculinities is shaped by multiple and varied social constructions of gender.

The modern foundation of sociological inquiry began with the understanding that social science is a systematic contribution to the natural sciences, as it involves human interaction.
Much like the natural sciences, sociological inquiry maintains a focus on objectivity. For instance, along with others, the architect of modern sociology, Emile Durkheim et al. (1938), argue that sociology ought to be objective and methodical. He positioned sociology as objective while treating social concerns as ‘things.’ This approach to sociology research leaves no room for interpretation. Edward Said (1993) argues that the rise of western civilization during this period influenced the ideology of race, as the legacy of slavery produced prejudice and hate against people of African descent. Wilson (1999) argues that “racial prejudice has a long and varied history, the nineteenth-century witnessed the reification of race, and science played an important part in that process” (p. 195). Essentially, the concept of race was treated, in scientific terms, as something real. People of African descent were “objectively” defined as less intelligent and more animalistic in comparison to white European people. This perspective lays bare the harm caused when sociology maintains the same order as scientific inquiry and when sociological research on the lived experiences of Black people utilizes a positivist paradigm.

3.2 Homogeneity

Unfortunately, few Canadian studies, such as the Black Experience Project, draw upon the same core concepts when approaching studies related to the experiences of Black youth, creating the impression that all Afro-Caribbean Black (ACB) young people lead homogeneous lives. This is particularly true with relation to marginalized first and second-generation Black Canadian young men. This homogenization results in an omission of many Black youth masculinities in Canada and the many intersections that make up their identities. In the few studies on Black young men and their lived experiences in the Canadian nation-state, there appears to be an assumption that there is one truth about these young people. The homogenous approach tends to elide the many multifaceted lived realities that make up Black masculinity,
such as sexuality, disability, religion, and, importantly, social class. In this section, I explore what it means to be a young ACB man who encounters social marginalization and seeks employment through Youth Employment Training Programs (YETPs). Outside of anti-Black racism, do marginalized, young ACB men share the same social oppressions as young Black men with higher socioeconomic standing? While I acknowledge that many studies centered on Black youth intend to highlight how white supremacy impacts their lives, I remain concerned with how conflating Black youths’ experiences can be problematic. In the present study, I acknowledge that young ACB men do have different social experiences, particularly when considering social class. By focusing on the marginal conditions of lower income young ACB men, we can better understand the employment struggles they face.

When leading with a heterogeneous approach, it is challenging to theorize the concepts of race, ethnicity, masculinity, and related politics. This process is further complicated by adopting the assumption that all people of the same race and/or social class have the same lived experiences. For instance, in her work on Black youth experiences in Toronto, Andrea Davis (2018) postulates that Black urban male youth share the same experience of being criminalized based on Canadian values and understandings, which creates barriers to their upward mobility. Davis’s (2018) work is relevant, as it interrogates how anti-Black racism impacts all Black youth without question and highlights how Canadian norms “reinscribe Black invisibility by dismissing Black youth’s distinctive experiences as signs of their cultural inability to conform to Canadian values” (p. 733). However, the varied and complex lived experiences of Black male youth go beyond their harsh experiences of anti-Black racism, revealing how their identities are socially constructed and how they access social opportunities. There are other factors, outside of the reality of racism in Canada, that account for the barriers that young, marginalized Black men
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face. Additional barriers include stereotypical and heteronormative notions of their masculine identities. Thus, I highlight that not all Black male youth have the same lived experiences outside the Canadian colonial social discourse.

Referring to the work of Frantz Fanon (1967a), it is evident that if sociological research is conducted by one belonging to the ethnic group they study, the researcher is then “wishing for others what one postulates for oneself” (p. 24). In this case, the researcher assumes the existence of truth. Fanon (1967a) further argues that “when this postulate integrates the permanent values of human reality – requires the mobilization of psychological agencies liberated from unconscious tensions” (p. 24). Considering this, I remained reflexive despite having some of the same lived experiences as the young men in this study.

Certainly, many previous studies on Black male youth do not intend to cause harm, but they indirectly distort the differences among these youth, homogenizing their social experiences and leaving no room for a heterogeneous understanding. I argue that studies focused on Black Canadian male youth should explore how these young people encounter social oppressions that are coupled with anti-Black racism, such as gender biases and classism. According to Ashcroft and Ahluwalia (2008), the notion of Orientalism positions western European ideology as a dominating and authoritative force that defines the non-white Europeans as part of the ‘Orient’. The authors explain that this dominating ideology “effectively demonstrates the link between knowledge and power, for it ‘constructs’ and dominates Orientals in the process of knowing them. The very term ‘Oriental’ shows how the process works, for the word identifies and homogenises at the same time, implying a range of knowledge and an intellectual mastery over that which is named” (Ashcroft & Ahluwalia, 2008, p. 49). When studies postulate the lived experiences of Black young men, they can inadvertently homogenize their realities. Within
research, it is broadly accepted that young Black men define their Blackness in the same way. Consequently, these young men and their lived experiences are under an “intellectual mastery” (Ashcroft & Ahluwalia, 2008, p. 49), whose lived experiences are manufactured solely based on the harsh reality of anti-Black racism in white Canada.

3.3 Theorizing Whiteness While Accounting for Youth Experiences

When comparing Black youth to white youth, the many ways in which whiteness affords white youth upward social mobility in white settler colonized countries are often omitted from the conversation. In A Phenomenology of Whiteness, Sarah Ahmed (2007) notes that whiteness in western societies gains currency when it goes unnoticed, as it is through reification that it has been, and continues to be, thought of as a way of living and a social norm. Ahmed (2007) continues:

[W]hiteness might be what is ‘here,’ as a point from which the world unfolds, which is also the point of inheritance. If whiteness is inherited, then it is also reproduced. Whiteness gets reproduced by being seen as a form of positive residence: as if it were a property of persons, cultures and places. (p. 154)

Here, Ahmed (2007) highlights how the ideology of whiteness is situated as a positive through western colonial discourse.

In the article Distinguishing Difference in Pathways to Resilience Among Canadian Youth, Ungar et al. (2008) distinguish between Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth, highlighting differences in their approaches to dealing with stress, their experiences of the justice system, and the barriers and facilitators to mental health support faced by each group. The authors discuss the lived experiences of one of the participants who is categorized as “non-aboriginal” (Ungar et al., 2008, p. 7), outlining the young person’s marginalization, and their
struggles in the education system (Ungar et al., 2008). However, the authors fail to name the specific race or ethnicity of the young non-Indigenous person. Instead, they compare and contrast the social experiences of marginalized Indigenous youth against the experiences of marginalized non-Indigenous youth. This single point of analysis generalizes and categorizes all non-Indigenous young people and their social experiences as the same, homogenously. There is no indication that heterogeneity is taken into account when comparing non-Indigenous young people to Indigenous youth. Consequently, we learn that the authors group white youth and racialized young people together as non-Indigenous, ignoring the stark impacts of whiteness on the lived experiences of racialized young people, including Black youth.

Studies such as the one conducted by Ungar et al. do not demonstrate an appreciation for the different lived experiences of young, racialized people. Instead, all who are not Indigenous are examined under a homogeneous approach, grouping together the experiences of racialized youth. This method removes any expression of difference, silencing racialized people, who are not considered free subjects. Harkening back to the confines of Orientalism, the racialized young people (the orient) are positioned as subjects who are perceived to have no free thought and no unique lived experiences deserving of attention (Ashcroft &Ahluwalia, 2008). Indirectly, this homogeneity positions the lived experiences of young, non-Indigenous racialized people as unimportant or not worth mentioning.

3.4 Considering Masculinity

If common applications of sociological analysis are homogenizing young individuals, how do we understand gender differences? How do we consider young men and how their masculinities interact with race, sexuality, ethnicity and social class? Even when considering
race alone, how is it plausible to consider that all Black men have the same lived experiences?

Would this homogenization not contribute to the development of false narratives?

While it is true that young Black men experience anti-Black racism, it is important to acknowledge how Canadian young men of African descent experience measures of institutionalized racism differently based on their lived experiences and varying social characteristics. For instance, James (2012) asserts, “in the case of Black young men, there will be a normalization of their behaviours; in other words, they will be stereotyped as troublemakers and undisciplined” (p. 480). This serves as an example of how young Black men and their masculinities are stereotyped, and how this stereotype is normalized under white supremacy and its tenets of anti-Black racism. Manzo and Bailey (2005) argue that Black Canadian young offenders, particularly Black men, live “in a world in which the only viable alternatives [for men] are sports” (p. 299). These manufactured stereotypes are centred around white supremacy’s marginalization of young Black men. Here, we recognize that scholarship on Black male youth homogenizes young Black men, similar to the stereotyping and scrutiny they receive for being Black in the white settler Canadian educational system. Although James (2012) positions his work to signify that the racist discourse is the culprit for the homogenization and marginalization of Black male youth, he still engages in generalizing young Black men by suggesting that all Black male youth experience the same social outcomes. There is no explicit mention of how Canadian born Black male youth experience discrimination subjectively and the varying intersections that make up their masculinities.

Drawing on Bourdieu’s concept of masculine sociodicy, we can appreciate how James inadvertently combines the biological and the social construction of Black masculinity. The naturalization of masculinity demonstrated among Black men is aligned with dominant modes of
thought which artificially link biological and social make up, creating the illusion that Black masculinity is natural and may only be viewed through one lens. This naturalization forces those outside of the gender and race category to assume that all Black young men experience the same injustices, creating an “indisputable guarantee of meanings” (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 22).

How can all young Black men experience the same social discrimination? Black male youth who are members of the LGBTQ2S+ community experience both racial discrimination and discrimination based on their sexuality, resulting in severe repercussions that impact their social experiences. Terry Goldie (2001), for instance, mentions that many gay men encounter similar social oppressions as their heterosexual counterparts, such as racism. However, in addition to these overlapping social oppressions, gay men face overwhelming complexities to their lived experience. In *Buller Men and Batty Boys*, Wesley Crichlow (2004) acknowledges how the Black community, including Black academics, marginalize Black gay men in Toronto and Halifax. Crichlow (2004) explains that “for some, "gayness" is interpreted as a sign of European decadence or a weak masculinity. In this context, men who participate in sexual relationships with other men are often regarded as race traitors” (p. 15). It is important to pay attention to how scholars, including James, group the experiences of all young Black boys in the Canadian educational system together. By doing so, James unconsciously and indirectly trivializes and ignores the lived experiences of Black gay boys and men. As a Black Canadian scholar, Crichlow pays explicit attention to the tensions that exist in the Black community surrounding the LGBTQ2S+ community. Crichlow (2004) explains:

[I]t is important to note that this narrow, political, but oppressive view held by some Black intellectuals and leaders has been a major influence in creating shame and […] marginalizing their lived realities in same-sex relationships. (p. 15)
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It can be argued that gay Black men and heterosexual Black men do, in fact, face differing lived experiences, and their oppression is not rooted in the same experience. Both heterosexual and gay Black men do encounter anti-Black racism within the Canadian white supremacist colonial nation-state, but Black gay men also encounter harsh discrimination based on their sexuality. Considering my research did not focus on sexuality, I mention this to bring attention to the differences within Black masculinity, and the need to acknowledge that Black men do in fact have more than one “common truth” about their lived experience.

3.5 There Are Differences

The Canadian scholarship on Black youth has positively created pathways for research, such as mine, to continue to push the narrative about Black Canadian youth. Previous studies on Black Canadian youth have inspired me to conduct this study. I steer the direction of this study to bring attention to and seek ways to encourage future studies to take into account the multiple and varied forms of discrimination experienced by Black youth, which is different based on differing intersections that define their social experiences. Although previous studies have created a gateway for critical thought on the experiences of Canadian Black youth, there remains a homogenization of their lived experiences. While I have discussed the work of Carl James, other Canadian scholars also tend to conflate the lived realities of Black youth. For instance, the outstanding work, Policing Black Lives, by Robyn Maynard (2017), uses a critical approach while explaining the lived experiences of Canadian youth of African descent in a white settler colonized nation-state. Maynard (2017) argues that Black youth are over-represented in Canada’s child welfare systems, particularly in Montreal. This important point unintentionally homogenizes Black youth, as there is no mention of which genders or ethnicities are represented in the high number of Black youth
in care. In this case, both quantitative and qualitative approaches to the data homogenize Black youth experiences. The quantitative grouping of all ACB youths’ lived experience in child welfare homogenizes Black youth as the same, be it true or not.

Maynard (2017) is correct in noting that Black youth are over-represented in child welfare systems compared to white youth. However, she does not identify whether it is Black males or Black females who are more likely to be in care. Maynard (2017) does, however, argue that “there is too little available research on the treatment of Black youth and families by child welfare agencies” (p.188). Identifying the gender of the Black youth is important to the analysis so that we can provide practical recommendations, which associate with adequate care for the specific Black male or female youth. Child and adolescent psychiatrist, Kevin Simon (2020) discusses the care and treatment for Black boys in America. Although this is not Canadian focused, there still exists relevance in recognizing the lived experiences of Black boys who are in care. Simon (2020) argues:

When it comes to Black boys, I’m often primed to encounter frightening caricatures — creatures who are at least rough around the edges, possibly hostile. Yet when I sit still, focused on being present and listening to their thoughts and feeling their emotions, I don’t feel angst or hear distortions of their reality. Instead, I see reflections, of both myself and society. I see individual boys navigating a society that often has negative conceptions of who they are. And I think, “He’s just a boy — must he be more responsible for his actions in a way that others cannot know?” The reality is, in our country…yes, he must. (para. 15)

Simon’s assertions help us to understand that Black boys in care are experiencing sets of social oppressions that are unique to their social circumstances. It does not mean Black
female youths’ sets of social oppressions, such as sexism, are unimportant. Instead, it does mean that when we are homogenizing Black youth experiences in care, there is a description of normative lived experiences. This could lead to analysis that is described as aberrant, or classically tied to common understandings that are misattributed about Black youth (Simon, 2020). Fanon (1967b) argues, “there is a difference between a West Indian and Darkarian as between a Brazilian and Spaniard” (p. 17). Here, Fanon indicates the importance of recognizing differences among people of African descent based on ethnicity and Black passing-ness. Fanon’s insights remind sociological researchers that we must go deeper to recognize the profound differences in what it means to be a person of African descent. The rationale is simple, “the object of lumping all Negros together under the designation of “Negro people” is to deprive them of any possibility of individual expression” (Fanon, 1967b, p. 17). According to Fanon, the practice of positioning Black youth under one homogeneous experience is to reproduce, intentionally or not, a colonizing approach.

3.6 We Are Not All the Same

Rejecting a homogenous approach through sociological inquiry affirms that there are multiple truths and people's lived realities are not unilateral. A sociological approach that utilizes relativism includes “co-constructed realities” (Lincoln et al., 2011, p. 98), which are subjective. The qualitative “multivoice” (Lincoln et al., 2011 p. 99) study, shared between the researched and the researcher, can help to minimize unequal power dynamics in research to some degree. Lincoln et al. (2011) note that the constructivist paradigm, much like critical theory, aligns with postcolonial aspirations. Fundamentally, constructivism creates “intellectual, theoretical, and practical space for dialogue” (Lincoln et al., 2011, p. 100). Lincoln et al. (2011) further argue that constructivism allows for “the potential for interweaving of viewpoints, for the incorporation
of multiple perspectives, and for borrowing, or *bricolage*, where borrowing seems useful, richness-enhancing, or theoretically heuristic” (p. 100). Thus, my sociological inquiry incorporates a constructivist view, which enables a qualitative investigation, leading with a heterogeneous stance. The ability to utilize a heterogeneous viewpoint acknowledges that there are individual experiences among people while pursuing inquiry into social life (Lincoln et al., 2011). It is critical that studies on ACB male youth consider and explore the many diverse intersections of identity among Black young men.

### 3.7 Phenomenology

To contend with the multiple truths surrounding the masculinities of Canadian born male youth of African descent and their experiences in utilizing YETPs, the sociological study must be grounded in the lived experiences of these young people. The individual’s subjective understanding of their environment is what creates their experience and their truth, which then creates their understanding of their environment. It is the consciousness of an individual’s “certain particular experiences rather than of a general or some outer reality beyond individual experience” (Dillon, 2014, p. 303). This framework aligns with the directive of this study, acknowledging the many lived realities among Canadian born, marginalized male youth of African descent.

There is great benefit in using phenomenology to address the dual relation between subjectivity and objectivity (Moran & Mooney, 2002). Essentially, the theory “seeks to overcome the traditional dichotomies of modern philosophy, especially the subject-object distinction of traditional epistemology, with its attendant account of knowledge as a representation of the object immanent in the subject” (Moran & Mooney, 2002, p. 2). As such, phenomenology guides the present work, ensuring that all young ACB men’s experiences are not
grouped as one. Phenomenology seeks to determine what subjective understandings exist in their lived experiences, which in turn is reflected in their behaviour as objective, in other words, their truth.

Intentionality refers to the quality of the mental condition of the individual, including thoughts, beliefs and even desires. Karl Simms (2003) notes that thoughts and beliefs “are ‘objective’ modes insofar as they must be what motivates the meanings” (p. 34). The concept of intentionality points to the notion that “consciousness is always consciousness of something, then thinking is always thinking of something” (Simms, 2003, p. 35). Laurie Spurling (1977) argues that:

Any perpetual act of consciousness intends a real perceived object in the world. Emotions reveal the same intentional structure: one is frightened of, angry with, etc. Consciousness, in its acts and manifestations, is essentially directed towards the world. All acts have both a subjective pole, consciousness itself, and an objective pole. (p. 7)

Focusing on marginalized, Canadian born young Black men, this study is grounded in an understanding of “different ways for consciousness to be in-the-world” (Spurling, 1977, p. 17). Acknowledging that Black masculinities are socially constructed around young ACB men and are forever changing, the present work recognizes “there are different ways for consciousness to intend its object” (Spurling, 1977, p. 17). Even though “some intentions are clear to themselves; some, on the other hand, are ‘lived’ rather than known” (Spurling, 1977, p. 17).

Through the use of phenomenology, the present study addresses historical underpinnings of Black masculinity, the subjective position of marginalized young Black men, and the intersubjective experiences of those who are in their social sphere. In turn, this approach addresses interpersonal understandings of people collectively. The present work reflects a
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commitment to understanding the subjective stance of young, marginalized ACB men while considering their intentionality, particularly how they seek employment through YETPs. In this context, I use the term ‘subjective’ when referring to the consciousness of young ACB men while also accounting for the content that builds their consciousness, such as perceptions and emotions. I explore the questions: How do young Black men understand the objective nature of Blackness, which contributes to the social construction of their masculinity? and, How do they utilize their Blackness to make sense of their experiences in YETPs? In this context, I use the term ‘objective’ to point out how Black male youth experience the social world through unexamined presumptions and beliefs.

David Macey (1999) discusses the utility of phenomenology in studies on Blackness. Like myself, Macey (1999) uses phenomenology and a Fanonian analytic to demonstrate that Blackness is an objective and subjective truth, “a form of lived experience” (p. 8). The present study recognizes that marginalized young Black men are “intrinsically social beings, acting within specific historical and cultural contexts, and embedded in a shared life-world” (Szanto & Moran, 2015, p. 3). Thus, phenomenology promotes a deep understanding of a “manner in which things and meanings show themselves, come to self-evidence, or come to be constituted for us” (Moran, 2005, p. 1). Phenomenology is useful in that it “stands opposed to naturalism, scientism and reductionism, and to all forms of explanation that draw attention away from the manner of the appearance of the phenomena in question” (Moran, 2005, p. 2). Further, phenomenology encourages researchers to “focus on the specific conditions of human embeddedness in an environment, and to make visible the phenomenon of the environment itself” (Moran, 2005, p. 5). As such, a phenomenological framework is aligned with the present study which explores the
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social experiences of Canadian born, young ACB men with low-socioeconomic status living in a settler-colonial nation-state and utilizing YETPs.

While phenomenology explores the subjective understanding of the individual and their ‘truth,’ the theory also recognizes the “interpersonal understanding, collectivity, and togetherness” (Szanto & Moran, 2015, p. 2) of others who exist in the same environment. Thus, the present work will also account for the experiences of YETP counsellors, employers and funders. It is important to consider these authoritative figures, as they are employed to help young people, including marginalized young Black men, to gain employment. Dillon (2014) notes that while an individual’s experience will differ from others in the same environment, this does not mean that an individual creates their reality. The present work recognizes the ways in which people perceive their social environments through the subjective views of others, shaping their own “truth.” The phenomenological investigation of how marginalized, young ACB men experience YETPs may reveal how the intersubjectivity of those in close proximity can influence the type of relationships these young men form, shaping their experiences and approaches to employment.

Similar to how Bourdieu positions doxa, I seek to understand how young, marginalized ACB men and their masculinities are positioned subjectively and how their gender and race impact the help they receive from YETP counsellors, employers, and funders. It is crucial to understand how YETP counsellors, employers, and funders of differing races, ethnicities, social classes and genders recognize and view young ACB men who rely on YETP services. Fanon (1967a) argues that white colonial civilizations have “imposed an existential deviation on the Black man” (p. xviii). Utilizing the work of Fanon, we must consider the subjective truth that white colonial powers have thrust upon society as an objective understanding of all Black men.
The notion that all men of African descent and their masculinities do not live up to white hegemonic masculinity has been socially constructed and has become a doxa in western societies. The social script that has been fashioned concerning Black men and their masculinity is that they are understood to be hypersexual, violent, and seditiously cunning (Clarke, 2012). This portrayal of Black masculinity stigmatizes Black men, and this stigma becomes normalized in society and accepted as an objective truth.

There are many scholars and policymakers who push a political agenda about race as “semantically empty, ontologically bankrupt and scientifically meaningless” (Yancy, 2014, p. 50). Particularly in the academic realm, “there are many philosophers who argue that race is an illusion, that there is no factual support for racial taxonomy” (Yancy, 2014, p. 50). I argue that scholars need to use caution when making such statements, as the politics of race do impact the living conditions of racialized people, particularly ACB people. Scholars must recognize that these measures can be used to justify the marginalization and extermination of the colonized (Fanon, 1967a). For example, although multiculturalism was about anglophone and francophone relations historically, its policies create moments of segregation, which also include ideas about race. Even though the intention of multiculturalism-related policy is to raise awareness surrounding diversity, instead it subordinates racialized people in favour of people with white skin through a majority versus visible minority understanding. Yancy (2014) explains that the attempt to invisibilize race in this manner is problematic:

The phenomenological or lived dimensions and reality of “race” exceed what is deemed “real” within the framework of a physicalist ontology. It is also important to note that to believe that there is no more to be said about race because it is impossible to reduce it to
a naturally occurring object in the spatiotemporal world is to engage in a form of disciplinary hegemony. (p. 50)

As Mills (2014) argues, “race is indeed material in that it is because of race that one is entitled to or debarred from the “normal” treatment extended to white humans” (p. 34).

Understanding intersubjectivity is fundamental to the present study, as the masculine qualities of young ACB men are seen as a “set of lasting dispositions” (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 121), which have been established by white settler colonialism. Even though Canadian born, marginalized, young ACB men are associated with the Black community, they remain impacted by the broader white community. Paul Ricoeur (1992) argues that “the identity of a person or a community is made up of these identifications with values, norms, ideas, models, and heroes, in which the person of the community recognizes itself. Recognizing oneself in contributes to recognizing oneself by” (p. 121). In the context of the present work, young marginalized ACB men will recognize themselves when sharing space with others. Consequently, ACB men who utilize YETPs are influenced by the people with whom they have contact, contributing to the ongoing shaping of their characters.

3.8 Phenomenology & History

Our understanding of history is shaped by those who control the historical narrative. In white settler-colonial societies Black people have been characterized as having “no culture, no civilization, and no ‘long historical past’” (Fanon, 1967a, p. 17). This portrayal places Black history as inferior and insignificant in the white colonial nation-state. Curry (2017) explains that Black men have historically been linked to material disadvantages that are expressed through incarceration, police brutality, and high rates of unemployment.
The framework of phenomenology accounts for the impact of the past on the present. Our social experiences are not only interpreted based on the present but are grounded in specific historical occurrences that shape us today (Szanto & Moran, 2015). Simms (2003) notes that the field of history is often taken for granted because it is not perceived as a science. Human history relies on sequences of events, woven into historical truths which are dependent on the observer and their subjective truth. Ricoeur (1967) explains, “we must understand in order to believe, but we must believe in order to understand” (p. 351). Based on the notion of understanding and shaping a subjective truth, human experience is shaped by historical narratives, providing an understanding of the social world. Szanto and Moran (2015) argue that “human beings are intrinsically social beings, acting within specific historical and cultural contexts, and embedded in a shared life-world” (p. 3). Given that history shapes our subjective understandings which are then understood objectively, it follows that our lived experiences are also rooted in the past. How we understand each other is dependent upon what we know about our past.

Historically, ACB men were treated as objects, rather than human beings with their own subjective experiences. This treatment shaped common understandings about Black men, which in turn shaped how Black men subjectively understood themselves. Many ACB men only know a limited amount of their own history and common historical narratives characterize Black men as beneath men of every other race and ethnic group, particularly white men. Ultimately, this may cause many Black men to view themselves as subordinate. Considering the important role of history while utilizing phenomenology as a framework allows us to explore how marginalized, young ACB men perceive themselves and how history shapes their social experience, especially when seeking employment. Further, phenomenology encourages the honest exploration of how people in close proximity to young ACB men who seek employment view these young men
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based on the stereotypical and historical narratives of the past. Thus, this study purposely focuses
on how the past can impact the relationships between young ACB men and YETP associates.

The social construction of race is also historically embedded and lives on in our contemporary moments. Research on race and ethnicity requires researchers to understand that these concepts “are neither 'natural' nor 'neutral,' but are socially and historically produced and are heavy with political meaning” (Gunaratnam, 2003, p. 11). The political implications of race and ethnicity both define identity and function through the colonial social discourse. Within colonial settings, particularly in the Canadian nation-state, racialized people are categorized as the Other compared to non-racialized people. According to Thobani (2007), the “Other becomes constituted as both an identity oppositional to that of the nation as well as a threat to the completion of the nation” (p. 20). Recognizing complexity of identity in research, “we are able to see that the meanings of ‘race' and ethnicity are constructed relationally and are located in particular social contexts” (Gunaratnam, 2003, p. 11). From a sociological standpoint, the intricacies of race and ethnicity help us understand how their meanings “regulate and organize our conduct and practices” (Hall, 1997, p. 4). Our knowledge is guided by how race and ethnicity are ordered and governed through our social world (Hall, 1997). Critical analyses that focus on the concepts of race and ethnicity allow us to recognize that those in positions of power govern and regulate social outcomes among the Other (Hall, 1997). The present study acknowledges how young, marginalized ACB men who access YETPs are categorized as the Other in the colonial setting of Canada.

3.9 The Tensions of Using Phenomenology

The present sociological analysis recognizes that the term “phenomenology” was originally coined in the early 1900s by Edmund Husserl and was later adopted by Martin
Heidegger. Scholars have argued that Husserl’s work on phenomenology is entirely neglected in favour of Heidegger’s work, which is popularized as contemporary European phenomenology (Moran, 2005, p. 1). Both Husserl’s and Heidegger’s work in phenomenology “was highly influential on twentieth-century European philosophy” (Moran, 2005, p. 1). Some scholars argue that Husserl’s and Heidegger’s development of phenomenology was based on experiences of whiteness. Ahmed (2007) argues that “we can consider how whiteness becomes worldly as an effect of reification. Reification is not then something we do to whiteness, but something whiteness does, or to be more precise, what allows whiteness to be done” (p. 150). The present study does not allow the notion of “whiteness” to dictate the work, as the hermeneutic nature of phenomenology allows us to interpret the lived experiences of young ACB men and their use of YETPs. Consequently, in the present work, phenomenology allows for the exploration of how the ideology of whiteness affects racialization, shaping the experiences and realities (Ahmed, 2007, p. 150) of young ACB men as they seek employment.

Below I discuss both the methodology of the present study and the qualitative research methods used, including in-depth semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and participant observation.

3.10 Positionality

This research stems from my own lived experience as a once-marginalized ACB man. Considering that I have had many opportunities to better my social circumstances, I did not lead this research with a sense of entitlement or privilege. Instead, I sought to remain humble, knowing that I once faced a marginal lived experience in my youth. I did not assume that the participants viewed me in the ways that I view myself. As a researcher, I kept in mind the nature of the relationship between myself and participants. I am aware that participant perceptions of the
research relationship may affect the information they are willing to share (Berger, 2015). As an ACB male in a Ph.D. program at Carleton, I may have been perceived as intimidating to participants because of the gap in our academic experience. To increase the likelihood that participants would feel comfortable, I relied upon sharing my lived experience as an ACB young man and the marginal conditions I encountered. This reciprocal sharing allowed me to be vulnerable among the participants. It seemed to help interviewees build trust and a relationship of solidarity with me. Establishing a positive relationship with participants resulted in longer interview times. Although longer interviews translated into more transcribing work, it was crucial to spend this time with the youth, as I was learning from their lived experiences. Through the interviews and focus groups, I believe that I became trusted as someone able to speak on behalf of the youth, to discuss the types of anti-Black racism that ACB male youth experience which result in social and economic barriers.

Before beginning each focus group, I provided participants with an introduction to myself and my research purpose. Introducing myself to the participants and providing them knowledge about who I am as a person and my academic experience encouraged participants to share some information about themselves. I elected not to read from a script when speaking with the young men, as I wanted our time spent together to be organic. However, I did remain consistent in my approach when sharing my lived experiences. I was vulnerable with the young men, as I shared barriers I faced in high school and employment. I perceived that the youth sensed value in what I was sharing, as they spoke to me candidly. I sensed that my vulnerabilities allowed me to build trust with young ACB men who participated in the research. With other participants, including YETP counsellors, employers, and funders, I shared with a similar level of vulnerability, and I sensed the same feeling of trust as I did with the young men. This was my attempt to share
further insight about my lived experiences in order to explain my motivation for setting out to
conduct this study. As such, sharing my lived experiences did not present challenges, but instead
helped to facilitate open and positive conversations.

After meeting the participants, the ACB young men began to speak about their interests,
including debating who is the better NBA player, LeBron James or Michael Jordan. These
moments with the young people were positive, as the youth showed that they were comfortable
with me. Interactions with the YETP counsellors, employers and funders were similar. Before
each interview, we spoke informally for about 30 minutes. I appreciated these moments, as I
noticed that participants were feeling me out, much like the young people. They wanted to know
I was not a researcher who would extract data and ultimately exploit participants. After deeming
my intentions acceptable, the interviewees were very talkative. In many interviews, I did not have
to ask follow-up questions or prompt for responses, as the participants were providing data with
elaboration. Many participants answered questions with excitement and positive body language,
asking me if they could add more to their initial responses. For instance, when I asked questions
regarding high school experiences among ACB male youth in Canada, all the participants had a
lot to say, especially the youth. The young people showed signs of frustration, anger, and
disappointment about their negative experiences in high school, and they felt the need to express
their feelings. As the researcher, I framed the interviews and focus groups as a platform for
participants to discuss and vent their frustrations, assuring them that the study served as an
opportunity for their voices to be heard.

3.11 Sample Selection

The sample consisted of 41 participants (N=41), including ACB male youth, YETP
counsellors, employers and funders. The sample contained 20 ACB male youth from Toronto,
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Ottawa and Montreal who took part in one-on-one interviews and focus groups. I conducted 7 interviews with ACB male youth, and 13 youth participated in focus groups. The young men who participated in the focus groups did not participate in one-on-one interviews. The remaining 21 participants were the YETP counsellors, employers and funders based in Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal. These participants engaged in one-on-one interviews only. The use of focus groups as a method encourages an exploration of the awareness of attitudes, values and perceptions of the participants of the group (Santesso et al., 2021). The interviews were useful for me to “explore immediate first impressions” (Santesso et al., 2021) of participants in a one-on-one setting, which allows people to be free to discuss their thoughts with me as the researcher. I employed both methods to serve as common data collection methods. The use of both of them offer meaningful insights about the perspectives and beliefs of the participants (Gill & Baillie, 2018). Between the two methods among the ACB young men, it was the one-on-one interviews that turned out to be more useful for the research project. Although I was able to gain some insight from the focus groups, I recognized that the young men were not sharing as much in comparison to the young men who did one-on-one interviews. In some cases, I had to skip over questions because the youth in the group setting remained silent, and I did not want to force the youth to talk. My thought process to skip over questions was to encourage dialogue. I recognized some young men were skeptical to share in a group setting more so during one-on-one interviews. Consequently, I relied more on the data deriving from the one-on-one interviews for my analysis as this data provided me with more insight into the young men’s experiences.

3.12 Accessing Participants

My own community and academic initiatives in Ottawa, Toronto and Montreal increased my ability to connect with participants. As the founder of both the Afro-Caribbean Mentorship
Program (ACMP) and Barbershop Talk: Black Men and Misconceptions, I have established my professional image as a trustworthy researcher across all three cities. For the past four years, the ACMP initiative has provided meaningful mentorship and specific events and programs designed to support the academic, social, political and economic development of ACB students, both in high school and post-secondary institutions. This initiative is now a recognized and annually funded program at Carleton University, under the Student Experience Office (SEO). The work of the ACMP has brought attention to how anti-Black racism disrupts Black students’ abilities to be successful in school in the Carleton community as well as the broader Ottawa community, Montreal and Toronto. The ACMP has provided a social space for community members from all backgrounds to learn the social barriers of anti-Black racism and recognize the importance of working together to create better social outcomes for ACB learners. The Barbershop Talk: Black Men and Misconceptions initiative creates a social space that invokes critical conversation about the misconceptions of Black men in Canada. Barbershop Talk has been offering programing in Ottawa, Toronto, and Montreal, and is appreciated by many community members. The program encourages Canadians to think about how Black men in Canada experience misandry noir that starts when they are young and continues into their adult years. This program is welcomed in the ACB community and has been publicized by media, including CBC news. As such, my involvement in ACB communities in Ottawa, Toronto and Montreal facilitated trust in my research.

Throughout the recruitment process I utilized my professional and academic connections. I took advantage of snowball sampling, which served as the primary “method for reaching difficult-to-access or hidden populations” (Tracy, 2019, p. 136). The majority of the people I reached out to were excited about the project and happy to facilitate recruitment, and I did not
face challenges accessing participants. I began contacting people in my networks and asked them to spread the word about my study to their colleagues who work in YETPs, ACB young men who utilize YETPs, as well as employers and funders associated with YETPs. Generally, my contacts were more than willing to suggest “a colleague, a friend, or a family member” (Tracy, 2019, p. 136).

Once I connected with people who received information about my research, it was not difficult to find people interested in participating. In Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal I had no issues in finding ACB male youth to participate. Many communities in these cities are challenging the political and social implications of anti-Black racism. The participants recognized the value of my research and felt that this work was contributing to the fight against social and political discrimination against people of African descent. Many community members in each city identified the unique barriers that ACB male youth experience through our Canadian education systems, pointing to the criminalization of young Black men. Many saw the value of this type of research as building upon Black Canadian storytelling and formally documenting evidence that challenges anti-Black racism in all its social and political forms.

When meeting participants, I explained why I was recruiting interview participants and ensured that everyone was provided with a hard copy of the consent form, detailing the specific goals of the project. Considering everyone I spoke to volunteered to participate, they did not give me a sense that they felt pressured. I provided my cellular phone number, giving participants the option to contact me to ask further questions. I was fortunate to interview every person I came into contact with, and no participants withdrew from the study. All participants were given a copy of the consent form to sign. Prior to completing the consent form, I explained to participants how their information would be used, both in my doctorate and in informing stakeholders, such
as the United Way, of research findings. The United Way funded this research and will use research findings in their development of better strategies for youth employment programs for racialized young people, particularly ACB young men, and had contributed funding towards this project.

Youth were living in either Toronto (n=8), Montreal (n=6), or Ottawa (n=6). All youth in the study identify as first or second generation and were born in Canada. The young men from Montreal identified as both Anglophone and Francophone, however, they preferred to conduct interviews in English and specified that they speak English more often. As research participants, there were no language barriers. As a university-educated man, I was conscious of the differing social locations occupied by myself and the youth participants. Throughout the interview and focus group process, I checked my privilege among these young men by not using inaccessible language or flaunting my comparatively high socio-economic status. The tabular summary below contains information about the participants. Note that all names that appear are pseudonyms, used to conceal the identities of the youth.

3.12 Procedure and Methodology

The present study utilizes a phenomenological and qualitative approach to appropriately understand the unique lived experiences of young, marginalized ACB men and their utilization of YETPs. By definition, qualitative research “is a systematic and planned empirical inquiry into meaning, an orientation grounded in the world of experience that seeks to understand how others make sense of their experiences and perspective” (Baldrige, 2019, p. 211). The use of qualitative methods requires an interpretation of the lived experiences of those who are researched. Meaningful interpretation involves the researcher delving deep into critical
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conversations around powerful topics, such as race, gender, and community (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Qualitative methods allow the researcher to “stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 8). Using this specific approach to sociological inquiry, researchers have the ability to study individuals, their communities, and the phenomena within their social environment (Baldridge, 2019). In other words, these methods allow the researcher to interpret and make sense of participants' social experiences (Baldridge, 2019).

The present study investigated the following four questions: (1) What are the experiences of young ACB men in Toronto, Ottawa, and Montreal when it comes to their engagement with employment training programs? (2) How do these youth apply the skills they learn from training programs in their employment-seeking strategies? (3) In what ways are Toronto, Montreal, and Ottawa-based YETPs attempting to anticipate and respond to the contemporary racialized ethnic differences and ethnocultural realities of young ACB men? (4) How do Toronto, Montreal, and Ottawa-based employers engage with young ACB men who seek employment with them? The research questions provided a foundation for the methods.

Building upon these four research questions, the one-on-one interviews and the focus groups allowed participants to speak exclusively and freely about the study's subject matter. This method allowed me to ask participants open-ended and semi-structured questions about marginalized, young ACB men’s encounters with systemic racism and how these impede their economic opportunities. As the researcher, I rely on my interpretation skills to make sense of situations. What does it mean? What is the significance? Keeping these questions in mind
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courages me to be open-minded about people and their lived experiences and to recognize that nothing is ever self-evident.

After interviewing young people, I interviewed YETP counsellors, employers and funders to understand their perceptions of how youth are served in YETPs. I conducted semi-structured interviews with seven employers, across all three cities, whose businesses are involved with the YETPs. I interviewed 12 YETP counsellors across the three cities, four in each city. Finally, I interviewed two funders between Toronto and Ottawa. Through one-on-one interviews, the researcher is positioned to gather much needed data (Fine & Weis, 1996). The participants should feel able to express themselves with a sense of ease when discussing specific things or events (O’Connor & Gibson, 2003). This is critical to individual interviews as the researcher must “look at the meaning and underlying implications of those expressions” (O’Connor & Gibson, 2003, p. 69). Interviews are unique, as they produce stories while giving the researcher a vivid sense of the participant's lived reality (Fine & Weis, 1996). Social sciences frequently depend on qualitative methods, such as interviews and observations, because they illustrate the social conditions of daily life (Fine & Weis, 1996). For instance, when using qualitative methods to research racialized people, we uncover nuance in their storytelling and validate participant experiences (Gunaratnam, 2003). As such, the researcher can use the participants' lived experiences “as grounds for political action” (Gunaratnam, 2003, p. 7). Gunaratnam (2003) explains that “social discourses are enmeshed in lived experiences and institutional and social power relations that have emotional, material and embodied consequences for individuals and groups” (p. 7). As researchers, we must consider both social discourses and lived experiences through storytelling, which intermingle with one another to capture the intricate details of the participants’ lives. By interviewing not only young men, but also the counsellors and employers
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with whom they work, as well as the funders who help shape the structure of YETPs, my study was well-positioned to consider the many intersubjective perspectives that influence ACB young men's employment outcomes.

Similar to one-on-one interviews “which aim to obtain individual attitudes” (Gibbs, 1997, p. 2), focus groups capture the “attitudes, feelings, beliefs, experiences and reactions” (Gibbs, 1997, p. 2) of a group. Like interviews, focus groups are used to capture data and elicit social experiences and opinions of participants (Guest et al., 2017). Tactically, focus groups use “open-ended questioning with inductive probing of responses” (Guest et al., 2017, p. 693). The focus groups with youth ranged between 3 and 4 participants, which “capitalized on group dynamics to stimulate discussion” (Guest et al., 2017, p. 693). Focus groups allow for an interactive and interpersonal interview that permits an extensive range of opinions and thoughts (Guest et al., 2017). Scholars have noted that “the participants' discussions to produce data would be less accessible without that interaction” (Morgan, 2018, p. 6). In the focus group setting, the group drives the discussion while responding to researcher questions. In the present study, one focus group was held in Montreal, one on Ottawa, and two in Toronto, one in the east end of Toronto and one in the west. Although I was able to conduct four focus groups in total, I found that the one-on-one interviews provided more specific responses to questions. I gained a sense during the one-on-one interviews that young ACB men were able to be more vulnerable while sharing their lived experiences of seeking employment through YETPs. As such, I drew heavily on one-on-one interview data. However, I did not exclude focus group data completely. Within focus groups, the discussions were able to “clarify not just what the participants think but why they think the way they do. As they share and compare their experiences and outlooks, the
Although one-on-one interviews and focus groups were my main methods, I also included participant observation field notes within my analysis. Participant observation “is a form of production of knowledge through being and action; it is praxis, the process by which theory is dialectically produced and realized in action” (Shah, 2017, p. 45). Relying on theory to understand social phenomena can only occur by learning about others’ lived experiences. Theory can only speak to broad sociological meanings that present themselves through empirical research. From the perspective of race and ethnicity studies, there is a need to recognize that racialized boundaries are produced and cannot be understood as something that is pre-given (Gunaratnam, 2003). Shah (2017) explains the usefulness of participant observation:

through living with and being a part of other people’s lives as fully as possible, participant observation makes us question our fundamental assumptions and pre-existing theories about the world; it enables us to discover new ways of thinking about, seeing, and acting in the world. (p. 45)

I used participant observation when I visited YETPs in all three cities, particularly when meeting YETP counsellors and ACB young men to conduct interviews, in or around the program centres. In total I took participant observation fieldnotes in approximately twenty distinct moments and situations. I relied on my observations to make sense of the design of the YETPs, as I was curious to observe any ACB specific posters or signage that could be used to develop employment skills for young ACB men. For instance, when I visited two YETPs, one in Montreal and the other in Toronto, I observed that both of them had pictures of Barack Obama, Martin Luther King, and Malcom X. The representation of these Black men stood as an example
of positive figures for marginalized ACB young men. While I did not explicitly ask, I sensed that these pictures were placed in the YETPs as visual reminders of ACB success for the young men.

I also used participant observation during one-on-one interviews with the participants (ACB young men, YETP counsellors, employers and funders). During these interviews, I paid close attention to body language, particularly eye contact. Considering the study objective of understanding the lives of marginalized young Black men and their relationship with YETPs, it was important for me to understand the level of sincerity from the participants who were not part of the youth category. I was interested to know if they were comfortable speaking about these young people, not to exploit their vulnerabilities, but to provide information in ways that could help better the employment outcomes for young ACB young men. For instance, when speaking with two of the white YETP counsellors, one in Montreal and the other in Toronto, I took note that when speaking about ACB young men they seemed to break eye contact at times and provide quick answers. Conversely, ACB YETP counsellors in all three cities sustained eye contact with me and appreciated the opportunity to describe the barriers that ACB young men experience when they seek employment. Many of the ACB YETP counsellors mentioned their desire to have their real name and the name of their organization revealed to ensure that their stories were told to the public. Their conviction verified that they were not only sincere, but strongly desired better employment outcomes for marginalized ACB male youth. The use of participant observation furthers the collection of a wide range of data. In the present study, observation allowed me to address social concerns that could be more difficult to obtain through directly questioning participants (Aktinson & Hammersley, 1998).

Taking field notes while completing participant observation is an important part of data collection. Alongside participant observation, field notes act as a secondary method for data
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collection, providing assistance in telling the story that the study sets out to tell (Wolfinger, 2002). My research notes described, in greater detail, the events that occurred during the interviews. The notes allowed me to remember situations that occurred during data collection, which helped in data analysis for this study. As such, participant observation and field notes act as additional research tactics that “systematically and comprehensively describe everything that happened during a particular period, such as a single trip to the field” (Wolfinger, 2002, p. 90).

**TABLE: ACB male youth participant table**

*Legend –*

(I)= Conducted interview   (F)= Focus group participant

(w)= West Toronto   (e)= East Toronto

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Age range</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Employment status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Charles (F)</td>
<td>16 – 19</td>
<td>Montreal</td>
<td>Still in progress to finish high school</td>
<td>In YETP program/Seeking employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ray (F)</td>
<td>16 – 19</td>
<td>Montreal</td>
<td>Still in progress to finish high school</td>
<td>In YETP program/Seeking employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allen (F)</td>
<td>16 – 19</td>
<td>Montreal</td>
<td>Still in progress to finish high school</td>
<td>In YETP program/Seeking employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zion (F)</td>
<td>18 – 25</td>
<td>Montreal</td>
<td>Not completed high school</td>
<td>In YETP program/Seeking employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christopher (I)</td>
<td>18 – 25</td>
<td>Montreal</td>
<td>Completed high school</td>
<td>In YETP program/Seeking employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taffari (I)</td>
<td>18 – 25</td>
<td>Montreal</td>
<td>Completed high school</td>
<td>In YETP program/Seeking employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kevin (I)</td>
<td>18 – 25</td>
<td>Ottawa</td>
<td>Not completed high school</td>
<td>In YETP program/Seeking employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kobe (I)</td>
<td>16 – 19</td>
<td>Ottawa</td>
<td>Completed high school</td>
<td>In YETP program/Seeking employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adrian (F)</td>
<td>18 – 25</td>
<td>Ottawa</td>
<td>Completed high school</td>
<td>In YETP program/Seeking employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tim (F)</td>
<td>18 – 25</td>
<td>Ottawa</td>
<td>Completed high school</td>
<td>In YETP program/Seeking employment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The size of the sample with YETP counsellors, employers and funders was 21 participants. These participants did one-on-one interviews only. The three sets of sample participants were selected from Toronto, Ottawa, and Montreal. Although accessing participants was generally easy, I did encounter difficulties engaging with employers in Ottawa. While I was able to access three employers in Toronto and Montreal, I was only able to access two employers in Ottawa. However, it is reasonable to conclude that these two employers still provided beneficial data. My aim for the study was to interview a funder in each of the cities, but I was only limited to two funders (Toronto and Ottawa). I was unsuccessful meeting with a funder in Montreal. After many attempts trying to set up a meet and greet with a few Montreal funders, I did not receive replies to my email or phone calls. The tabular summary below contains information about YETP counsellors, employers and funders. Pseudonyms are used to conceal their identities.
TABLE: YETP Counsellors / Employers / Funders

*Legend –

\[(e) = \text{West Toronto} \quad (w) = \text{East Toronto} \quad (m) = \text{Male} \quad (f) = \text{Female}\]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Age range</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Race/ Ethnicity</th>
<th>Employment status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fabiola (f)</td>
<td>30-35</td>
<td>Montreal</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>YETP Counsellor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anita (f)</td>
<td>45 +</td>
<td>Montreal</td>
<td>African descent</td>
<td>YETP Counsellor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jason (m)</td>
<td>45 +</td>
<td>Montreal</td>
<td>African descent</td>
<td>YETP Counsellor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jhennel (f)</td>
<td>30-35</td>
<td>Montreal</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>YETP Counsellor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jackie (f)</td>
<td>30-35</td>
<td>Ottawa</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>YETP Counsellor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dailene (f)</td>
<td>25-30</td>
<td>Ottawa</td>
<td>Arab</td>
<td>YETP Counsellor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julia (f)</td>
<td>45 +</td>
<td>Ottawa</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>YETP Counsellor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dalton (m)</td>
<td>45 +</td>
<td>Ottawa</td>
<td>African descent</td>
<td>YETP Counsellor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William (m)</td>
<td>30-35</td>
<td>Toronto (w)</td>
<td>African descent</td>
<td>YETP Counsellor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jackson (m)</td>
<td>30-35</td>
<td>Toronto (e)</td>
<td>African descent</td>
<td>YETP Counsellor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julez (f)</td>
<td>30-35</td>
<td>Toronto (e)</td>
<td>African descent</td>
<td>YETP Counsellor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sean (m)</td>
<td>30-35</td>
<td>Toronto (e)</td>
<td>African descent</td>
<td>YETP Counsellor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dwight (m)</td>
<td>30-35</td>
<td>Toronto (e)</td>
<td>African descent</td>
<td>Employer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justin (m)</td>
<td>30-35</td>
<td>Toronto (w)</td>
<td>African descent</td>
<td>Employer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim (m)</td>
<td>45 +</td>
<td>Ottawa</td>
<td>African descent</td>
<td>Employer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craig (m)</td>
<td>30-35</td>
<td>Ottawa</td>
<td>African descent</td>
<td>Employer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rohan (m)</td>
<td>30-35</td>
<td>Montreal</td>
<td>African descent</td>
<td>Employer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norma (f)</td>
<td>30-35</td>
<td>Montreal</td>
<td>African descent</td>
<td>Employer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexa (f)</td>
<td>45 +</td>
<td>Montreal</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Employer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christine (f)</td>
<td>30-35</td>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>African descent</td>
<td>Funder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joan (f)</td>
<td>45 +</td>
<td>Ottawa</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Funder</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
After reaching the 41-participant mark for the study, I heard similar themes from individuals, indicating that I had reached data saturation.

3.14 Data Analysis & Key Findings

Data analysis of the present study utilized a thematic analysis technique. This type of analysis purposely pays attention to “themes or patterns, and in relation to different epistemological and ontological positions” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 77). The study made sense of what the participants discussed, while accounting for subjective and intersubjective perspectives. Throughout the analysis, I also took note of the social and organizational arrangements that “invite, permit, or inhibit” (Hong et al., 2011, p. 886) ACB male youth from receiving services that work towards increasing their economic development.

Analyzing the data was an exciting part of this study. Listening to recorded data allowed me to gather new insights that I may have missed during interviews, such as the tone and pitch of vocalizations. I used Nvivo 12 qualitative data analysis software to upload and code the data. Using Nvivo, I was able to code for multiple themes, which helped to keep data organized. The following broad themes arose and they are discussed and explored sequentially in the coming chapters: 1) The anti-Black racism and gender-biased ideologies in formal education that lead to missed learning outcomes and stunt social development, 2) YETP counsellors being up against neoliberal logic that interferes with the type of support offered to ACB male youth in their program; 3) counsellors and employers sharing the social oppression of youth when supporting their social development, and 4) The insensitive cultural approach which promotes white settler colonial social discourse. Participants raised these four themes many times during both one-on-one interviews and focus groups.
3.15 Conclusion

In conclusion, this research allowed me to study and recognize the lived experiences of ACB male youth as they struggle to seek and sustain employment using YETPs. The research set out to understand how the identities of marginalized, young ACB men shape the barriers and facilitators they face when using YETPs to gain employment. The methods I selected for this project allowed me to answer my research questions and uncover multiple novel themes. The present study identified a need for marginalized ACB young people to speak their truth, and for broader society to refrain from homogenizing ACB youth experiences. The methods used in this study allowed the ACB young men and other participants to be vulnerable and share their stories without feeling a sense of exploitation. In the following chapter I discuss how whiteness as a social discourse shapes and influences Canadian social practices. I also discuss how whiteness as a social discourse penetrates all of Canadian society, including the social practices of YETPs.
Chapter Four: Whiteness & Canada’s Colonial History & Present

As a social construct and social ideology, whiteness shapes and influences the social practices of Canadians, penetrating all Canadian society, including YETPs for marginalized ACB young men. Understanding whiteness as a concept allows us to make sense of the barriers faced by marginalized young ACB men. Along with the concept of whiteness, this section will outline the historical and current implications of colonization in Canada, Canada’s connection to slavery, and how historical narratives of masculinity have shaped the image of ACB masculinity in this country. In this chapter, I demonstrate that present-day assumptions about Black masculinity are rooted in historical colonial narratives. As such, marginalized ACB male youth are subjected to stratification derived from historically defined Black masculinity. These historical scripts for masculinity continue to marginalize ACB male youth and complicate their employment opportunities.

The colonial practices carried out by white European settlers in the nation-state we call Canada were intentionally crafted to punish and conquer those who were non-white, or non-European. As a nation, Canada was built on the subjugation of and colonial violence directed against Indigenous peoples, coupled with the enslavement of people of African descent, and the exploitation of other racialized groups (such as Asians and South Asians). The oppression of Black and Indigenous populations in Canada served as a vehicle to exalt white European colonizers as Canada’s national subjects, the only people ennobled with humanity (Thobani, 2007). As Thobani (2007) argues, this construction of the exalted Canadian subject precluded a reciprocal relationship with Indigenous peoples within Canada. As a result, Indigenous peoples were forced to move to “territories and lands created for them by the colonizer,” (Cannon &
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Sunseri, 2018, p. 33). For white colonial settlers, this displacement also served to create the “Other,” against which white superiority could be measured (Thobani, 2007).

Othering those who are not white European people created a binary between colonists and the colonized (Cannon & Sunseri, 2018). The term ‘Other’ describes how white settler colonists defined people who were not white Europeans, fixing them in a subordinate state. Cannon and Sunseri (2018) argue that othering is “used to refer to the creation of an us/them binary, where normality is understood in the “us” and the abnormality, sub-humanity, or inferiority is understood as belonging to “them” – the Other” (p. 257). Thobani (2007) points out that the white European Canadian settler worldview desires “to limit the Other’s access to the much-coveted nationality it organizes” (p. 21). Limiting access among the Other ensures power remains with the nation’s white subjects, facilitating white people’s access to land, employment, education and the full spectrum of social entitlements (Thobani, 2007). Consequently, the labelling of non-white people as Other ensures favouring of the white settler within the colonial conquest of Canada, paralyzing the social mobility of racialized Canadians.

4.1 White Settler Social Discourse

Within the Canadian nation-state, the white settler colonists set the tone of behaviour and communication that was deemed acceptable. After the arrival of white European colonial settlers, norms within the Canadian nation-state were fashioned to benefit their political, economic, and social way of life. As Razack (2002) argues, the Canadian nation-state is built on the foundation of “white settler society” (p. 257), created on non-European soil at the expense of Indigenous peoples. Ultimately, the actions of white settlers were justified through the measures of colonialism. Jiwani (2011) argues that Canada’s “historical formation has undoubtedly shaped the way in which the state continues to stratify groups in the interests of maintaining a
hierarchical structure of power and privilege” (p. 4). The white settler colonists intentionally created a society where white supremacy functions as an invisible social discourse, dictating how people experience whiteness. Whiteness stays invisible and undetected as the reason for why and how the Canadian nation-state is defined. As such, white settler thought has been configured in the “social and natural qualities” that mark “much racial thinking” (Goldberg, 1993, p. 26).

As a social discourse, whiteness has been normalized in Western civilizations (Ahmed, 2007). Specifically, Ahmed (2007) notes that whiteness not only disappears, but it becomes concrete, shaping our thinking and behaviour as we practice whiteness in our daily social settings. For instance, whiteness as a racial category that established the foundation of Canada as a nation-state, can influence the body, inhabiting how we operate socially within the confines of whiteness (Ahmed, 2007). Similarly, Frantz Fanon (1967a) discusses how the white European way of living seeps in through fashion, literature, writing and many other forms of social discourse, influencing how people align themselves with whiteness unconsciously. Consequently, the white settler colonial discourse is inherited by all races and ethnicities within the colonized Canadian nation-state.

Historically within the Canadian nation-state, white supremacy has resulted in the marginalization and oppression of racialized Canadians, to a point of normalization. Today, as for many years past, the covert2 stature of institutionalized racism has empowered white Canadians, as it bestows power and privilege among them while subordinating the Other. Historian Timothy Stanley has studied the history of racist discourses and how they serve to exclude racialized Canadians from the social benefits of the state. Stanley (2014) argues that “Canadian historiography underplays the significance of racisms in shaping Canada,”

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2 The term “covert” is being used to illustrate how racism is disguised in Canada.
highlighting that racist discourse presents present-day inequalities as “individual moral failings or expressions of the prejudices of the age, all the inevitable result of difference, their devastating consequences largely ignored” (p. 29). In mainstream Canadian society, the covert nature of discrimination against non-white Canadians suggests that racial discrimination is non-existent, something that does not take place in the Canadian nation-state. Stanley (2014) suggests that racial discrimination has been historically manufactured and used to rule over people who are not white European settlers. For example, little is known about how the first Prime Minister of Canada, John A. Macdonald, segregated and oppressed racialized Canadians. We do know that Macdonald excluded the Other from achieving full Canadian citizenship, and that “he personally introduced biological racism into Canadian state formation and used it to define Canadianness. Biological racisms depart from older racisms by constructing allegedly natural, immutable and inescapable racial categories” (Stanley, 2014, p. 29). Stanley (2016) mentions that Macdonald revoked the right to vote in Canadian elections from Chinese men, reasoning that Chinese men were biologically different, posing a threat to white Canadian society. Today, this normalized racism lives on in Canada through discriminatory policies and social practices.

4.2 Colonization

In its classical sense, colonization involves “the control and exploitation of the majority of a nation by a minority of outsiders” (Blauner, 1969, p. 395). Eva Mackey (2002) notes that “from the early days of Canadian historical writing, historians liked to portray the colonisers of Canada as more generous than those of the USA” (p. 25). This narrative serves as “a push to construct a settler national identity perceived as innocent of racism” (Mackey, 2002, p. 25). Colonization in the Canadian nation-state normalizes "violence that renders it invisible, or visible
only under certain conditions” (Jiwani, 2011, p. 9), resulting in the exploitation of colonized peoples through a racist and discriminatory discourse which scarcely receives publicity (Bannerji, 2000). In other words, the process of colonization and white settler dominance is not only exploitative, but serves to control its own narrative, masking colonial practices as mythical.

The stronghold colonization has on the colonized ensures that they obey and fit into the social system which it has created. Fanon (1963) argues that colonization “is a systematized negation of the other, a frenzied determination to deny the other any attribute of humanity,” and that “colonialism forces the colonized to constantly ask the question: ‘Who am I in reality?’” (p. 182). The delusion created among the colonized convinces them to question their social reality within the confines of colonization. According to Fanon (1963), the colonial process can cause a delusional impact on the colonized, invariably causing “a vulnerability virtually visible to the naked eye” (p. 184). For example, Fanon notes that as a result of social systems including religion, colonized peoples hold misbeliefs about the extreme harms of colonization. Fanon (1963) states that religion enables a form of fatalism that “relieves the oppressor of all responsibility since the cause of wrong-doing, poverty, and the inevitable can be attributed to God” (p. 18). Thus, among other social facets, religion impacts the thinking of the colonized, creating and maintaining the belief that the colonist is not to be blamed for social oppression.

4.3 ACB People & The Canadian Nation-State

Within the Canadian nation-state, colonization interacted with systems of slavery to negatively impact people of African descent. Afua Cooper (2007) has documented the enslavement of ACB people in Canada, highlighting that against a backdrop of colonization, they were made to contribute to building the Canadian nation-state in its early days. Cooper attests that the slavery that occurred in Canada is a relatively unknown topic. Dating back to the mid-
1700s (at that time the country was a British colony, following British laws), many African people died as a result of violence and neglect during their enslavement in Canada (Cooper, 2007).

The commonly held notion that slavery did not exist in Canada speaks to an erasure of the horrific and brutal historical realities that many Black Canadians faced. Alongside Cooper, Barrington Walker (2012) notes that the enslavement of people of African descent in Canada was real and motivated by the same political impetus that shaped Canada in the image of the white European settler. Despite the fact that slavery did take place in Canada, many Canadians remain unaware of it and the social impacts that people of African descent faced, alongside other colonized peoples. Although the harsh conditions of slavery experienced by Black people in the United States were different, for example, by forcing reproduction for the purpose of enslaving young Black children, Canada still invoked its own set of rules to mistreat African slaves. Not only were slaves in this country stripped of their human rights, but they were also treated as the property of slave masters, similar to furniture and land (McRae, n.d.). In the Canadian nation-state, people of African descent were used to create and maintain the white European vision of the world.

Indentured servitude was also used against Black Canadians to promote European expansion, done so under the conditions of so-called free labour because white Canadian Loyalists defined them as “servants.” This terminology made it difficult to distinguish what terms of agreement were established between slave owners and “servants.” According to McRae (n.d.), in order to control and define the African slave, there were contracts drawn between the slave master and the enslaved. McRae (n.d.) contends that “under the system of indentured servitude, individuals signed a contract committing to perform unpaid labour for a set number of
years in exchange for transport, shelter and food” (para. 10). Despite some recognition of trade between slave owners and enslaved Africans, there was no monetary compensation for their labour. In *The Delectable Negro*, Vincent Woodard et al. (2014) uses the word consumptive “as a modifier, as in ‘consumptive rituals’ and ‘consumptive practices’” (p. 18). Woodard et al. (2014) point to the word consumption as having “something to do with the word’s rootedness in modern notions of market economies, commodities, consumer appetite, and so forth” (p. 18). The authors discuss how Black men and boy slaves were consumed as a delicacy among white slave owners and coveted for their hard, mundane labour.

Whiteness as an ideology sets prevailing rules of reason, and a standard of logic, which stipulates a racialization of Black humanity within the confines of the white colonial authority. Black Canadians and their humanness are framed as ‘different,’ whereby the white authority evokes “feelings, attitudes and emotions and it mobilizes fears and anxieties in the viewer, at deeper levels than we can explain in a simple, common-sense way” (Hall, 1997, p, 226). By mobilizing a doxa about Black humanness, white ideology disrupts Black people’s ability to belong within the colonial reality. This dominance results in a “continued denial of inclusion within the Canadian society” (James et al., 2010, p. 70). Denying the inclusion of Black humanness creates an inferiority complex among Black people (Fanon, 1967a). Fanon (1967a) argues that “inferiorization is the native correlative to the European’s feeling of superiority. Let us have the courage to say: It is the racist who creates the inferiorized” (p. 73). Under a white, colonial ideology, Black humanness is universally defined as the other, a devaluation of their humanness. Black people are convinced that their humanness is not equal to white humanness. The white dominance that stipulates and defines the meaning of Black humanness is a dangerous
concept, and is crucial to the continued exaltation of whiteness and dehumanization of Black people (Hall, 1997).

4.4 Males of African Descent & Slavery

It was the white ruling class in the eighteenth and nineteenth century who consumed the labour power of Black male slaves to build their capitalist economy in North America, particularly in the United States of America (Woodard, 2014). For African male slaves, labour included enforced continuous lifting of heavy farm items to facilitate farming practices. In contrast to female slaves of African descent, male slaves were positioned as sources of brute physical force, carrying out the slave owner’s needs both “on and off slave plantations” (Woodard, 2014, p. 6). The consumption of African men and boys’ labour by slaveowners defined Black masculinity as aligned with and inseparable from labour-intensive work. Even though white colonists despised the Black male slave, they still selfishly cherished the slave for the work they conducted. The colonist both disdained and subordinated, as well as marvelled at the brute strength of Black men who were viewed as no more than an animal, an ox to do heavy lifting. The appreciation many slave masters held for the Black male slave derived solely from the subordination and exploitation of their masculinity, which benefitted the white slave owner.

The use of African male slaves was essential to the establishment of capitalism and its socioeconomic system grounded in the means of production and private ownership in the colonies. Capitalism, as Cedric Robinson (2000) suggests, is comprised of social, cultural and political ideologies that are formed by European thought. African men and women were exploited to create the industrial system that formed the basis of capitalism. As such, slaves received less social recognition and no monetary payment, and were viewed as merely commodity-producing labour (McMichael, 1991). Slaves held labour-intensive jobs such as
domestic servants and farm workers. Essentially, farming benefitted not only the slave master, but also the international colonial system, which was tied to a political monopoly that was responsible for manufacturing and circulating commodities (McMichael, 1991).

During the colonial Canadian slave era, Black manhood meant taking orders from white colonial slave masters and never giving orders to members of the white colonist group. Black masculinity was tied to colonization and was effectively imprisoned. Fanon (1967a) identifies an inferiority complex among Black men tied to colonization. If the Black man “forgets his place, if he thinks himself equal to the European, then the European becomes angry and rejects the upstart, who on this occasion and in the “exceptional instance” pays for his refusal to be dependent with an inferiority complex” (Fanon, 1967a, p. 74). Fanon (1967a) points not only to how Black manhood was subordinated in the gaze of the white colonist, but also how the Black male was forced to practice the subordinate behaviour continuously. If a man of African descent attempted to transform and challenge the masculinity that was fashioned for him, he was quickly reminded to re-subordinate himself in order to appease the white colonist.

Colonization robs the Black man of his autonomy while reminding him that he is beneath the white male. During slavery, men of African descent were required to act in complete servitude to white colonists in order to disprove their savagery. As an example, the first documented young African male slave in Canada, Oliver Le Jeune, was bought by a white slave owner and arrived in the early 1600s. According to Dorothy Williams (2020), Le Jeune was asked by white slave owners if he wanted to be baptized so that he could be Christian like his owners. However, Le Jeune mistook what was being asked of him, and thought that the slave master wanted Le Jeune to transform his skin from Black to white. The priest and his wife who performed Le Jeune’s baptism documented that Le Jeune “also asked whether we would flay him during the baptismal
cere: he must have been truly afraid, because he had seen poor savages flayed.

Furthermore, when he saw us laughing […] he replied in the gibbering patois, “You say that through baptism, I will become like you: I am Black and you were white, so you will have to flay my skin so I become like you” (Williams, 2020, para. 4). Here, we realize that Le Jeune was not concerned about becoming white but was worried about the process of whitening his skin itself. Le Jeune’s fear was connected to the real possibility of being abused or even brutally murdered at the hands of white slave owners in the process of whitening his skin. As per the historical documentation, the priest and his wife laughed at Oliver Le Jeune’s mistake, “and seeing he had been mistaken, he laughed along with us” (Williams, 2020, para. 5). Williams (2020) notes that following that miscommunication, Le Jeune was baptized in Christianity. Oliver Le Jeune did not whiten his skin, but he was baptized like his white slave masters. For Oliver, this meant aligning with whiteness in order to avoid the infliction of pain, and ultimately, to stay away from the brutal physical aggression that many men of African descent encountered during slavery. This example illustrates that “when Blacks make contact with the white world a certain sensitization action takes place. If the psychic structure is fragile, we observe a collapse of the ego. The Black man stops behaving as an actional person. His actions are destined for ‘the Other’ (in the gaze of the white man)” (Fanon, 1967a, p. 132).

4.5 Free but Still Enslaved

After Britain’s abolition of slavery in Canada in 1834, it was against the law to buy or sell slaves (Williams, 2020). However, people of African descent encountered a different type of social oppression in the Canadian colony. The abolition of slavery only prohibited the sale or purchase of African people, shifting how Black people experienced discrimination and social oppression in Canada. Robyn Maynard (2017) argues that Black Canadians’ “freedom remained
elusive even in the absence of formal bondage. Whether formally bonded or emancipated, Black life in Canada was subject to intensive economic, political and social devaluation” (p. 27). White colonists despised the existence of freed Black people, openly demonstrating their hatred for the new social condition of Blacks through the creation of social, political, and economic barriers for Black people in Canada. Maynard (2017) argues that “slavery […] created particular meanings of what it meant to be Black- meanings that were attached to Black people’s bodies” (p. 31). Optically, Black people and their skin elicited a sense of loathing among the white settler-colonists, who attributed negative stereotypes to Blackness. Such attributes included, “subservience, criminality, lack of intelligence and dangerous” (Maynard, 2017, p. 31). These stereotypical negative characteristics persisted beyond slavery and have continued to present day.

Economic opportunities for Black men in Canada continued to be extremely limited after the abolition of slavery. Some scholars have explored the experiences of Black men who worked as sleeping car porters in the mid 1800s and the exploitation of their bodies for cheap labour. Agnes Calliste (1987) argues that “whites monopolized the higher paid positions (for example, sleeping car conductor and dining steward) and restricted Blacks to portering” (p. 2). Further, Calliste (1987) explains that this “was a result of market conditions (i.e., the need for cheap labour) and institutional racism” (p. 2). Black male porters acted as “cooks and waiters” (Calliste, 1987, p. 2), serving white train riders during transit across Canada (Foster, 2019). In order for Black men to retain their cheap labour jobs, they had to pretend to be happy while being sleep deprived (Foster, 2019). Their survival depended upon masking their pain and frustrations due to the deplorable job conditions. Thus, the Black male was exploited, and the general idea of their manhood was “dehumanized at any moment, given the disposition of those who encounter” them (Curry, 2017, p. 28).
4.6 Of Which Black Men Do You Speak?

Although many Black males suffered at the hands of white colonists and the system of white supremacy, a socioeconomic divide began to separate Black men from one another. Some Black men found economic opportunity through entrepreneurship or working for white-run organizations, which paid them enough to gain a sense of social respectability. However, at all levels of economic attainment, they still received lower earnings compared to their white male counterparts (Grodsky & Pager, 2001). Some Black men were able to pursue and obtain an education once the opportunity existed, allowing them to advance their careers through academia. Sociological studies in the United States, which also hold relevance in Canada, as early as the 1970s recognized that Black men “find themselves on the negative side of social statistics in the area of health, employment, education, income, etc.” (Staples, 1978, p. 170). This same study links Black men’s economic performance with their masculinity, noting that Black men face “institutional racism and environments which often do not prepare them very well for the fulfillment of masculine roles” (Staples, 1978, p. 170). The anti-Black racism encountered by Black men seeking to integrate into white settler reality caused them to feel “socially castrated, insecure in their male identity, and lacking in a positive self-concept” (Staples, 1978, p. 170). This lack of self-esteem and confidence left many Black men in marginalized positions, struggling to obtain respectability even among their fellow Black people. This new social reality among Black men created what Staples (1978) has coined “the insider-outsider dichotomy in selecting reference groups as guides for the expected level of achievement” (p. 172). Black males measured themselves among one another in order to determine “their worth by the achievement of others within their own culture” (Staples, 1978, p.172). In so doing, Black men who were positioned to strive for better social outcomes in comparison to their Black male counterparts
were able to use the lower socio-economic status of others to boost their social status, while marginalized Black men who lacked opportunity to make things better for themselves were socio-economically left behind.

### 4.7 Homogenizing the Black Identity in Canada

In this section, I explore the concept of Blackness within Canada, beginning with a discussion of how white settler colonial discourse has set parameters on Blackness, and, in particular, has generated a perception of the homogeneity of Blackness. I consider the similarities between Canada and other nations that sustain anti-Black racism within the nation-state. I discuss how Canada tolerates Black people, while socially constructing their identities as “visible minorities,” which in turn invisibilizes their lived experiences. The homogenization of Black Canadians defines them as Other, erasing their histories and contributions to Canada. I explain how Blackness as a racial category functions in Canada and how this social understanding impacts ACB Canadians, including marginalized young Black men.

Whiteness has been used to define Blackness, in Canada and elsewhere. The many intersections of identity that make up the humanness of white people, including gender, sexuality, social class, and ability, do not apply to people of African descent in the gaze of whiteness. Dei and James (1998) explain that “difference is a site of power. But, more importantly, difference is an important location for understanding the relational dynamics of power” (p. 93). Omitting the social differences among Black people not only limits their social currency, but it also dismisses any aspect of identity beyond Blackness (Harney & Moten, 2013). Homogeneity strips Black people of the opportunity to retain any form of power in the white colonized world, disallowing the many intersecting aspects of identity that make up their humanity.
Based on the “common sense” logic of white supremacy, Black people are portrayed as inferior and insignificant, erasing their existence and contributions to the white world. The negative and derogatory positioning of people of African descent is associated with “powerful common-sense meanings” (Gilroy, 1987, p. 16), which are normalized in Western societies. The societal norms that are placed on Black people associate Blackness with material disadvantage, expressed through extreme cases of marginalization, police brutality, and barriers to education and employment opportunities (Curry, 2017). As outlined in the previous section, these beliefs and stereotypes about Black people have historical roots but sit comfortably in our contemporary society and continue to pose challenges for people of African descent in colonized white settler nation-states. This homogenization of Blackness and the resulting stereotypes have led to, amongst other consequences, the over-policing of Black folks. For instance, there are numerous examples of white people contacting law enforcement arbitrarily to complain about law-abiding Black people. In 2018, a Black man who was looking after white children encountered a run-in with police because of a white woman’s wrongful assumption about the Black man “driving around with two white children” (The Associated Press, 2018, para. 4). Under the gaze of white supremacy, all Black people are tied to an everlasting association with slavery and a need to be policed (Fanon, 1963).

Marginalized ACB young men from low-income areas encounter a high rate of police harassment. Blauner (1969) suggests that police harassment of Black men intentionally restricts the mobility of Black people, as internal colonized subjects, keeping them inside the ghetto and problematizing their movement outwards. For example, in 2021, the Toronto Star reported that young Black people who reside in low-income areas, such as Toronto Community Housing Communities (TCHC), are aggressively targeted by police. Black youth routinely encounter
Toronto police officers who treat them without dignity and invade their privacy (Gibson, 2021). In this example the police represent “the key agents in the power equation as well as the drama of dehumanization” (Blauner, 1969, p. 404). The police are, according to Blauner (1969), doing “the dirty work for the larger system by restricting the striking back of Black rebels to skirmishes inside the ghetto” (p. 404). Marginalized young ACB men who reside in contemporary ghettos encounter internal colonial exploitation within the Canadian nation-state, negatively impacting their ability to survive and ultimately positioning their bodies as inferior to young white Canadian men.

The social construction of Blackness was meant to demonize people of African descent, but Black people continue to strive to change the perception of Blackness. Over the years, Black people recognized they were required to take accountability for changing the narrative about Blackness within the confines of the white world. The likes of Frantz Fanon and Malcolm X have pushed the agenda of Blackness towards empowerment, pride, and self-love. Black activists, advocates, and scholars like Garvey centred their philosophy around Black-pride, which provided hope and a sense of worthiness among Black people (Skyers, 1982). Further, “it was Garvey’s firm belief that a movement erected on a solid foundation of black pride would wield black people everywhere into a united front, thus giving them the power to liberate their race” (Skyers, 1982, p. 1). Along with Garvey’s desire to empower Black people, it was important for Black people to believe that their humanness was on par with the humanity of others, including white people, and that the world belonged to everyone (Fanon, 1963). Malcolm X spoke to liberate American Black people with words of empowerment, his message reaching far beyond the United States. Malcolm X (1965) recognized that Black people were learning to “be proud they were Black,” having “learned to love other Black people instead of being jealous
and suspicious” (p. 121). The Black pride movement was a counterattack against white supremacy, intended to liberate Black people from white supremacist ideology, which influenced people of African descent to both accept that Blackness was created by white supremacy, and recognize how whiteness continues to oppress Black people. (X et al., 1965).

4.8 Canada & Blackness

Canada’s attitude toward Blackness is revealed through the ongoing social, economic, and political marginalization of Canadians of African descent. Black Canadians nation-wide are impacted by high unemployment rates, low socio-economic status, and overrepresentation in the criminal justice system (Mullings et al., 2016). Although Canada has selectively recognized historical contributions of Black Canadians, such as Viola Desmond, who now appears on the Canadian ten-dollar bill, anti-Black racism is an ongoing concern throughout the country. For instance, the N-word and other derogatory comments demeaning Black Canadians were recently used during a 2021 Black History Month celebration in Quebec. During the online event, “the N-word appeared on the screen” accompanied by “pornographic drawings, other derogatory words and voices making anti-black comments” (Carpenter, 2021, para. 5). Such instances are not limited to the province of Quebec. In Ontario, the N-word has been used by white university professors during their undergraduate lectures. Time and again, lecturers refuse to refrain from using the word, failing to recognize the harm it causes Black learners. Even the one professor who has publicly apologized for using the N-word in class has expressed that they are “worried the controversy has now been blown out of proportion by people taking extreme positions,” (Pfeffer, 2020, para. 1). These situations demonstrate that Blackness remains devalued nation-wide and that Black Canadians endure a racist lived reality that has been
normalized. Anti-Black racism in Canada is largely ignored, positioned as unimportant so that Canada is not held accountable for anti-Black racism (Austin, 2013).

Although the fabric of Canada is rippled with anti-Black racism, there have been, and continue to be, Black Canadians who champion against race-based discrimination. In many Canadian cities, including Montreal, Halifax, and Toronto, Black communities have organized and protested against white supremacy’s stronghold on Black Canadians (Austin, 2013). For instance, in places like Montreal, the Black community “acted autonomously and yet were also an active part of a wider movement for change that touched the lives of others around the globe” (Austin, 2013, p. 13). The movement to liberate Black people in Canada during the 1960s, for example, was in line with global protests decrying anti-Black racism (Austin, 2013).

Despite the cries in many Canadian cities to call out and dispel anti-Black racism, it was only in the early 2000s that institutions, such as the Toronto Police Service, began admitting to the existence of anti-Black racism (Mullings et al., 2016). Prior to the widespread confirmation of anti-Black racism as an issue in Canada, there have been white people in positions of power who have called it a myth. For example, in 2016, then-president of the Toronto Police Services Board, Mike McCormack, denied the existence of anti-Black racism “by framing it as a non-issue during the Ontario public consultation on carding and protest organized by Black Lives Matter Toronto” (Mullings et al., 2016, p. 35). Even though there have been situations that highlight anti-Black racism in Canada, it is more palatable for the general public to deny the existence of racism and point to the common misconception that Canada is a tolerant, colour-blind nation. Recently, Ontario Senator Lynn Beyak claimed that there is no racism in Canada (Tasker, 2019), and current Quebec Premier François Legault, “sticks to [the] position that systemic racism doesn’t exist in Quebec” (Banerjee, 2020, para. 1). Canada prides itself on
tolerance for the Other by denying the existence of racism, especially when compared to racial discrimination observed in other nations, such as the United States of America.

4.9 Conclusion

This chapter discussed how whiteness shapes and influences the social practices of Canadians, penetrating all Canadian society. This section outlined the historical and current implications of colonization in Canada, Canada’s connection to slavery, and how historical narratives of masculinity have shaped the image of ACB masculinity in this country. In this chapter, I also discussed how present-day assumptions about Black masculinity are rooted in historical colonial narratives. These historical scripts for Black masculinity continue to marginalize ACB male youth and complicate their employment opportunities. Chapters Five through Seven discuss my study’s analysis and key findings from the research.
Chapter Five: Youth Employment Training Programs & Marginalized ACB Male Youth

Youth work programs provide education and mentorship to young people, usually in after-school settings. Greater Toronto Area (GTA) YETP, Youth Employment Services (YES) mentions on their website that when a youth registers in their program they will receive “FREE counselling, training, and job placement. With a variety of programs and a close to 90% success rate, YES will help you find employment and change your life” (Youth Employment Services, n.d., para. 1). Statements such as these allude to YETPs’ drive to position themselves as institutions that increase the social capital of young people. My interpretation of statements like this is that they represent a doxic belief in the transformation of individuals’ social outcomes through hard work – the ‘pull themselves up by their bootstraps’ approach of neoliberal ideology. Through this ideology the “doxa would seem unquestionable and natural” (Bourdieu & Eagleton, 1992, p. 1). Within these YETP settings, staff reproduce this doxic understanding in their attempts to empower and educate marginalized young people, sometimes in particular ways, which I discuss in this chapter. Baldridge (2019) argues this to be a “theory of practice of supporting children and youth” (p. 8). This theory of practice assumes that YETPs are intentionally striving to better the lives of marginalized young people, and that such a goal can be accomplished merely through the efforts of youth, with the support of youth workers. Although youth are meant to benefit from this youth work theory of practice, the approach is made up of a broad group of ideologies (Kirshner & Pozzoboni, 2011). The question remains, do these YETPs recognize the “false consciousness in the sense of false notions or propositions that actually sustain unjust systems of power” (Bourdieu & Eagleton, 1992, p. 1)? This chapter focuses on the ways in which YETPs inadvertently reproduce the white settler-colonial doxa as
well as promoting the tenets of neoliberalism, which downplay racist and structural inequalities that ignore marginalized ACB young men’s lived realities. The YETP counsellors discuss how they are aware of the structural barriers facing these young people, but they are unable to resist neoliberal logic. This forces many, if not all, YETP counsellors to resort to getting youth to work hard to overcome these barriers that impenetrable. In doing so, these counsellors use the white dominance and racism to fulfill their employment development strategies to develop the young men.

5.1 The Role of YETPs

Within Canada, YETPs are supposed to integrate marginalized youth into employment, utilizing their labour-power under capitalism. Many mainstream YETPs seek to work with young people who encounter social barriers, including lower income levels, criminalization, and less educational attainment. YETPs offer marginalized ACB young men both life skills training and an opportunity to earn wages and experience working for employers. Practices of youth-centred programs such as YETPs are meant to encompass “the education, guidance, and mentorship of young people” (Baldridge, 2019, p. 8). Marginalized young people who utilize YETPs are positioned to learn new skills that are entrenched in neoliberal and capitalist ideologies. Throughout the present chapter I will discuss my time spent at various YETPs speaking with YETP counsellors and funders. In the following pages I discuss how YETPs are deeply entrenched in the doxic reality of neoliberalism, capitalism and the continuance of the white settler ideology. These processes make invisible ACB young men’s social experiences, while forcing YETP counsellors to attempt to turn these young people into good economically productive citizens. I discuss how ACB counsellors, particularly, take an invested approach to try to resolve social and economic stressors that the young men encounter. I discuss the relationship
between white counsellors in these programs and their ignorance about Black male youth in the programs. I discuss how the youth understand their relationships with the white staff, and to what extent the white staff understand these young people’s lived realities as they help them seek employment opportunities. Largely, the YETP counsellors inadvertently reproduce neoliberal logic, even when their educational practices are intended to save the Black young men from leading dangerous lifestyles.

5.2 Recognizing the Tension Of Neoliberalism

The reality for lower class marginalized ACB young men who seek services from YETPs is that they are to an extent customers of these programs. These young men are perceived to be reliant on the YETP service which feeds into neoliberalism. The assumption is that marginalized people are those who need these services to survive in the neoliberal capitalist society. The dangerous assumption feeds into a narrative that these young people need to utilize these services so that they transition into good economically productive citizens. Wacquant (2009) suggests that lower-class Black people are customers of these institutions, which ultimately aid in the neoliberal state's progression. Marginalized Black male youth, who are perceived as the urban poor, are essential to neoliberal processes. They are regulated to control their otherness and how they access social services (Teelucksingh & Galabuzi, 2009).

YETPs’ primary focus is to connect marginalized and racialized young people with employment opportunities. I found that some YETP counsellors demonstrate an ignorance about the lived experiences of marginalized ACB male youth, mainly because of how YETPs are entrenched within neoliberal logic. On the other hand, I found that a small minority of counsellors are aware of the many social characteristics that accompany the race of the youth, such as gender biases and classism. Compounded, these barriers heighten the social oppression
these young men face. For instance, when speaking with Sean, a Toronto ACB YETP counsellor, he demonstrated an awareness of the hardships and lived realities of the young men. However, he was one of only a few of the counsellors who were in the know. He mentioned,

Sean: *Many of the Black males that sign up or enrol in a program are already facing challenges to comprehend basic social skills. I’m not blaming the youth, but it is a result of their marginalized circumstance. So, for many of them that enrol in our youth employment program, it can be a waste for them because of their inability to understand what it takes to find and sustain a job.*

Here, Sean demonstrated an awareness that young people have barriers and challenges prior to entering YETPs. He also asserts, at this point, the benefit of not placing blame on these youth because they have and continue to face a white settler colonial setting which despises their existence (Fanon, 1967a). Considering the neoliberal tactics at play, youth-centred programs ultimately shift accountability for failure and concrete responsibilities to individuals (Cope & Latcham, 2009). Although neoliberal logic suggests that it is the youths’ (the individual) fault, Sean shows his awareness that it is not their fault. The reality is that many of these young men have less chances of succeeding in gaining employment if there are barriers to learning in YETPs. Also, it is beneficial to take into account that Sean identifies as an ACB male. Although Sean did not mention his race or ethnicity to make sense of what he was saying, I got a sense that his reflection was because of his closeness to the race and gender of the young men. He mentioned,

Sean: *I feel like a father figure or an uncle to these young men. Man, I remember I needed that attention when I was young, so I give right back to them. Sometimes individuals need that voice that ensures them there is an understanding and an appreciation for what they are going through.*

When I was interviewing the young men, I at times felt that I was living through their oppression, because I, as a Black man, experience anti-Black-racism and gender biases in this white settler Canadian society. Although there was an age difference between the youth and I, I
intentionally resisted the doxic notions that define these young men. I, like Sean, worked through active listening to these young men, while appreciating them as human beings without the political implications that define their marginalization and Black masculinity.

Considering many of the counsellors mention an understanding of the ACB male youth’s lived realities, it was common to hear the tensions this generated with neoliberal logic. For instance, many YETP counsellors in this study indicated they are aware of the barriers among these young men, particularly their low comprehension skills. However, it was also difficult for these counsellors to service these young people in their programs. Julia, a white YETP counsellor in Ottawa, discussed these barriers and shared her struggle to support these young people:

Julia: Many Black male youths are generally lacking skills in the area of being able to find employment. Sometimes, it is difficult to determine where I should start to help them with their employment goals in this program. Sometimes, I feel the program does not consider who they are and where they are lacking in life. It makes working with these youth difficult because I have to work against a program that is inconsiderate.

Julia’s assertion indicates her struggles to support marginalized ACB male youth’s employment development. As she mentioned, the focal point to support these young men is dim and difficult because of the design of the YETP program. The one-shoe-fits-all program design homogenizes youth and assumes that all youth can benefit from the same program design and find suitable employment. Baldridge (2019) suggests that youth programs’ successes are separate from the well-being of Black youth in their programs. The presumed success of the neoliberal ideology in these programs neglects “the structural factors that contribute to the subjugation of Black youth in schools and in larger society” (Baldridge, 2019, p. 181). There is a lack of appreciation for the systemic racist and gender-based discrimination that ACB male young people encounter, which
include multiple barriers to achieving appropriate levels of education and encountering racist employers. The reality is if the YETP staff recognise that the youth face systemic barriers, they cannot do much about that within the constraints of the YETP’s design. The misfortune is that YETP counsellors, such as Julia, find it difficult to support these young people to achieve their employment goals. The inability of Julia to provide the appropriate supports for ACB male youth’s employment development furthers the distance between these young men and employment opportunities. Many, if not all, YETP counsellors are unprepared or unsupported in YETPs to adequately help these young men because of the design of the programs. These community-based youth programs fail to understand the complex identities of marginalized Black youth who lack education and comprehension skills (Wacquant, 2009). It is as if they are setting up the young ACB men and the counsellors to enter a systematic employment search failure, where the outcome is to have counsellors not being supported nor equipped to come to the aid of these young men’s employment development. Yet, it is more important to keep up with business like practices.

As neoliberalism disallows a deep understanding of the lived realities of the young men in this study, and promotes a business-like model within YETP, many counsellors are forced to understand these young people based on what they already know about Black men in Canada. For instance, when I was speaking with Montreal YETP counsellor Jason, he explained,

Jason: *We are living in a society that has not changed its outlook on Black men. It’s still the same villainizing of Black men. I would say marginalized Black male youth that enters our program face it worse in our societies. Unfortunately, all of society kind of thinks the same about these young Black men, which is that they are useless and all they do is cause trouble. In many YETPs, outside the one I work for, do not consider getting to know these Black young men. They automatically place them in employment opportunities that use less thinking, knowing they have low comprehension levels. The reality for many marginalized Black men is that they do have low literacy levels, but it does not mean that they only deserve low-paying, labour-intensive jobs.*
Many Black male youth end up in circumstances that do not increase their social capital and are left facing limited opportunities and a denial of their humanity (Baldridge, 2019). This dangerous labelling of these young ACB men, as Jason describes it, impacts their ability to gain suitable employment, which could serve to increase their critical thinking skills. As he mentions, many marginalized ACB male youth in YETPs are routinely placed in jobs that do not require them to use critical thinking skills, partly because of their low comprehension skills. The routine practice for many YETPs to not provide support that will increase these young men’s low critical thinking skills leads to poor employment opportunities, reproducing a doxic reality for Black Canadian males. Black Canadian men are overrepresented in low-skilled, and low critical thinking occupations, making up 15.6% of workers in low-skilled occupations (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2020). The anti-Black racism and gender biases embedded within the current political economy of employment confines young Black men to marginal conditions in which they are exploited for cheap labour (Curry, 2017). In the confines of such labour, these young men are not critically engaged. Mainstream society does not contest the general idea that Black men are lazy and unintelligent and deserve to be emasculated (Curry, 2017). Based on what Jason mentioned, many YETPs operate within the confines of a racist and gender biased social reality, further promoting misconceptions about marginalized Black youth.

Although neoliberalism is a force within YETPs, many counsellors strategize ways to resist. The YETP counsellors who do resist are subjected to longer work hours and further critical thinking that is outside the scope of their employment requirements. Jackson, an ACB YETP counsellor in Toronto, offered his understanding of the social position of young ACB men that he supports,
Jackson: *Many Black males in our program mention that they faced academic challenges. Teachers did not support them, and because of that, they are not interested in learning. When I establish my relationship with many of them, we go through different post-secondary programs, and I take my time to encourage them to see value in formal learning, but it is hard to convince many of them. When I do get through to them, they respond with positives about learning. If I have encouraged them to be interested in formal education and pursue education, I do not force employment on them. It makes no sense. I lead with empowering these young Black men to be better versions of themselves, even if it means putting a pause on finding employment through our employment program to pursue school full time.*

Although I did not see Jackson’s approach in person, I think it is probably effective among the young people he works with. According to Prier and Beachum (2008), it is important for educators and social workers to have some working knowledge about Black male youth so there is an understanding of these young people’s reasons for resisting. Many “educational leaders understand where these youths’ motivations, desires and alienation lie within particular urban contexts of the social worlds they live” (Prier & Beachum, 2008, p. 520). Many Black male youth work with educators who are in opposition to support these young people with empowering educational training, which can be oppressive (Prier & Beachum, 2008). Jackson’s assertion indicates that he is working in opposition to the normative and oppressive educational framework that marginalizes these young men. YETP counsellors, such as Jackson, who do see the value in supporting marginalized ACB young men, are working to change the status quo and disrupt the doxic educational reality for ACB male youths. Jackson’s approach is in line with Wacquant’s suggestion to challenge doxa, which lies within issuing more critique and critical questioning (Patrick, 2013; Wacquant, 2009). The approach restores human sensibility in learning, whereby education can be reimagined, so that people who are marginalized can lead meaningful lives and gain a sense of positive wellbeing (Patrick, 2013).

When I asked Jason what could be done to support ACB male youth in his program, he too offered an approach which disrupts the doxic reality that these young men face:
Jason: So, we need to deconstruct that understanding of Black marginalized young men in employment programs, or at least make them see there is always another way to support these youth. It may take more time to educate and support these young men for better employment opportunities, but you and they will benefit in the end. I have bought into supporting, educating and empowering Black young men in my employment program. To buy into this model, it alleviates a quick fix to get these young men hard labour-intensive employment. Instead, the more time we take with them, we can get them in positive, life-changing and sustainable jobs. You need to speak to the Black males. You need to build trust with them. You know, or else you are going to develop them to work like machines. So, we need to help them develop their skills at their pace. That’s what I recommend.

Given these explanations from Jason and Jackson, we can conclude that ACB YETP counsellors in this study, both in Toronto and Montreal, are committed to employ more of their time and resist the doxic understanding about these young men. ACB YETP counsellors, or any counsellors of different racial and ethnic backgrounds, who choose to commit to supporting these youth are keeping in mind how to increase their social capital. Patrick (2013) suggests that educators who are shaping the intellect of individuals must therefore consider an education which is meant to increase the social capital and economic growth of the receiver of the educational training. This approach transforms the common doxic educational approach that many of these ACB men encounter, which is dismissal of their lived realities, which sustains their marginalization within mainstream society. The question still remains, how long can these YETP counsellor keep up with this type of support with the tenets of neoliberalism so deeply embedded in YETPs? Are these counsellors subjected to burnout at a faster rate in their employment? The answers to these questions did not arise in the YETP counsellors’ responses about their strategies to support ACB young men in YETP. I did, however, feel their passion and love for the opportunity to work with ACB young men. For many of these counsellors, it was these opportunities that made their work meaningful.
5.3 YETPs’ Homogenization of Black Male Youth

Within youth work settings, Blackness is seen as homogeneous, invisibilizing the complex and multifaceted lived realities of marginalized ACB youth. Failure to recognize the many axes of Black identity results in stagnant, negative stereotypes about Black men. During the present study, I found that youth work programs’ perceptions of Blackness are generally surface-level, and often omit the politics of Blackness. When speaking with white YETP counsellor Julez, I asked how YETPs consider the social, political, and economic status of low-income, young ACB men in Toronto. Julez explained,

Julez: *Well, part of the referral application asks explicitly for that population so, they are looking for someone, particularly marginalized Black men who are low income or have been involved in the criminal justice system. There are specific criteria within the employment referral process where you have to check off to see if you identify with that type of Blackness. And that’s kind of what is part of the eligibility process.*

Even though many YETPs select ACB youth facing social barriers like lower education levels and criminalization, they follow the lead of mainstream society, grouping the lived experiences of all young ACB men as homogenous. Youth programs pay “scant attention to how nativity, social class, and/or mixed-race origins may differentially impact racial group consciousness, group identification, as well as individual self-concept” (Charles et al., 2015, p. 284). The YETP counsellors I engaged with, including Julez, were aware of the political nature of YETPs. Due to the organizational structure of YETPs, counsellors are tasked to identify marginalized ACB male youth and as a result, they promote and maintain the homogenization of marginalized ACB male youth. However, Ottawa YETP counsellor, Jackie, explained an approach which embraces a heterogeneous understanding. She mentioned,

Jackie: *I understand that the Black young men I work with are marginalized and don't have equal access to employment. However, there is much more to these young people than seeing them as marginalized or criminals, which is suggested by our*
Unfortunately, many Canadian YETPs engage in “minimal exploration of what Blackness means for different segments of the Black population” (Charles et al., 2015, p. 284). The different social characteristics of marginalized Black men go beyond social class, race and ethnicity, much like Jackie explained. When discussing marginalized Black men, gender and sexual orientation are often left out of the conversation, despite their importance as social identities (Bowleg et al., 2013). The omission of an intersectional approach to understanding the politics surrounding Blackness for marginalized Black men intentionally ignores “interlocking systems of privilege and oppression (e.g., racism, sexism, classism, heterosexism) at the social structural level” (Bowleg et al., 2013, p. 2). Much like the white settler ideology within which YETPs are nestled, the programs themselves continue to frame all marginalized Black men as homogeneous.

Misconceptions surrounding the identities of marginalized ACB male youth in YETPs that fail to recognize the social oppressions they encounter, such as anti-Black racism and gender biases, may result in failure to provide meaningful support. Considering that Canada itself is founded on a white settler ideology, it is not surprising that Canadian YETPs fail to recognize how these young men’s masculinity is constructed as an unfavourable race and gender in this country. Many of the white Canadian YETP counsellors that I spoke with were unaware of the social implications of race and gender for Black youth. YETP counsellor Julia from Ottawa explained,

Julia:  

[...] as an employment specialist, it’s a professional relationship as a mentor, I guess. In terms of employment, you know an extra person that they can approach to ask questions and help find solutions, a resource person.
Although Julia attempts to maintain a professional relationship with ACB young men she serves, her assertion demonstrates an uncertainty about the relationship she has with these youth. Her mention of “I guess,” tells me that she does not know how ACB male youth feel about their relationship with her, much less if they consider her a mentor. Of course, this does not necessarily mean that Julia is a villain for not understanding whether the relationship between her and the ACB male youth is positive or not. When reflecting how Jason and Jackson explained their passion to work with ACB male youth, their conviction did not relay statements such as “I guess.” Both of those counsellors were enthusiastic and expressed their appreciation of their relationships with ACB male youth, in comparison to Julia. Her assertion does lack how she understands these youths’ feelings and thoughts about the services they receive within the YETP because her moment to describe was limited in wording and enthusiasm. Are these young men satisfied with Julia? Are the youth feeling closer to obtaining employment success when working with Julia? Ultimately, this lack of understanding on Julia’s part may lead to the unintentional omission of necessary support for young Black men to seek and sustain employment. This assertion is replete with the Canadian social discourse that limits the understanding of racialized Canadians’ lived experiences (Mackey, 2002). As such, Julia’s unintentional assertion can invisibilize ACB male youth’s experiences. As such, her approach can be perceived as ignoring the youths’ perception of how they are receiving services.

The assertion from YETP counsellor Fabiola, in Montreal, was similarly uncertain. I asked her what supports and accommodations ACB male youth require in her program. She mentioned,

Fabiola: *I think. I’m just not exactly sure what accommodations precisely. I think it’s a conversation that’s a complex issue. I think it will be interesting to look at that and see what are the best accommodations. For a short answer, yes. I think people who have experienced structural barriers and experienced a history of*
When asked to describe a situation where she discussed how Black manhood is perceived in Canada in a specific way to educate ACB male youth, she said,

Fabiola: “I can’t think of a specific situation where I have discussed that.”

The lack of insight demonstrated by Fabiola and Julez is not rooted in a desire to do harm to ACB male youth. Instead, their ignorance reflects that the culture of the YETP is rooted in Canadian white settler ideology, which is inherently inconsiderate of Black young men’s realities. The fact that both of these white YETP counsellors, from two different Canadian cities, are unable to provide insight into how they serve these youth or thoughts about their relationship with them supports the notion that racialized people’s experiences are not understood, and possibly not valued, even in the YETPs. Jiwani (2011) suggests that this practice of not considering the experiences of racialized Canadians is a standard to regulate them to the bottom of Canada’s social hierarchy. In Canada, racial biases and a sustained willful ignorance contribute to the ongoing neglect of Black Canadians’ lived experiences, resulting in harm (James et al., 2010). Marginalized ACB young men are routinely villainized due to both their race and low SES, while their lived experiences are ignored. These marginalized youth are perceived as tainted, as polluting mainstream society and requiring social services in order to join in with capitalist mainstream society (Wacquant, 2009). Consequently, there is no room in many YETPs for a deep understanding of these youths’ experiences.

5.4 The Importance of YETPs

When speaking with YETP counsellors, I started each interview by asking whether YETPs are important for young, marginalized ACB men. Universally, YETP counsellors agreed
that these programs are extremely important for Black male youth. ACB Montreal YETP
counsellor Anita explained,

Anita: I think they are extremely important. For those who do not have formal education
or have not completed high school, it’s an opportunity for them to get the foot in
the door when they are mature enough to handle it. Sometimes going to school
and having personal problems, I find many Black male youth do not finish high
school, and they drop out. When they cannot get employment independently, this
youth employment program gives them a second chance.

In Anita’s response, she spoke explicitly to why the theory of practice employed by YETPs is
important for marginalized ACB young men. In her experience, Anita highlighted that these
young men have no other option to survive in Canada’s white settler capitalist society without
employment. She sees YETPs as a vehicle to help young ACB men get their first start in
employment. Even though Anita views YETP adding value to these young men’s lives, in terms
of getting them employed, we are reminded that there is an assumption that ACB male youth,
generally, can simply insert themselves into the Canadian economy. Anita’s assertion here keeps
up with neoliberal logic. Patrick (2013) argues that “within both neoliberalism and the idea of the
knowledge economy rests a concept of each individual as being economically responsible and
“economically self-interested”” (p. 2). Earlier, we were reminded by Jason and Jackson that
many of these youth benefit from critical engagement from youth counsellors, and not a
traditional educational model. Considering this, neoliberalism functions to highlight YETPs as
an alternative when Black male youth drop out of school. When I spoke with Black YETP
counsellor Sean, he echoed Anita slightly, but he also provided more contrasting context as to
why YETPs may be a waste of time for some marginalized ACB male youth,

Sean: It is subjective to the individual that signs up or enrols themselves in a program.
It is very important, or it can be a waste of certain resources and a waste of time
for the Black male. I’ve also seen some Black male youth who enter the program
do not value the employment counsellor’s resources who are trying their best to
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*get them a job. The ACB male youth end up being warm bodies filling up a seat in the employment program.*

When I asked Sean his thoughts about whether this is a waste of the employment agency's monetary resources, he explained,

Sean: *Yes, a lot of the time, we see many Black young men come into these programs, and they spend their weeks like they are in grade 12 or grade 11. They often attend required employment training sessions, and if many of them attend, they come late. With many of them, they are just in the room, and they are not engaging. So, I have to challenge them to see the good in our program. I say to them, “you and you get paid, right? You got into the program. Now, what’s next? Are you going to sit here? Let’s say you didn’t get the right job that you wanted, or are you going sit here and use this as a vehicle to get the job you want?” So yes, these programs are important, but to say yes or no to that question, you miss the point and the essence of these young men’s experiences in these types of employment programs.*

The responses of Anita and Sean frame our understanding that YETPs are only important for a Canadian economy that is driven by neoliberalism. Even though YETP counsellors, such as Anita, are content with saying that YETPs are important, another YETP counsellor paints a vivid picture of the struggles that can occur among the young men in these programs. Anita offers us insight about how these programs are perceived as important. Woolford and Curran (2013) suggest that non-profit service providers are attuned to the conditions of neoliberalism, because these programs are dependent on its ideology to survive. The service providers embody neoliberalism while omitting concerns that can occur within the organizations, such as many ACB young men not engaging enough and showing disinterest in seeking employment. This theory of practice requires both the YETP counsellor to see value in neoliberal logic while attempting to convince the ACB male youth to see the value of employment services. It is important to pay attention to the contrast between Anita and Sean, as it is necessary to see how both of them are explaining the importance of YETPs for ACB young men. Considering the
ACB young men who enter these programs already have low comprehension levels, due to poor formal learning experiences, it is problematic for YETP counsellors, under neoliberal logic, to assume these youth will be encouraged to learn and self-motivated to seek employment. Taking from Sean, we are urged to consider that through neoliberalism, it is the utmost concern that service users are aligned with neoliberal citizenship. In doing so, the outcome and accountability for individuals is set through the relationship between the not-for-profit sector and government. (Woolford & Curran, 2013).

5.5 Avoiding the Problem

Many youth-centred employment programs in major Canadian cities, such as Ottawa, Montreal and Toronto, are situated in or close to low-income or public housing areas. Black youth are commonly associated with living in low socio-economic households compared to other Canadians (Livingstone & Weinfeld, 2015). Low-income areas in Toronto, such as Rexdale and Malvern, have high crime rates and are often considered dilapidated communities (James, 2010). Low SES communities, such as Malvern (Toronto), Vanier (Ottawa), and Little Burgundy (Montreal), are perceived to require youth work programs due to the many marginalized and racialized young people who reside in these areas. One of the barriers to employment that ACB male youth face is because of their address: many white employers refuse to hire these young men because of the neighbourhoods in which they reside. When speaking with Toronto YETP counsellor, Jackson, he explained, 

Jackson: So, half these guys are from NIAs. The acronym means New and Improved Areas. So, NIAs are low-income neighbourhoods. A majority of the Black men in our programs come from low-income communities. I am talking about Malvern, Galloway, Orton Park, Glendower, and Danzig. In many moments we instruct these young men not to write their addresses on their resumes and don't let employers know your address. This is to prevent their chances of gaining employment. I have seen employers that I work with to employ Black men reject them because of their particular
neighbourhood. It sucks for these Black youth because they are trying to work, but their address turns off the employer.

As Jackson is aware of the struggles, such as social stigma, that these young men face because of the location of their residence, he and other YETP counsellors with whom he works are compelled to seek out strategies to employ these young men. In this circumstance, it is instructing the youth to avoid writing their addresses on their resumes and avoid mentioning it to the employers. The service users are encouraged to act and respond as neoliberal citizens, which can tie them to the required outcomes for success (Woolford & Curran, 2013).

The YETP counsellors are aware of the stigma that these youth face. However, their solution is to disguise their addresses to seek ways for these young men to align with being neoliberal citizens, in an effort to employ them. The YETP counsellors’ approach does not encourage the young men to critically think about ways to respond to their marginalization, nor does their strategy raise the consciousness of the young men to be aware of the structural disadvantages they face, such as employment discrimination. The reality is that the Canadian white settler ideology discriminates against these Black youth, but also marginalizes their existence because of their low-socioeconomic circumstances. Jiwani (2011) suggests that such practices continue to confound social concerns that are rooted in racism, such as anti-Black racism, while conflating these concerns. In other words, the counsellors’ actions imply an acceptance of anti-Black racism and classism as inevitable when recommending that the young people should disguise their addresses. This strategy does not challenge the social oppression that these young people face. Instead, it sustains the social oppression they experience but in a disguised manner.

Considering Jackson’s assertion, YETPs can be thought of as sites that solve residence discrimination by employers. However, the resolution, as we learn, is not a resolution at all. In fact, it is another neoliberal tactic which masks the real concern that ACB male youth are
experiencing in these programs, which is discrimination based on their residence. As Jackson mentioned, his strategy is to omit the address from employers. This resolution is what Woolford and Curran (2013) characterize as a complete disregard for the social concerns of the service users in an effort to uphold neoliberalism within these services. This approach may successfully get a few ACB male youth employment opportunities, but it does not resolve the employment discrimination that is tied to anti-Black racism and classism, that serve as an obstacle for these youth.

When speaking with Montreal YETP counsellor, Anita, she mentioned that attempting to employ marginalized ACB males with many white employers is difficult. When I talked to Anita, she provided her solution to challenge the doxa surrounding these particular young ACB men. When she offered me her strategy, she smiled and winked at me as if she trusted me with her secret,

Anita: \textit{When I first started in youth employment, I felt I was in between a rock and a hard place. It was stressful to receive negative comments and the consistent “no” from mainly white employers.” \ldots{} “I had to adapt to the ‘nos.’ Now, I don’t present these Black men as low income. I offer them as decent citizens, as they should be seen. It’s all about perception, right.}

The reality is that YETPs face many white employers who discriminate against these young men based on their social status, particularly in this case their home addresses. Many Canadian employers' hiring practices are racist and do not give equal opportunity to African descent people. With this said, mainstream YETPs may assume that they are helping Black youth find employment. Still, their services face a white settler colonized economy that maintains anti-Black, classist, and gender-biased ideologies. In comparison to white Canadians, the Black Canadian population is disproportionately unable to access and sustain employment. As mentioned by two YETP counsellors in Toronto and Montreal, many employers subscribe to
negative biases about marginalized ACB youth. In turn, the counsellors have to trick employers, or work extra hard to locate and sustain employment for these young men.

When speaking, on separate occasions, with YETP counsellor Jhennel in Montreal and YETP counsellor William in Toronto, they discussed how they worked towards not exploiting these young men to employers. Jhennel, for instance, argued that poverty is society’s problem, not just that of the Montreal Black male youth in the YETP for which she works.

Jhennel: *We have a skewed idea of what it means to be low-income. The majority of the Black young men in our program reside in low-income areas, such as Little Burgundy. Poverty is unjust, and this is everyone’s problem that poverty exists. The advantage of running an employment program is that there is some pride that you are actually seeking a job instead of being at home.*

Jhennel’s assertion tells us that she acknowledges the marginalization to not be the fault of the ACB young men. She mentions that poverty is unjust and is everyone’s problem. Jhennel, as a YETP counsellor, appreciates the social circumstances of these Black male youth, and alludes to her working through these challenges with the young men. We gather from these YETP counsellors that employing these youth while ensuring they are meeting the organization’s requirements (placing youth into employment) is tough because of the employment discrimination they encounter from many employers. The counsellors are forced to practice non-confronting ways to address the employment discrimination among employers. Instead, these counsellors are forced to seek alternatives to address the problem. Unfortunately, the counsellors I spoke with in each of the cities, and who discussed this concern, are aware of the employment discrimination from employers, but have little options to remedy this concern. Even if the counsellor finds a solution to remedy this concern, it often comes with extra work for them.

When speaking with Toronto YETP counsellor William, he stated,
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William:  
With the employers you have to vouch for these young men. I will go above and beyond to accommodate many of these employers. I'll say to them, “you know what, what if I call you every Friday to check in with the progress of the young Black man?” So, I’ll check-in and make sure they're good. I would do extra work to communicate with the employers to ensure there are no issues. Regardless, I’ll always be here to make sure the young men are good because I have to make sure that they know that I’m here to support them and ensure the employment opportunity is stable for them.

Ottawa YETP counsellor, Jackie, also expressed the difficulty she encounters when assisting marginalized ACB young men in her YETP,

Jackie:  
These particular youth are tough to employ. It is very hard for employers to look beyond their own judgment and bias about Black young men. So, I find it challenging to work with many of these employers at times.

In all three cities, I learned from the majority of the YETP counsellors that the employers’ perception of ACB male youth who reside in low-income neighbourhoods are a reflection of them being dependent ‘losers’ in society. These areas are perceived to be inhabited exclusively by low-income residents who are racialized and/or newcomers to Canada. Between William in Toronto and Jackie in Ottawa, their attempts to seek employment for ACB young men is tied with extra work that is a result of them attempting to resist blaming the marginalizing circumstances on the ACB male youth. Although William’s attempt to resist can result in better outcomes for the youth, such as working with more sympathetic employers, he does run the risk of being unable to attend to all the ACB male youth he serves equally and efficiently.

Considering the difficulty for William and other YETP counsellors to find employment for these young men, it further means that they must extend themselves with individual employers to sell the employment services of one Black male. We have to consider that each Black male comes from different neighborhoods and have different addresses. This would also mean that the YETP counsellors focus on one youth at a time to convince employers to hire these young men. The challenge for these counsellors is that each time they attempt to pull back the veil of
neoliberalism covering the real concerns that these young men face, they must start from scratch with each employer.

Marginalized Black male youth who utilize YETPs are not taken seriously within Canada’s labour market because of general perceptions of Black youth within the white settler nation-state. Black Canadians typically face an uphill battle while seeking employment. For instance, it is reported that Black Torontonians encounter greater difficulty securing employment than white people who have a criminal record (Cruickshank, 2017). Given this sobering fact, the 14-to-16-week training program offered by YETPs, even with on-going employment mentorship, may not be enough for young, marginalized, Black men to secure employment. Bowleg et al. (2013) mention that low-income Black men experience a higher rate of racial discrimination, unemployment, incarceration and constant police surveillance than middle-or-higher-class Black men. Black men with low SES are disproportionately and unfavourably impacted by negative stereotypical assertions based on their race, gender, and social class. Due to the socially inscribed misconceptions about Black masculinity, coupled with historical understandings of what it means to be Black and male, Black men encounter more sustained hardship than any other masculine group. When socioeconomic marginalization becomes an added social reality for young ACB men, they experience an additional system of social oppression (Bowleg et al., 2013).

5.6 YETPs & ACB Young Men

Many marginalized ACB male youth do not belong to a network of people who can educate them and provide them with capital resources. For instance, formal education and positive mentorship are both forms of investment that add value to an individual’s social capital.
However, many young ACB men do not see these investments as important because they are not tangible for marginalized ACB youth.

Taking from the YETP counsellors in this study, it is the YETPs that are outlets for marginalized ACB young men to gain empowerment while recognizing the value of work. Still, in Canada’s capitalist society YETPs seek to fulfill the demand for labour-power. When speaking with ACB YETP counsellor Sean in Toronto, he mentioned things that sounded controversial and in line with neoliberal logic. He believed that, in his approach to fulfill the Canadian labour market demand, it is the young ACB men’s responsibility to take advantage of the current employment opportunities. He mentioned,

Sean:  

I always marvel at the idea of people telling me that there is not enough employment resources for youth in 2019. I hear a lot of people mention that Toronto, Ontario does not have enough employment resources for black male youth. That to me is a little comical. It's a little comical because it is the hottest topic right now, which is “you're black and you’re a youth or your black and you’re gay and or you got mental health issues so you can get employment.” I can guarantee you, if you walk into any places with these issues people will come out of the wood works to assist you and all you have to do is listen, follow the direction you’ll be good. It’s so easy to get a job these days. When our YETP is offering jobs in the community all you have to do is show up. If not our YETP then other ones are offering jobs. Come down to the assembly line because it happens every year. The problem is many of these youth screw off with their friends and go to the mall and when they only want a job when they don’t have any money.

There are multiple reasons why Sean’s assertion is problematic, and also contradictory to what he mentioned to me earlier, as his statement here about marginalized ACB male youth omits their unique sets of circumstances. Sayer (2005) mentions that marginalized people are not disadvantaged only because of how middle-class people stigmatize and undervalue their identities. It also is because low-income people lack the means and understanding to live up to the expectations of high earning people. Sean’s assertion is contradictory because he pointed to
the struggles that YETP counsellors face earlier, such as the pointlessness of trying to insert marginalized ACB young men into employment opportunities. The difficulty is rooted in the employment discrimination that these young men encounter. Now we come to know that Sean thinks it is, and should be, easy for ACB young men to access employment. His assertion leads with a neoliberal logic that suggests that ACB young men can work harder to find employment and that there are many jobs awaiting them. The clear contradiction is that Sean is aware of the barriers but then thinks the barriers are not barriers at all and the young men can access employment regardless of their marginal circumstances. The ladder of Sean’s positionality is one that is in line with neoliberal logic. In this sense, the individual is attempting to shape peoples’ intellect through educational means to develop others while adding to neoliberal economic growth (Patrick, 2013). Sean’s siding with neoliberal logic, as he mentions, is comical and he believes when Black youth are not taking advantage of the employment opportunities through YETPs they are the problem and not their marginal circumstances. As mentioned, the discrimination, such as anti-black racism, gender biases and classism that these young men face do in fact impact their employment opportunities. Sean’s assertion rejects the doxic realities about ACB male youth. Even though Sean believes the year 2019 is an indication of equity and equality among these youth he is doing so arbitrarily and is siding with the colonial regiment. Fanon (1967a) suggests that there are Black men who think they are closer to being the white man and can assert themselves fully into the colonial regiment. In doing so, the Black man begins to reject Blackness and the anti-Black racisms that are directed at African descent people. What we are learning from Sean, through his contradictory assertions, is a complete rejection of the lived experiences of the marginalized Black male youth. It is rejection of the mental trauma of dealing with the consistent badgering of anti-Black racism and gender biases, socially,
economically and politically. The reality within social service programs is that neoliberalism and
capitalism function within these spaces, but it is all manufactured and sustained by the white
settler colonial ideology (Woolford & Curran, 2013). Consequently, Sean upholds the sets of
ideas that suggest it is the fault of the individual for not thriving in the neoliberal colonial white
settler employment reality.

Other YETP counsellors provided a more compelling rationale to convince marginalized
ACB young men to embrace the Canadian capitalist society, one that did not deny their daily
experiences of anti-Black racism. For instance, Jason in Montreal justified his reasoning as being
literally a matter of saving the lives of marginalized ACB male youth. He mentioned,

Jason: Yeah employment money is not like fast money that they want. They have
to get accustomed to waiting every other week to be paid. I encourage
these youth to seek positive and legal means to make money, instead of the
illegal route. I tell them they have two options; you can make the $500 in 2
weeks and live longer, or you can make it tonight and probably die
tomorrow.

Jason justifies working with young ACB men to fulfill the demand for labour-power in the
Canadian economy, because many of the young men are susceptible to entering into an illegal
way of making money. Davis (2018) suggests that low-income Black male youth in Canadian
cities, such as Toronto, are more likely to be rappers, hustlers and gangsters. Their choice in
lifestyle is because of the social barriers these young men face, such as education attainment
barriers which come with anti-Black racism and gender biases that define these young men as
undeserving of education. These life choices, which are highly influenced by societal pressures,
can and have been dangerous life choices for these men. For instance, in 2005 Toronto was
dubbed “The Year of the Gun.” It was during that year that 52 Black young men died of gunfire.
What we can take from this is a recognition that marginalized Black male youth do in fact have
unique sets of circumstance, which Sean in Toronto did not address in his assertion. Jason in
Montreal recognizes this concern among the Black men he serves in Montreal. In this, we can consider that Jason is accepting the doxic realities of anti-Black racism, neoliberal capitalism, and settler-colonial discourses, which are tied to the troubling experiences that many marginalized male youth encounter. When speaking with Dalton in Ottawa, he spoke to the concerns surrounding the Black young men he serves. Although working with ACB young men can be challenging, he spoke of sticking it through with the young men to show them resiliency,

Dalton: *These young men are going through many social obstacles. We have to convince them to stay in the jobs. We also convince them to get rid of the idea of dropping off whenever you feel like you do not want to work, because it's too easy to drop off you know. The tendency with many of these young men is that they try it for a week and then they drop the job the week after. We're trying to teach them resilience and consistency you know.*

The irony here is that YETP counsellors’ rationale about the need to set marginalized male youth on the path towards legal and non-threatening employment opportunities is justified as an effort to save the lives of the Black male youth they serve. This justification seems to overlook the fact that funnelling young ACB men into poor-paying and labour-intensive jobs is likely to ultimately damage their health and well-being.

The logic of neoliberal capitalism fundamentally structures YETPs not only culturally (in terms of staff beliefs) but also practically and economically. When speaking with YETP counsellor William, he mentioned the funding from government or private foundations is at risk if YETPs do not commit to following neoliberal logistics which mean operating their non-profit organizations like businesses. He mentioned,

William: *I feel all the funders care about is making sure the youth are working jobs regardless of their circumstances. So, what happens is that through the funding, you now have to register the social insurance of the young person. That is how the funders know how many young people get employed, but it also informs them if the youth entered the program. If the
youth’s SIN pops up on the funder’s side, they know the number of young people in the program and the program's success rate.

William mentioned that all young people in YETP, including ACB male youth, are tracked by funders who use their social insurance numbers to manage YETP through a business-like approach. As William shares his assertion at this point, we know that the quota, through the capturing of the youth’s SIN numbers, is for funders to regulate and substantiate funding for YETPs. If YETPs do not achieve the target, they risk losing financial support from funders. This phenomenon is recognized as common within YETPs. I learned from many YETP counsellors, in all three cities, that mainstream YETPs, such as the YMCA and Youth Employment Services (YES), rarely run the risk of losing funding from multiple government levels. However, non-mainstream, smaller YETPs located in marginalized areas, such as Desta in Montreal or Careers, Education and Empowerment - Centre for Young Black Professionals (CEE) in Toronto, are at higher risk of losing funding. Often, these smaller centres are the ones focusing on Black youth and their unique sets of social, economic and political circumstances that are impacted by anti-Black racism. The risk comes as a direct result of their tailored programming, as their approach is not solely based on meeting the target for funders. In actuality, these smaller YETPs provide the social supports that marginalized ACB young men require to be successful in the white settler Canadian nation-state. Jason, who operates a Black-focused YETP in Montreal which primarily employs Black staff who reflect the ACB male youth they serve, told me about his hardships with funding,

Jason:  

All of the funds that I receive are federal funding. So that means YETP grants are open for applications, but they close when the money is all spent or revised by different government departments, such as Employment and Social Development Canada. The many times that I had to revise my applications to secure funding is ridiculous at times. The funders will attempt to hear our concerns to support youth, particularly Black males, but they always find a way to make achieving funds difficult.
Sometimes, it’s frustrating to see the directives of how we can enter the funding pool. So now, it seems like they have designed these grants with a “holistic approach” that they think will benefit. For instance, they recently announced you could bid, and you can still seek funding nationally. But, get this, you have to partner with other YETP agencies to secure the pot of money. Sometimes the politicking is too much when you are trying to do the right thing. Yes, we can operate our YETP to suit Black young men’s unique needs, but getting the grant is very gruelling and demanding, as the process takes a toll on you. The work we put in to secure the funding is sometimes more. However, any life of a young Black man we change or influence positively is good, even with the struggles of funding.

When speaking with YETP counsellor Dalton, who recognizes the need to support these youth by paying attention to their social circumstances, he mentioned,

Dalton:  

[...] Our program was designed to support the employment needs of marginalized Black youth, including young Black men. Instead of our programing focusing solely on employment, we also focused on the Black young men’s other social needs, such as providing formal education advice and mentorship, as many of them mentioned returning to school was an option for them. The funding for that employment program was cut by the Justice Department. Although it was a pilot project, I realized we were making an impact with the young men. I think we lost funding because our focus was to help these youth. This is an issue with these programs.

As mentioned by the counsellors in this study, YETPs’ main focus is to match youth with jobs and offer ACB young men employment training. Although the training is meant to last for a couple of weeks, the intent is to transition the youth into employment opportunities once the training time has expired. However, as Jason and Dalton mention, they see the need to spend more time with the ACB young men to mentor them longer, as many of them do not have positive mentorship relationships. The informal learning that YETP ACB counsellors, such as Jason and Dalton, execute goes against neoliberal ideologies in youth work programs. The YETPs, under stresses from funders, are forced to keep up with the demands of a neoliberal and capitalist society, which is to turn these youth into contributing members of the Canadian
economic society within the time frame that is offered by the funders. Woolford and Curran (2013) suggest that social programs for young people work through the challenges and hurdles set by funders. In doing so, the community programs appear to be competent in working through the barriers. Even if they are struggling to keep up with the demand of the funders, the funders expect community programs to work through the challenges, without question. These expectations are grounded in business cultures and follow capitalist neoliberal logic, which ignores the lived realities of marginalized ACB young men. One aspect of this logic is that it assumes that these young people will not face employment discrimination. The consequence for YETPs of not meeting the demands of the funders is to risk losing funding for their organizations. This impacts not only the YETP’s operations, but it can impact the counsellor’s ability to make a living. The reality is that if YETPs push back against the neoliberal and capitalist ideology of funders, they risk their ongoing existence as organizations, including the jobs of their staff. It also risks jeopardizing their ability to provide support to the marginalized ACB male youth who are in need of economic development.

This study had the opportunity to speak with funders in Ottawa and Toronto. The benefit of this was to understand the other side of the funding relationship between YETP and the funders. When I spoke with Toronto-based funder, Christine, who works with a majority of the YETPs in Toronto, she expressed awareness of the need for the YETPs to thrive in order to work towards supporting the ACB male youth in YETPs. From her positionality, Christine recognizes that additional mentorship is required for these young people’s social and political development. Christine explained,

Christine: *The program might be necessary, but they might not be configured correctly. The other thing is recruitment and retention strategies. Programs are paid for by us, and in turn, the employment programs pay youth to be in a 14,16-week program. We don't know what's happening on*
the other end with these young people. You know, it's hard to say that these programs are actually meeting the needs of young Black men particularly. When you look at the funding formula for our young people, we are spending about 12,000 bucks per kid per year. So, if you don't fit the employment program funding definition of an average investment, unfortunately, the programs are probably not going to get the funding needed.

After speaking with Christine, I realized that between the YETPs and the funders, generally speaking, there are two different outlooks about how funding is granted to YETPs. According to Christine, excluding herself, other funders are not aware of what is going on within the YETPs. They are not aware of the additional mentorship needed to run these programs. The omission of information leaves funders in the dark concerning how ACB male youth require a service that will meet their employment training needs. Also, we get an understanding of how much each youth costs the program and the funder, which is twelve thousand dollars per youth, per year. The money, per youth, is attached to funding criteria, which defines how the money should be spent per young person. A report on community programs to promote youth development by the National Research Council (2002) suggests that funding use by community programs is directly linked to the funding agency’s direction on how to spend funds. The reality is that funding and its logistical parameters impact the effectiveness of the community programs and their outcomes. In turn, the funding can affect the community program’s ability to serve marginalized young people. Although Christine sees relevance to supporting ACB male youth in their programs with the mentorship they need, unfortunately, the funders’ parameters, based on how they are defined, do not recognize the need to support the ACB male youth. The funding is set through a single model that homogenizes all youth who enter the program, disallowing a heterogeneous approach to supporting ACB male youth.
There seems to be no value to emphasizing the need to support ACB male youth by funders. In doing so, marginalized ACB male youth are left out from receiving the supports they need to address their unique employment barriers. At this point, we are compelled to recognize how neoliberalism is not only manifesting in the practical work of YETPs, but it is deeply entrenched into the administration work as well. Neoliberal ideology penetrates these youth-centred organizations, which in turn attempt to shape and mold youth for capitalism. Based on the funding model, YETPs sign up for funding, and if they win funding contracts, they must then commit to the funder’s neoliberal logic focused on producing job-ready people to drive the engine of the Canadian economy.

5.7 Stipends

Front-line staff at YETPs work as employment counsellors, focusing on coaching and mentoring young people during their job search. Youth who utilize YETPs are supposed to gain job and life skills relevant in today’s growing economy (Kluve et al., 2016). Along with coaching and training, employment counsellors are often able to provide a monetary wage to their young clients. When speaking with YETP counsellor Sean, he explained his strategies for utilizing incentives, including the stipend paid to youth who enter the program,

Sean:  
_The incentive is everything. You have to get the horse to move for the carrot, but the thing is, if there is no value on the carrot, then the horse is only going to move as much as the carrot goes, and that's it. You've got some youth that will come in, and they're like, ‘yo, I got to get into the program cause I need a job.’ And they will use it to get themself where they have to be. Then there some guys that will just come in and say ‘I’ve got to do this. I need some money. I don’t want to do much. I will come in, and I will quit that job after getting paid. I will get my eight weeks of pay, and I’m out.’ So, the importance of creating an incentive is to teach people how to overachieve. Also, I use the stipend to encourage them to push themselves and take the initiative while they are in the program. I also use the stipend to teach them how promotion works in a job and how moving up within a company operates. So, the stipend makes my_
Montreal YETP counsellor, Anita, echoed Sean’s response,

Anita: A lot of the YETP pay the youth, especially the Black young men. The stipend, which is minimum wage, allows many young men to have some money in their pocket. It provides them food, so they do not have to be hungry all day. So, they can have lunch, breakfast, and transportation. When we take on Black young men for our employment program, it’s one of the first things we set up for them.

The incentives offered by many YETPs in Ontario and Quebec are determined based on region, but often include weekly stipends for basic living needs, and may reach up to $2000.00 for completing the YETP programs. Although the stipend is not enough for these young people to live on, its use provides some means of accessing money during the youths’ transition from unemployment to employment. The purpose of being paid for employment is to not only contribute to the Canadian economy, but also as a means to provide food, shelter, and other needs and wants that sustain your well-being (Maxwell, 2002). As Sean mentioned, the stipend is the carrot to motivate these young people, but also used to educate them on how work and pay go hand in hand.

YETP counsellors perceive some youth as taking advantage of the stipend, and only showing up to YETPs for the incentive. When following up with Sean, he mentioned,

Sean: I use it to teach them employment skills. I have seen the opposite. I have witnessed employment agencies promote the stipend as right, and in doing so, the youth treat it as a paycheck. In those circumstances, the employment counsellor, whoever does that, not me, creates dependant drones out of these Black men. In those circumstances, the Black males perceive the employment program as a program they only get money from and no social skills training.

Taking from Sean’s assertion, the stipend can also be used as money to force the young men to align with the neoliberal mandate. The neoliberal plan is to encourage these young people to be
self-sufficient, while disregarding their social, political and economic barriers. William, also an ACB YETP counsellor in Toronto, mentioned,

William: “We want to show them that we got their back with the stipend. However, we usually avoid telling the youth how much at first because we don't want that to be the only reason they come to the program. So, we tell them we're going to give you a stipend, and they get payment bi-weekly, or sometimes they have to do the whole program, and you'll get that big chunk at the end. It depends on the program structure.”

We gather at this point that the YETP counsellors must strategize ways to provide the stipend to the ACB male youth, while educating the young men on the importance of work and pay. This study finds that the neoliberal strategy is to use money as a motivator to encourage youth to see the benefit of finding jobs. This plan reinforces the tendency for neoliberalism to invisibilize anti-Black racism, gender biases and classism, all of which contribute to the young men’s employment discrimination. All of this creates the need to convince these young people to only focus on the benefits of work and the contributions they should make to the Canadian economy. William avoids telling the young people how much they are going to make from the incentive. It is his way to get them interested in work but also provide the stipend as a goal for the youth to reach in two weeks of participating or at the end of the four-week training. Consequently, YETP programs become a race to the neoliberal finish line, and the YETPs mandate, for these young people.

5.8 Conclusion

In conclusion, the interviews demonstrate that neoliberalism is a force within YETPs. The logic of neoliberalism disallows an appreciation for ACB male youths’ lived realities. The YETP counsellors work within a difficult structure which complicates how they serve these young men. As discussed in the study, many counsellors appreciate the opportunity to mentor and inspire ACB male youth through non-traditional ways of educating them. Although many
counsellors strategize nuanced ways of supporting these young men, they do so by adding additional time and effort to support them. Considering this, the counsellors are inspired by the work they do and do not complain, and the young men are beneficiaries of the counsellors’ support – but this is still extra volunteer labour for the counsellors. The study also uncovered that some counsellors are not able to describe the same enthusiasm for supporting ACB male youth universally. This does not mean that they are unsupportive. It raises questions about how difficult it is for these YETP counsellors to resist the neoliberal logic in YETPs to support ACB male youth. Although many YETP counsellors focus on building confidence among low-income young Black males in non-traditional educational ways, it is risky to play outside the bounds of neoliberalism. These counsellors’ strategies could endanger funding to run their programs, as their unorthodox ways of supporting ACB male youth are not producing the bottom-line numbers that funders are seeking, aligned with neoliberal logic. The commitment between funding agencies and YETPs is based on neoliberal logic that the role of the YETP is solely to produce job ready ACB male youth. As was the case historically, these low-wage and under-educated Black workers are needed to sustain the white settler Canadian economy.

The following chapter will explore how formal education plays a role in disrupting ACB male youths’ social, political, and economic development, and thus complicates their time in YETPs. The chapter also discusses how ACB employers attempt to create opportunities for the many ACB marginalized young men they employ. Many ACB employers choose to be mentors for these youth. In doing so they see value in acting as a role model for ACB male youth. Unfortunately, these employers are a small minority, and the extra mentoring work they do can be understood under neoliberalism as individual efforts to make up for state failures, only benefiting the lucky youth who happen to be paired with them. I will also analyze conversations
I had with funders about the frustrations they experience with many mainstream YETPs who fail to consider the lived experiences of marginalized, young ACB men.
Chapter Six: Symbolic Violence, Education and the Tensions within YETP

Service Delivery among ACB Male Youth

The present chapter includes discussions surrounding the experiences, struggles and barriers faced by marginalized ACB male youth in the education systems in Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal. Specifically, the chapter focuses on how anti-Black racism reinforces symbolic violence that impacts the literacy and numeracy skills of young, marginalized ACB men. The barriers that are created in formal education impact these young people’s social capital, as they are unable to associate with a network of formal teachers who can serve to increase their knowledge. Although ACB young men are dealing with a cascade of social oppressions, such as the criminal justice system, homelessness and child welfare, the youth and YETP counsellors focused mainly on the educational barriers. ACB male youth learn that they are not deserving of education and are de-motivated to learn. As a result, the young men are impacted by how they receive services from YETP counsellors. The present chapter explores how YETP counsellors respond to ACB young men with educational barriers. The data reveals that these learning difficulties pose a challenge for YETP counsellors who provide educational and employment training to young, marginalized, ACB men.

The present chapter will explore how ACB employers attempt to create opportunities for the many ACB marginalized young men they employ. Many ACB employers choose to train young Black men in both employment skills and life skills, using a mentorship approach which takes into account of the young people lived realities. It is in this chapter that I discuss how the mentorship that ACB young men receive from some employers is similar to a positive big brother relationship between employers and the ACB male youth. The employers who
participated in this study realized the value in their approach. They recognized that ACB male youth needed further mentorship for their employment development.

Finally, in this chapter I will discuss how funders attempt to shift blame to YETPs for their failure to get youth into employment. Funders display little recognition of how the funding parameters require outcomes from YETPs that do not consider the social, political and economic barriers ACB young men face. The chapter argues that neoliberalism creates a problematic relationship between funders and YETPs.

6.1 The Nightmare of Formal Learning

The white settler ideology reflected in formal learning settings positions the white identity as favourable (Dei, 2008). Through the white European cultural models utilized in traditional western learning institutions, ACB male youth experience both anti-Black racism and gendered ideologies. As mentioned, it is this type of formal learning that convinces ACB male youth that they are undeserving of an education, resulting in them being un-motivated to learn. This reality is reflected in the present data. For instance, when I asked Kobe, an ACB young man from Ottawa, about his experiences in high school, he looked away from me and paused for about 15 seconds before responding. I felt that he was reflecting on past events that he did not know how to articulate. When he did find the words to articulate himself, I perceived his response to contain both frustration and hurt,

Kobe:

To be honest, for me personally, as a Black man, it was horrible, man. Every time I was in school it seems like I got more in trouble in comparison to someone else who is white, or if they are a Black girl. I would get more in trouble and face deeper consequences than the other person. They would get an in-school suspension where they could still stay in classes. While my ass would get suspended for like 3 or 10 days out of school, and I would have to stay home. So that was my experience.
When speaking with Obi in Toronto, he echoed Kobe and provided an example of what he experienced. He mentioned that many young, marginalized Black men share the same experience in high school.

Obi: *I wanted to be a social worker since I was like 11 because many social workers made a positive impact on my life, and I wanted to do the same for the next generation of marginalized Black youth after me. [...] I was Tony Montana, “the bad guy” in high school. So, there was no support for bad guys like me. The crazy thing was I was not the only bad guy in high school. Black boys like me were also considered the bad guys. Some kids, who are not Black boys, will come in the class and misbehave or something like that. But true say, instead of the teacher kicking them out the class and sending them down to the Learning Centre. Oh, the Learning Centre is for people that basically like giving trouble and they have the social workers down there that would help out. So, instead of the teacher sending those other youths who are not Black boys down to the Learning Centre, they would talk to them and show them empathy. But if it was me or any other Black boy in the school, the teacher never showed you empathy. Instead, they are showing you the door and telling you to go to the Learning Centre. Them teachers do not care about what we are going through, and they don’t want to care. All they care about is sending us to the Learning Centre.*

The neglect that many marginalized ACB male youth receive in formal education settings results in lowered social capital, and they are unable to display “appropriate social energy in the form of reified or living labour” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 15). The unfavourable experiences faced by marginalized ACB young men lead to their inability to connect with formal educators, as many teachers create a barrier between themselves and the young men. This practice distances the young men from being a part of the teachers’ network, which could help to increase their social capital. As Obi mentioned, many ACB male youth are being kicked out of classrooms and ostracized in educational spaces that are perceived to be only for troubled youth. It is in these spaces that people are unlinked to a network of people who can serve to be useful connections. Grenfell (2009) mentions that key themes to social capital include trust, collaboration and cooperation. However, in many of these marginalized ACB male experiences in the classroom
with educators the youth are unable to draw from the social support from the teachers, which can serve to increase and expand their knowledge. When speaking with Kairo, he informed me of his experiences in high school, particularly his encounters with his teachers. He mentioned,

Kairo: *I didn’t feel like high school teachers wanted to help me. Instead, they unprepared us for post-secondary school. They told me, at least, I should not consider applied courses, nor did they help me to get to applied courses. I felt I had no help. When I got to college I was not ready and I found it difficult. Only if my teachers in high school cared to help, maybe I would have been better in college.*

Kairo’s comment speaks to him not receiving teachers’ mentorship while he was in high school. As we know about social capital, it takes time to accumulate. What we gather from Kairo, is that the teachers did not spend the time he needed with him so he can learn but in doing so, increase his social capital. Instead, Kairo experienced neglect by the teachers in his learning curve in high school and is mainly because of the neglectful teachers he experienced.

Public education systems in Canada maintain an anti-Black social discourse, which results in an intensifying sense of violence towards youth African descent people. This encourages these young people to view themselves as unworthy of an education. Pierre Bourdieu calls this type of action symbolic violence. This type of violence occurs when a subordinate group of people view themselves only through the lens that the dominator has constructed (Bourdieu, 2007). In many cases, young, marginalized ACB male youth contend with educators who loathe their very identities. As a result, they receive inadequate teaching and supports for their academic development, missing the opportunity to access a “credential which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 21). Even if many young ACB men obtain their high school diploma, they often do so with lower grades and lower comprehension and literacy levels. Unfortunately, these markers indicate low grade point average, and many ACB male youth cannot use their high school education to enter post-
secondary education as a result. Education history is often a barrier for young Black men attempting to find and maintain employment. Generally, the present data reveals that ACB male youth experience anti-Black racism within learning spaces and are “ill-served by the educational system” (Thobani, 2007, p. 172).

The systemic failures experienced by ACB youth in school result in poor literacy and comprehension skills when they enter YETPs. YETP counsellors and employers enter a relationship with ACB male youth where their efforts to support them primarily focus on basic comprehension skills, including reading, writing, and necessary life and social skills. For YETPs to serve ACB male youth adequately, they often need to revisit training that ACB male youth should have been taught in formal education. For instance, William, a Toronto-based YETP counsellor, told me,

William: One of the most teachable moments for me was the majority of the males don't have bank accounts. I said to many of them, ‘Ok, let's go to this bank and let’s get you a bank account.’ They said ‘Okay,’ and I said ‘Ok, I’m following you in,’ and I sit down, and I say ‘Go ask for a bank account.’ They were refusing to budge and would say, ‘I’m not doing this. It is stupid.’ I’m like, ‘You are part of a program. We pay you. We have to deposit the money into your account, so you need a checking account. If you don't get your account, then we can't pay you.’ And then they start railing up and carrying on, and I'm like, ‘Bro, you just gotta walk over and ask the person for a bank account. Chequing or savings, you choose.’ Even after I explain that to them, they still are fighting against me. I remember one time, I was like, ‘Ok, let's get up and leave. You don't want an account. You just don't get paid.’ The youth responded with, ‘Alright, I’m leaving the program,’ and some would actually leave. Some would come back to the program, and I would attempt to understand why they were against opening a bank account. Most of them say, ‘I don’t know what to say.’ It's because they've never had this type of social interaction before or professional interaction. One time I went to a bank with one Black male, and he said to the teller, ‘Yo, this guy said I need an account.’ So, I have realized over the years that they lack the basic ability just to communicate.
William’s experiences highlight his willingness, as a Black man himself, to take extra steps to support the development of social and life skills for young, ACB men. William mentions that young ACB men often cannot advocate for themselves to access services like bank accounts. William’s mention points to the impacts of growing up marginalized for many of these Black male young people he serves. It does so because many of the young Black men are associated with families who are also marginalized and are providing these kinds of skills and supports. There is a lot of assumption that many of these young men know how to execute certain task, such as opening a bank account, but in reality, they are ignorant of the knowledge to conduct such as task. Their ignorance is compounded by anti-Black racism and gender biases, which pushes them further away from gaining this information in social settings because the doxic understanding of these young men is that they deserve not to learn. Although it is not the full responsibility of the teachers in formal learning to teach ACB male youth about opening bank accounts, the responsibility of educators is to ensure that these young men have the confidence to at least assert themselves socially and economically in Canada. Although we cannot place all blame on the educational system, we can take into account the many moments during which these young people face barriers in education, which complicate their literacy and numeracy skills, which in turn distances them from gaining financial literacy.

All of the young men in this study mention and reflect upon their difficult social experiences, particularly in the high school. These young men are not shown empathy from teachers and are defined as villainous in formal education institutions. Kobe’s and Obi’s experiences also suggest that young ACB men spend more time outside of the classroom, isolated from social spaces that engage in pedagogy. As a result, these marginalized young men may not receive even basic education required to increase social capital. This lack of access
seems to be a social norm for young ACB men. Marginalized, ACB young men’s identities “are manifested, embodied and naturalized in social and cultural space- as social and cultural history and a habitus” (Dillabough & Kennelly, 2010, p. 495).

All of the young ACB men who participated in the study indicated that their high school experiences featured daily occurrences of anti-Black racism and gender-based discrimination, and that they were discouraged by educators from learning. As mentioned by Obi and Kobe earlier, they faced ongoing barriers, including frequent forced dismissals from classrooms. Sefa Dei (2008) argues that whiteness “simply reifies and normalizes racism throughout society, especially in the classroom” (p. 353). Both anti-Black racism and gender-based discrimination contribute to the barriers experienced by young ACB men in formal education.

When speaking with Tafari, he discusses how he is reminded by educators that he associated with marginalized Black community. The reminder that Tafari discusses is from an ACB high school teacher. Tafari, an ACB male in Montreal, described his high school experiences as dreadful moments in formal education, very similar to Kobe and Obi,

Tafari: *I found that the teachers and their methods were delusional and useless. Even though they were teaching us, they were not at the same time. I mean, they would follow a curriculum, but they never took the opportunity to engage with me, at least, so they could make education enjoyable. It was like, for them, learn or don’t learn, which made things boring. I tried to talk about it with teachers. Some said they would try to be more engaging with us, but they never did. It was like they ignored me, which made me feel like I didn’t exist. So, because they didn’t care about me, I stopped caring about school. I got to a point where I said, ‘Fuck school.’*

When I asked whether he gave up on school, Tafari explained,

Tafari: *No, I tried different schools in Montreal to see if I could gain a sense of appreciation in other schools. But it was all the same. The teachers do not care. To me, it was like they were trained in university not to care about youth like me, fucked up when you think about it. In total, I went to nine different high schools. Even though I felt like I was being treated like a*
piece of shit in the many schools I went to, I still went because ‘It was the right thing to do,’ - so we are told.

When I asked whether any teachers make him feel welcomed, Tafari shared,

Tafari: You know what, there was the Senegalese teacher, Monsieur Gail, yeah yeah yeah. He taught me at one of the high schools I attended. He had this thing of doing things. He would tell me what to do without explaining anything to me. One time, I can’t remember exactly what it was, but he gave me a school task to do, and I was like, ‘No, I don’t want to.’ All he said was, ‘You are gonna find a way to do it.’ So, I remember getting mad at him, then he told me in French, ‘Take the door,’ meaning leave the class. So, I stood up, and I literally left the class. Then he said I was everything that’s wrong with Black people.

Although Monsieur Gail is a Black man, Tafari’s story highlights a difference in their Blackness. As an educated Black man, Monsieur Gail's social status differentiates him from Tafari, who is marginalized, uneducated, and appears troublesome. Although they are both Black men, Monsieur Gail positions Tafari as the Other. Monsieur Gail has identified Tafari’s masculinity as marginalized and troublesome compared to his own, which he sees as less harmful for the Black community. This contrast demonstrates intersecting power relations and an indication of individual lived experiences on the spectrums of social class, ethnicity, and age. By identifying differences in the social realities of people of the same race, we can understand how people differ from one another but also the similarities between them (Collins, 2012). By paying attention to the intersections of identity, class, and privilege, we can make sense of the social characteristics of people and better understand the social oppressions that people experience.

When we consider Monsieur Gail and Tafari, two Black males, we see that while their racial characteristics are parallel, their masculinities and their social class are exclusive and not mutual.

Every ACB male youth who participated in the present study had similar negative experiences in formal education. This is reflected in Tafari’s experience in high school with an educator of African descent, in which Monsieur Gail labelled Tafari “at an uncivilized and
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primitive level – that is insulting” (Fanon, 1967a, p. 15). Considering Monsieur Gail is a male teacher of African descent working in the white colonial Canadian nation-state, he, much like many Black men under the heel of whiteness, positions himself with the dominant white culture, which is both anti-Black and code for middle-class. In this situation, middle-class status (Monsieur Gail) stands in opposition to the lower class (Tafari). In this case, “the more the colonized has assimilated the cultural values of the metropolis, the more he will have escaped the bush. The more he rejects his Blackness and the bush, the whiter he will become” (Fanon, 1967a, p. 2-3). Of course, this is not suggesting that Monsieur Gail will become white in complexion, but that his comments towards Tafari demonstrate assimilation to anti-Blackness, demonizing Tafari by identifying Tafari’s social status as a negative attribute in the Black community. He unconsciously adopts the colonial understanding of the stereotypical Black man within the colonial nation-state. Monsieur Gail’s comment towards Tafari is an indirect “preservation of white childhood innocence that has often taken place at the expense of the safety and security of Black children (Maynard, 2017, p. 210). Historically and today, “Black children and youth remain outside the construction of innocence, as well as that of childhood itself, and the suffering that they are exposed to is frequently erased or negated” (Maynard, 2017, p. 211). Consequently, Monsieur Gail perpetuates negative definitions and understandings of young, marginalized ACB men in white settler colonial settings, such as formal education institutions.

As a result of their high school experiences, many ACB male youth drop out, failing to see the value in formal education because of the ill-treatment they encounter. ACB young men in formal learning spaces, such as high schools, have been categorized as “at-risk students” who are seen exclusively as behavioural concerns (James, 2012). These perceived characteristics contribute to ACB young men being stereotyped as underachievers in Canada’s education
systems. Such stereotypes and misconceptions about ACB men in public schools “affect educators’ conceptions of the youth” (James, 2012, p. 471). This results in contributing to the neglect of these young men's learning barriers in formal education settings. Much like Tafari described, ACB male youth “disengage from school and the educational processes” (James, 2012, p. 473) because they do not feel a sense of appreciation for who they are and for their ability to learn.

Historical notions of marginalized ACB male youth continue to be normalized in the white settler colonial nation-state of Canada, particularly in educational settings. Although the young Black men who participated in this study live in the present, they are subjected to “the effect of being made distant” (Simms, 2003, p. 39). They are generally viewed and defined based on historical definitions and stereotypes of Black masculinity. This history is “not verifiable, but instead derives from whether or not it can be shown that what it describes is historically motivated” (Simms, 2003, p. 50). Black men struggle to separate themselves from historical definitions of Black masculinity because this historical conceptualization of Black masculinity has been normalized (Fanon, 1967a). Based on the management of history through whiteness, Black men are constantly associated with Black masculinity as a set of negative traits (Fanon, 1967a).

It was troubling to hear about the social exclusion experienced by marginalized ACB men in high school. Although participants in the present study came from different geographical areas in Canada, their learning experiences were similarly problematic. For example, Kyle, an ACB male youth in a focus group in the east end of Toronto, described his experience of high school,

Kyle:  
*Hard. High school was not always the most enjoyable moment for me.*  
[...] “It was either the teachers and the principals racially profiling you,
Kyle eloquently encapsulated what appears to be a trend among ACB male youth. It seems as though ACB men are meant to be villainized by many formal educators. For many educators, the villainizing of ACB male youth is a “structure of experience [that] is always based on previous experience” (Brinkmann & Friesen, 2018, p. 6). Educators who continue to villainize ACB youth are influenced to do so based on past experiences with educators who have mistreated young Black men. It is well documented that historically, Black Canadian youth have been exposed to traumatic experiences within education systems. Regardless of their gender, sexuality or abilities, ACB youth have suffered mistreatment and barriers to learning, which still persist today (Maynard, 2017). Past educators have demonstrated the normalcy of socially oppressing and labelling ACB young men as troublemakers, hindering their learning. Kyle’s experience of being labelled a troublemaker is not a new phenomenon faced by ACB male youth in formal education. In fact, it has been a norm for many high school teachers to label Black young men this way. Previous teachers' experiences convince many contemporary educators that their anti-Blackness is justified, maintaining a doxic reality about these young men. In this sense, “learning from experience consequently becomes learning as experience” (Brinkmann & Friesen, 2018, p. 6) for many teachers who create and sustain learning barriers for ACB young men.

### 6.2 High School Unprepared ACB Male Youth

Young men who participated in the present study were often aware that many high school teachers did not prepare them for life after high school. Kairo, a young man from Toronto,
explained that he too had a negative experience in high school, mentioning that he was not equipped with the learning tools to be successful,

Kairo:  
*I don’t feel like high school really prepared us for post-secondary or for jobs, especially when they continuously pressure you to take applied courses and not academic. How are you going to apply for college if you only take applied courses? You should be transferred straight into college, right? But most of the stuff that was taught to us in applied learning courses are not being taught in college or readies us for college.*

When I asked Kairo to clarify who he meant by “us,” he explained,

Kairo:  
*Oh. I am talking about the marginalized, Black men that I hung around with at school, especially those who lived in the same area as me. Many white teachers didn’t understand what we went through growing up in a marginalized community. There are many things that kids like me deal with daily. Some of us Black males face financial problems. Moms are abusing them, and moms are on drugs, stuff like that. Man, there’s a lot of things that we marginalized youth deal with. If the teacher gave more time to know me and some of my male friends, I think it would’ve been a better experience for us.*

The lack of empathy towards young Black men held by white educators was described by Kairo and is deemed an objective truth among ACB youth. Kairo pointed out that the mistreatment faced by Black boys in formal education is an attempt to derail them from higher learning and the possibility of securing meaningful careers. The teachers' approaches and behaviours toward the youth impact the educational development of youth, as the emotions of teachers are shared within the relationship. Young ACB men recognize that their development rests on how the teachers react and decide what is best for them. As Kairo mentioned, the teachers he encountered pushed him and other marginalized ACB young men towards applied courses, discouraging them from pursuing post-secondary education. Kairo mentioned that he was being pressured to enter applied courses and that like many other ACB young men, he chose applied courses as a consequence of his relationship with educators.
6.3 Supporting Marginalized ACB Males in YETPs

YETP counsellors who participated in the present study faced many barriers to supporting and mentoring ACB male youth in their attempts to secure employment. With low literacy levels and poor educational achievement, counsellors reported trying to market young Black men to prospective employers, drawing upon their supposed education and comprehension skills evidenced by the completion of a high school diploma. Despite this tactic, many employers were unmoved and not convinced by the counsellors attempts.

All of the counsellors who participated in the present study were aware of the educational challenges faced by young, marginalized ACB men in high school. However, the YETP counsellors of African descent seemed to empathize more with the youth, as they had often experienced similar situations in formal learning. These ACB counsellors recognized how anti-Black racism creates barriers for youth of African descent, as these barriers were reflected in their own experiences.

Many ACB and white YETP counsellors involved in the present study felt the need to offer more mentorship to ACB young men because they sympathised with their lived experiences in education. Although these YETP counsellors are wanting to sympathize, they are being pulled towards neoliberal logic by the expectations of funders. They realize that they cannot be as sympathetic as they might want to be towards the ACB young men, unless they work more hours to support the young men. This study identified that YETP counsellors elected to take on multiple roles to support the development of comprehension and literacy skills among ACB male youth. YETP counsellors worked towards figuring out unique ways to educate and support ACB youth in informal learning settings. YETP counsellors across the three cities informed me of the creative training approaches they employed while mentoring young,
marginalized, ACB men. YETP counsellor Jhennel in Montreal outlined helpful strategies and suggestions for educators to consider when supporting marginalized ACB young men,

Jhennel: The content in these training programs is very similar to the school system, but I have my unique twist on how I educate these young men. I see how the school system sets these youth up for employment. It’s a lot like ‘Don’t be who you are. This is who you have to be. You have to listen. Your CV is your ticket to employment. This is how you behave in an interview.’ I think that old curriculum needs to change. I think that if we are to tap into questions, such as, what does it mean to be an ACB young man? we have the ability to focus on resilience and coping mechanisms for them. Tapping into people’s strengths and seeing how that translates into the job market is important, and what you bring to the table. That’s what should be in the curriculum, that’s what I do.” […] “I don’t think that type of training and thinking does anything for these particular youth. It’s like we are still living in the 1950s, pertaining to how to get a job, literally. You have to wear certain clothes. Yes, you want to be presentable, but a person should not be looked down upon if they do not have the right clothes. They should not be blamed and there should not be that sense that there is something wrong with you, if you don’t conform to the standard way of presenting yourself at a job.

Jhennel’s mention here is a strategy to affirm the young ACB men she works with. Although I was not privy to witness how she uses this type of educational practice, I could only assume two outcomes can come from this approach. The first outcome is a resistance to the neoliberal logic that is tightly woven in to YETPs, as Jhennel is resisting the old way of working with ACB male youth to get them employed. She points to the employment strategies in YETP as nostalgic, and a critical approach that does not fit into the employment mentorship practice with the ACB male youth. Research by Wright et al. (1998) suggests particular ways Black young men in Western societies should be approached when educators are focusing on their social development. Although their study was completed more than a decade ago, the authors work is relevant as their suggestions echo Jhennel’s assertion. Wright et al. (1998) note that Black male youth are consistently approached by educators ambivalently, resulting in a continuance of negative perceptions about their masculinities. Without an appreciation and an understanding of Black
male youth and their masculinities then the chances of interpreting their race connected with their gender can be misconceived by those working with these young men. Educators are encouraged to recognize not to restrict or limit the discussion about the lived experiences of Black young men as critically engaging with them can lead to positive social, and economic outcomes for these youth. This approach to avoid pathologizing Black young men’s identities can work towards resisting the notion that these young men are responsible for their own social position.

The second outcome to Jhennel’s approach can potentially hinder these young men. We must keep in mind that white settler ideology is tied to the Canadian economy which does not acknowledge and appreciate these young men and their lived experiences. Instead, these young men are consistently reminded that they are useless, colonized subjects in the white settler Canadian nation state. Fanon (1967a) reminds us that Black men and their masculinities are continuously under attack in the colonized world. Black men are turned into the colonized subject and told they are parasites and should “toe the line” of the white colonial world without hesitancy. Jhennel’s assertion is rooted in a deep appreciation to liberate these young men from the continuance of anti-Black racism and gender biases. However, her approach, as she mentions it, could lead to an omission of the structural barriers that Black young men experience in the white settler reality. Consequently, her approach could complicate how these young men access employment because her training could implicate the probability of how Black male youth access employment. Meaning, employers who are not practicing a deep consideration of these young men’s social experiences will not consider how to work with these youth in a pro-social way. There is high probability that ACB youth will run into employers who uphold the white
settler social discourse through their practices and will sustain the employment barriers and discriminations that these young men face.

During my time speaking with William, a Toronto YETP counsellor, he also mentioned the importance of affirming ACB male youth. He mentioned,

William: *We have to meet these youth where they are. Experiential learning is key. Also, the traditional way of using PowerPoint presentation can be effective, but we have to change it up to connect with these young people. For instance, I take advantage of social media to educate these young men, such as YouTube, Instagram, and Snapchat. I try to use tools that they would be familiar with. Like I said, and to be fair, we have to meet them where they’re at and talking to them on their level. The way you speak to them is imperative cause you can use perfect jargon and talk to them, but they’re going to be like ‘Man, this guy’s an Op, he’s a boy dem.’ But if you can talk to them in their way of speaking, then they’re like, ‘I can reason with this person, he talks my language.’ Cause they’ve created their own vocabulary, it's so common now, and we have to understand it, get with it, enjoy it, and enjoy their creativity. But let them know that they can talk this way but encouraging them to understand that they have to switch the way they speak, especially when you go into the employment space. You can't go to your boss and be like, ‘Yo, bro, can I have tomorrow off?’ It's not going to work, right? I encourage them to know when to switch it off, and it's having those conversations.*

When speaking with William about how he educates these young men, he points to him training the youth of being aware of when and how to speak in certain social circumstance, such as the place of work. This way, William is not denying these young ACB males’ lived realities, and he is accepting their vulnerabilities, particularly the way they speak. Instead, he is focusing on building social capital by offering insight as to when and how to speak in certain social circumstances. William further discussed his way of experiential learning with the ACB young men. He explained,

William: *I have to, for me at least, because I care for the wellbeing of these young men. Me and another counsellor would go out of our way to purchase the GED books. So, you had to be the teacher and counsellor. So, essentially you had two jobs. We had no choice because they were only comfortable*
with us. They wanted to learn, but we could not place the Black males in specific school settings, as it was too much of a risk.

What is certain about William’s approach is that he is aware that “black boys lag behind on practically every population indicator, from education and income to health and mortality” (Curry, 2017, p. 29). However, as Curry (2017) suggests, the Black male can be dehumanized at any given moment because there is usually no space given to Black men to be vulnerable in the moment for them to learn. What we learn from William is that he is giving these young men space to learn while encouraging them to recognize that they can be vulnerable in the sense of being themselves.

William pointed to experiential learning as a useful tool. By utilizing experiential learning, he is able to create and sustain meaningful learning outcomes among marginalized, young Black men. William further explained why his methods to educate ACB young men were necessary, pointing to the lack of empathy experienced by ACB youth in high school. He discussed how these youth were purposely derailed from achieving education by the structural violence that they experienced in formal education. William also mentioned that the political realities surrounding young Black men in high school impacts how ACB males receive services in YETPs. William discussed the term “LD”, which he learned in 2013 as a YETP counsellor,

William: You would think these ACB young men should have basic skill sets, but the reality is that they do not. You think the school system would support these young men to know basic knowledge, but the reality is they are not. The harsh reality is that they are dropping out of school or they pass high school, and at the same time, they lack the necessary skills because a majority of the males graduate with LD.” [...] “LD means ‘local development.’ Have you never heard of that acronym?

When I told William that I was unfamiliar with the acronym, he explained,

William: The Toronto school system decided to create local developments in the applied classes. LD or local development courses are connected to sports math and weird titles, but it’s equivalent to nothing when you graduate.
You cannot apply to college or University.” […] “The diploma means nothing. It's a piece of paper that says you finished, but you cannot use this to go on to further your education.

William further explained,

William: I came to know LD in 2013, but it existed before that year. I became aware of LD until I had a group of young Black men graduating, and I was looking at their transcripts, and I was like ‘What is LD?’ One of the youth told me, and I was in shock myself, just like how you are in shock. The youth told me that he could not even apply for college with LD on his transcripts. I was like, this is insane to find out. I visited one of the local high schools to find out more about LD, and I was told that any youth with LD on their transcripts could not get into any post-secondary school. The sad thing is that they know an LD high school diploma means nothing. It is like these schools are purposely sending unprepared youth into society with nothing in their heads.

I asked William whether a youth who wished to attend college would need to retake all of their high school credits, William responded,

William: So, what would end up happening is that they would have to apply as a mature student at a college or university, considering they meet the post-secondary requirements. They tend to wait for the opportunity to attend a post-secondary school because they had a bad experience in high school. Their past traumatic experiences of being in high school were extremely negative for them. They don’t want to go back. They are done with school. Once they are out, they are out.” […] “The local development approach in high school is a super sabotage for Black youth, especially the males. The only time it gets rectified is if the youth and their parent are clever or aware enough to catch the high schools arbitrarily placing them in LD status.

The political implication of this practice within formal learning institutions is institutional anti-Black racism. This approach continues to colonize the lived experiences of young Black men in the gaze of the white settler Canadian nation-state. For Black male youth who experience this structural violence in formal education, the practice continues to demonize their race and masculinity. It is oppression that shows up “in the form of marginalization, repression, dehumanization, vilification, exploitation and other forms of discrimination” (Crichlow, 2014, p.
1). What William shared with me serves as an example of neglect and normalization of stereotypes of young Black men in the Toronto-based school system, which derails the future prospects of youth who walk away with LD status on their high school profile. Many schoolteachers simply give up on these young men but are able to convince them that they are supporting their goals of graduation using the LD designation. The reality is that they are supporting young Black men to enter a social, economic and political white settler reality that refuses to acknowledge their high school achievements. LD status also hinders youth in their development of comprehension skills that may aid them as they seek employment.

While Toronto and Montreal are two distinct cities, the barriers to education faced by marginalized ACB male youth are similar. Montreal YETP counsellor, Anita, echoed William’s sentiments,

Anita: *Most ACB young men do not like high school because they felt it was not something for them. They always complain about the teachers mistreating them and making them feel like they are too dumb to understand the curriculum that is being taught. In many moments, teachers are not there to help them to understand what is being taught. Also, depending on their own home life, no one is there to look over your shoulder or assist you. So, where do they go for help?*

Not only do marginalized ACB young men face social oppression in the schools, but they “have at all times been limited, fragmentary, and isolated from other state activities” (Wacquant, 2009, p. 49). In conjunction, young Black men contend with different, intersecting forms of marginalization, including marginalization based on their race, gender, poverty, perceived criminality, and low literacy levels. These young men are frustrated with the routine choice they must make: to settle for what protects them from criticism, or to lash out against those who criticize them.
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6.4 Jobs Not Careers

Throughout the present study, I learned from YETP counsellors that they support ACB male youth with job-seeking strategies, rather than career-seeking strategies. Due to the multiple barriers faced by marginalized, young ACB men in formal education systems, they often seek the services of YETPs with the primary goal of obtaining a job for survival in Canada’s white settler capitalist society. Many marginalized, young Black men believe that all they have to offer is manual labour, as opposed to intellectual labour. YETP counsellor William explained,

William: A majority of the males want physical jobs. They will say ‘Just get me something where I can lift like a one-two boxes, whatever’ or ‘Get me something where I can just push like a lawnmower.’ So, it is either factory, boxes, or lawn care. But as soon as you propose a job that encourages critical thinking, something at Footlocker for instance, in a cashier position, where they have to use critical thinking, they are like, ‘Nah, I don’t want to fill out nothing or do anything as a cashier.’ In a factory setting, you do not have to fill out anything. Someone just has to give you an order. Just lift that box and put it over there, bing!!! They don’t want to take criticism at all. They don’t want to be called out for their lack of education and understanding. For instance, I had ACB male youth who just came out of the bin (jail). So, they said to me ‘If you tell me something and I feel it is aggressive then I have to match you. I have to let you know you can’t talk to me that way, and I’m going to show you any way I can.’ So, that socializing aspect is a key component because that’s where a lot of the struggles are.

According to William, ACB young men request manual labour jobs for two reasons: 1) To avoid ‘critical thinking’ and filling out forms, and 2) To avoid criticism stemming from their lack of education. This behaviour may represent the manifestation of self-protective masculinity, whereby young Black men use their physical strength rather than their intellectual capacities, mobilized to disguise their own shame about their insufficient education. This response is based on both gender and class and reproduces the cycle of young Black men holding positions as low-wage and precarious workers, keeping them in poverty for their adult lives. The idea of the young, low-income, Black male youth as being good only for manual labour is a “given in the
Wacquant’s (2009) analysis focuses on the United States, it also represents Canadian realities. In this case, the marginalized are positioned in a moralizing conception of their marginalization as a product of their own failings (Wacquant, 2009). This is why ACB youth in the present study provide uniform responses, reporting that they feel unwanted and that high school did not teach them anything. Even when YETP counsellors encourage ACB young men to see the value in social opportunities, such as going back to finish high school or pursuing intellectually challenging employment, they refuse.

Their refusal for these opportunities is because they are being taught to believe themselves incapable through their intersubjective experiences with many formal educators who they have come in contact with. The school staff direct them away from academics and towards technical streams of employment. This convinces young, ACB men that they are not good enough to learn or work certain jobs. During my conversation with ACB YETP counsellor, Jackson, he told me,

Jackson:  
A lot of them are coming into programs trying to gain employment, but they have no structure, they are not used to that. When they get to a certain age in school, they are shunned or push in a certain direction. The education system is like, ‘Hey, you know you don't go academic, you need to go to a trade, or you need to do something with your hands, so don't take these academic classes. Take these applied classes’. [...] “A lot of the young Black males are either kicked out of high school by the time they go to grade 11. If they get to grade 11, there is one in a few, but many of them get kicked out during high school. So, a lot of them don't even have a high school diploma or even thought about taking their GED or not. So, they end up looking towards the streets.

These young Black men have settled in the truths of the oppressor and the disorders that have been designed for them (Fanon, 1967a). Here, ‘disorders’ refers to distorted beliefs they hold, that as young ACB men, they are not smart enough to learn in formal learning spaces, and
that education and other social opportunities are intended only for others, not for themselves.

These young men become accustomed to and resigned to teachers failing them or directing them to take applied courses. Essentially, young, marginalized ACB men experience an internal colonialism within the Canadian nation-state that results in their further oppression, which is a form of symbolic violence. Even when YETP counsellors attempt to convince youth otherwise, they are often unwilling to recognize the benefits of formal learning. YETP counsellor Jhennel discussed this with me,

Jhennel: I actually spend most of my time trying to convince young men to see the value in high school. I will hear some of them say to me that they have one credit away from graduating. I will be like, ‘Come on, you’re one credit away!’ I try to demystify ideas about subjects like math, where many ACB young men I encounter say they are missing that credit to complete high school. I will encourage them to think that math is an absolute truth. There are not a lot of things in the world that reflects that. That’s what’s fun about math. That’s my strategy, which is to get them an education. People want good-paying jobs. If you have an education, then you have more opportunities. You just have more options. However, I hear a variety of responses. Some Black males don’t want to hear about it. They are like ‘School! It’s done, it’s over.’ Even in my attempts to convince Black young men to complete high school, it turns out to be a long and hard attempt. As a YETP counsellor, I have to be fine with their choice to denounce formal education. As much as I feel the urgency to push more, I know I cannot overstep. I have to be fine with it. So, I have to focus on employment. If they don’t want to hear anything about school, I will follow their lead. I have to be respectful of that because it’s their life. They are the experts of their life. ‘I’m just here to follow you, CAPTAIN!’ They are the captain, and maybe I’m just the map.

Based on prior experiences in formal learning, many ACB young men have come to understand that high school is just not for them. As Jhennel and other YETP counsellors have explained, their attempts to encourage young Black men to see the value in education are often unproductive. Despite the requirement of earning money to survive, young, marginalized ACB men perceive education and employment based on critical thinking skills as not viable options
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for them. It seems that the doxic truth has convinced young, ACB men that high school education and formal learning hold no value for them.

6.5 Sharing the Oppression

Many YETP counsellors who took part in the present study witness marginalized ACB male youth being villainized through structural violence. The counsellors walk alongside the youth and, in a sense, experience the barriers the young men face as they try to find work for them. During their attempts to educate and support the economic development of young Black men, YETP counsellors encounter the white settler colonial narrative that is both gender-biased and anti-Black. Counsellors are intertwined within the politics that demonize ACB masculinities. When attempting to assist marginalized male youth with employment, YETP counsellors experience rejections from many employers, even those who are considered the most accepting. In those moments, YETP counsellors, regardless of their race or gender, learn first-hand about the anti-Black racism and gender-based discrimination experienced by ACB young men. During our interview, YETP counsellor Dailene mentioned that seeking employment for these youth is challenging. As she spoke, she placed her left hand on her forehead, resting her head on her hand, a sign of worry or frustration about what she has to deal with among employers,

Dailene: The ACB men that I work with have a lot of barriers. Yes, there are barriers to employment based on their identity. However, many other barriers come with their identity. They deal with mental barriers, where they put themselves down and say things like, ‘I am not smart enough.’ ‘I’m not good enough.’ ‘Why should I?’ ‘I didn’t finish high school.’ All these things. So those are barriers that I have heard from the ACB young men specifically. I do not want to out the Black men in the program, but I’m being honest about what I experience with them.” […] “I have also experienced how they view their own name as a barrier. For instance, a few would say, ‘My name is this, and I’m just going to throw my resume away.’ Those are really hard things to hear, but totally understandable because the white society we live in sniffs out their Blackness and masculinity based on their name and then villainizes them before they get an interview. These employers focus on the name and determine if they are
Black males, which results in not interviewing them for employment. But this is the world we live in. Although it is challenging at times, it is important to build them up and their self-esteem and confidence, it’s important.

All Dailene can do is to offer to ‘build up the ACB male youth’s self-esteem and confidence’, which is an individualized tactic to try to repair the individual, rather than the system. However, this does not address the impossible task of getting rid of the neoliberal logic that these YETP counsellors face. They are stuck in an impossible dynamic. When I asked Dailene if she shared the trauma experienced by marginalized ACB men, she responded,

Dailene: To be honest, it kind of feels that way, but I try my best to build them up. Like, I personally work on with them is presenting themselves to employers, and how to sell themselves within that two-minute period of an interview. It is difficult to do because a lot of the time, they are like, ‘I don’t have any skills.’ My response to that is, ‘Come on now, of course, you do! You did this, and you did this. Those are skills!’ So, teaching them how to communicate that about themselves. Often, I feel they are suffering from low self-esteem because they are expected to fit a certain stereotype at all times, but people view them as nothing but the stereotypes, but there is so much more to them.

Dailene’s explanation connects to the sharing of an “interpersonal understanding, collectivity, and togetherness” (Szanto & Moran, 2015, p. 2) between herself and the ACB male youth she serves. This is both intersubjectivity and the “we” that manifests as an emotional and cohesive bond. This relationship is a sociality and social cognition for members to interpret and understand each other (Szanto & Moran, 2015). Dailene’s proximity to the ACB young men she serves in the YETP allows her to experience some of their lived realities in the Canadian colonized nation-state, particularly around anti-Black racism and gender biases from employers. As Dailene mentioned, many ACB young men she works with know they are viewed by society as low class, uneducated Black men who have no future. Further, young ACB men recognize that they do not need to be seen visually to be discriminated against. Dailene explains that some ACB male youth understand that their names communicate their Blackness to employers, who then decide that the youth do not deserve employment opportunities. Although Dailene still attempts
to assist ACB young men to gain and sustain employment, she shares many of the same
disappointments as the youth when she is denied the opportunity to employ marginalized young
men. Many YETP counsellors echoed the same notions about the hardships of helping ACB
male youth to access employment. Ottawa YETP counsellor Jackie mentioned similar sentiments
to Dailene’s,

Jackie: The ACB male youth in the program are tough to employ. Some employers
cannot look beyond their own judgment and bias about these ACB young men. At times I just do not get it. I'll give you an example: We had an employer who was happy to work with us, and we even had a financial incentive for him. He was in the West end, and I worked in the Richie (Ottawa) area at the time. So, I had a bunch of guys in there looking for work. So, the employer agreed to conduct some interviews with the ACB males I was working with. The ACB males I was working with were phenomenal, and he loved them, and then one day he called me, and he was like, ‘OK. So enough of the neighbourhood guys!’ I was like, ‘What does that mean? Are you having problems with them?’ He responded with, ‘No, everything’s fine. I think I have enough neighbourhood guys.’ I said, ‘So, are you telling me you have too many Black kids in your store? Is that what you're saying?’ He just went silent. It is common sense for me. If they're doing their job correctly, why does it matter if they are Black and male? How do you know where they're from? So, it becomes very challenging with employers like that. We stopped working with that employer, but when we heard that, we were like, ‘Wow, this is going to be a common theme that we're going to face.’ It's been very challenging for the young men and me.

Throughout the present study, YETP counsellors demonstrated empathy towards the
ACB young men with whom they work. Many relationships based on empathy “are, almost
always, emotionally charged, and have some affective dimension” (Szanto & Moran, 2015, p. 2).
There is mutual concern within the relationship, along with shared emotion for one another
(Szanto & Moran, 2015). As a result, many YETP counsellors feel let down by some employers,
because of the racial and gender discrimination experienced by the young ACB men. Some
YETP counsellors try to support young ACB men to obtain employment and also speak out
against the social oppression the young men face. For example, Jackie stated,
Jackie: *It's extremely difficult, but we do not give up. There is a perception amongst employers and in our community and neighbourhoods that Black men have records, they are violent, they are aggressive. I always stand up against those employers who try to put these young men down.*

Here, Jackie illustrates her willingness to empathize and share the employment hardships that young ACB men encounter in her YETP, which is an “affective and embodied interaction” (Szanto & Moran, 2015, p. 2). These results demonstrate that Jackie, Dailene and many other YETP counsellors recognize the uphill battle facing young, marginalized, ACB men who seek employment, yet are committed to supporting these youth to pursue their goals.

### 6.6 ACB Employers Increase Social Capital

Not all employers practice anti-Black racism and gender-biased hiring practices. When the time arises to transition ACB male youth from YETPs to employment, some employers also strive to provide extra support to the youth and help to further increase their social capital. The employers who took part in the present study demonstrated an awareness of how structural violence in formal education creates barriers for youth, hindering their ability to gain social capital. For instance, when speaking with Rohan, an ACB male and a Montreal employer who works with YETPs, he explained that it is important to hire ACB male youth for more than just their manual labour skills. Rohan explained his intentional approach to training ACB young men on comprehension and various employment skills in order to increase their hiring potential,

Rohan: *I tend to provide young Black men extensive training after their time in YETP, so I can open their mind to certain [things?] they need to know. I might have a young Black man who doesn’t have much experience in a certain area of my business. They might have some understanding, but they will get more training on the job and time spent with me. It’s all about patience. On the job, there is going to be another training that they are going to need for sure because it’s not something they have experience in, you know.*
As an ACB employer, Rohan recognizes the importance of providing further training for young ACB men so that they are able to conduct the work he is offering them and increase their social capital. The “social capital accruing from a relationship is that much greater to the extent that the person who is the object of it is richly endowed with capital” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 23). It is the youth who benefit from the additional comprehension skills they are acquiring with the help of Rohan. Further, the relationship facilitated by Rohan increases the economic awareness of young, marginalized Black men, enabling them to assert themselves in the Canadian economy. Essentially, Rohan is providing the education that many ACB male youth were denied in formal education settings. Rohan further explained his strategy to educate and support the economic development of young ACB men,

Rohan:  
*I sit down with them after I hire them from the YETP, and I ask them, ‘What do you want to do after your employment with me?’ I go through their CV and help them improve on it. I also talk to them about interview skills for the future, after their employment with me. These are some of the things that I do proactively.’ [...] ‘Life is a gift, and this is (your body) is your temple, so it’s like, I am all about how we treat each other and the way you see yourself. Like the word ‘Nigger.’ I discourage the use of that word because words have power, and I do not want them to think they are subhuman. So, these are some of the aspects that you know I would focus on. I must give these young Black men a hundred percent because these life skills will provide opportunities, especially for work. No matter the job you are doing, whether you are a musician, a ballplayer, an architect or an engineer, certain basic skills like how you treat people, greet people, and present yourself are very important. I want these Black young men to know that.*

Rohan was not the only employer who explained his attempts to support young ACB men even after the formal ending of a YETP. Dwight, another ACB male employer from Toronto, explained that he sees himself as a mentor and fatherly figure to the young men he hires. Dwight establishes a bond with ACB young men over his time spent with them. Similar to Rohan, he shares his knowledge and experience in order to increase their social capital,
Dwight: *Oh Lord. I have been in management for 20 years now. I’ve been in management since the age of 17. I have been seen as a father and a mentor to many ACB young men. I truly invest in these young men. I will help ACB young men go to school. I will help them do anything to better themselves and their social development. I’d rather take a risk with more dividend and return in social skills and on a trust scale to change your thought process.*

Considering that many employers in the present study are ACB men themselves, they recognize the importance of supporting the economic development of marginalized ACB young men. In their respective work, neither Dwight nor Rohan mention that they work with marginalized ACB young men for extra incentives from YETPs, nor did they allude to themselves as being strained in their attempts to support these young men. These are individual employers who are stepping into do more work for these young men, where representatives of the state, such as formal educators, perpetual the structural and symbolic violence that ACB young men encounter, while creating difficulties to these young men’s learning. I mention the state at this point to also tie into, and demonstrate, the deep rootedness of neoliberalism within the practice of YETPs. Davies and Bansel (2007) suggest that neoliberalism encourages the state to not be responsible for providing all of the social needs such as health care and education. In this case the many of the ACB employers in this sense find themselves taking responsibility to provide education to ACB young men, putting more work their person. When discussing their experiences and practices, both Dwight and Rohan report attempting to do what is right to mentor and support youth. They also intentionally recognize that the ways they practice masculinity can set an example for these youth. Jim, an ACB employer from Ottawa, echoed Dwight and Rohan,

Jim: *I’ve been working with ACB male youth, and other youth, for the past 15 years and I just got involved in that simply because, you know, I have two young boys, and I want to be a positive role model for Black young men, much like how I am for my sons.*

Justin, an ACB male employer from Toronto, echoed Jim,
They are emotionally crippled, so hurt, and unaware of understanding a positive sense of masculinity. Many of the ACB men I work with define their masculinity in very negative ways, such as beating someone up because they stepped on their kicks. And that’s a horrific way to grow up, but it’s also super common. These Black young men are living dangerous lives. They are around so much violence where that’s all they know. There is always violence, always a shooting or a stabbing.

When I asked how this made Justin feel, he clarified,

It’s not about how I feel. It’s about what am I going to do about it. In conjunction with employing many of these youth, I also operate a program to teach these youth how to manage a business. I don’t do it to make money. I did it to keep kids safe and something for them to be productive.

Some employers involved in the present study demonstrate a genuine interest in the employment success of marginalized ACB male youth. They mentor and support young Black men in order to increase their social capital in the face of the many social oppressions and barriers they frequently face.

6.7 YETP Counsellors & Employers

Although some ACB employers in this study demonstrate their willingness to support and educate marginalized, ACB male youth, I learned that many other employers, who are predominantly white, do not use a similar approach. Many of the YETP counsellors who participated in the study explained that they have to convince employers to hire young ACB men, while employers push back on the idea of having marginalized Black male youth associated with their business. Many employers feel that the social status of young, ACB men will impact their businesses negatively. Ottawa YETP counsellor Julie discussed this further with me,

The low-income status, low education levels, gender and the race of these young men are factors that would impact their ability to find and maintain employment.

Julie also mentioned a past interaction with a white employer when she was working with them to establish employment for the ACB young man,
Julie: I’ve had one person tell me that his hair was often an issue with employers, so I would use it when speaking to an employer. I would try to gauge, or you know, ensure that they will not be surprised by the Black male’s hair by describing it to the employers prior to them hiring the Black male youth. I would organize it in a way so that the issue is out there, and they’re not going to be able to use that as an excuse. That way, they are more focused on the person’s skills and abilities, I hope.

Here, Julie described how many white employers maintain the racial and gendered discrimination that creates barriers for ACB youths attempting to secure employment. The employment discrimination faced by marginalized, young ACB men occurs before, during, and after employment with many white employers. YETP Ottawa counsellor, Dailene, discussed this further with me,

Dailene: I have seen employers take ACB male youth and then fire them with no explanation. Also, I have seen employers mistreat ACB male youth, and the youth would just quit. A lot of employers will not call ACB youth back for employment or even an interview. I have had to advocate for ACB male youth, where I would have to visit the employer and convince them face to face to hire or sustain employment for some Black young men.

Not only do counsellors feel frustrated when trying to support Black male youth who work with white employers, they also have to contend with anti-Black racism and a gender-biased social world that has oppressed Black masculinity for many years. These counsellors experience the colonial oppression faced by ACB young men, but only when they attempt to find employment for these youth. Dailene also discussed the hardships she faced when attempting to convince a white employer to employ ACB male youth,

Dailene: I have approached employers to attempt to sell the ACB youth to them. In those moments, I have had employers meet the youth, and the youth try their hardest to impress the employer, to a point where they think they are impressing the employer. In one particular situation, the employer pulled me aside and said, ‘These youth are so loud and bad.’ The way the employer was talking, it was like she was so disgusted with the youth. I took a moment to speak to the youth to get their thoughts on their interaction with the employer. They said that it went well. I went back to the employer to ask them what happened. They said, ‘Um, we did not sign
up for this demographic.' I was like, ‘What demographic were you in search of?’ She was like, ‘I was looking for the bubbly and preppy type. The boys you brought were too aggressive. They were laughing.’ I said, ‘If they were white, you would have hired the youth.’ The youth and I left immediately. It was a sad experience. A lot of ACB male youth and I struggle to find employment.

Many white employers who reject these youth based on their race, gender and social class do so based on extreme prejudice. This oppression is based on pre-conceived notions of marginalized Black male youth, who are stereotyped as aggressive, uneducated criminals. Employers accept this notion, creating employment barriers for young ACB men, in an effort to safeguard their businesses from the stereotypical idea that ACB youth will be bad for their business. Even with the help of YETP counsellors, employers disregard the added training that these youth receive in YETP settings. Black masculinity is continuously stereotyped as a worthless gender role that does not deserve liberation (Woodard et al., 2014). The irony of this situation is that historically, enslaved Black men, who were uneducated and had underdeveloped comprehension skills, added value to the white colonial economy through years of indentured slavery. During the slave era, Black males were positioned as a prize for the capitalist and it was white employers who won the prize (Woodard et al., 2014). Today, the labour of marginalized Black males is not seen as ‘good enough’ for certain employers, who demonstrate misandry noir and classist practices within their businesses. These young people are only perceived to be ‘good enough’ for labour-intensive jobs. The marginalized young ACB male youth involved in the present study are reliving historical notions of Black masculinity, which ensure they are devalued in the Canadian economy, only contributing to the white capitalist society through labour-intensive employment. Their lived reality is based on a historical trope, and not one that is natural (Butler, 1988). The social status of young ACB men is often perceived to be characterized by a lack of formal education, marginalization, and criminalization. This
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characterization acts as an added barrier, hindering many YETP counsellors from helping these youth connect to employment opportunities. Consequently, YETP counsellors are attempting to sell the labour-power of ACB youth to employers, while knowing that they have little chance of gaining and sustaining employment with many white employers.

6.8 There Has to Be A Way to Support ACB Male Youth

Even though YETP counsellors often face the same rejection as ACB male youth, they do find ways to get these young people employed. For instance, Ottawa YETP counsellor, Jackie, explained that in order to avoid employers' rejections she sends a single employer multiple resumes in hopes that the employer will hire an ACB male. However, in most cases her strategy does not work in her favour,

Jackie: So, I will send multiple resumes to an employer from all different backgrounds of young Black men I work with. They assume by the name who is a Black male and who is not. So, they fish through, and they'll pick certain people who they think are not the stereotypical Black male, based on a name. Even though I helped to create these young men's resumes it does not stop these employers from name discrimination. These are the demographics that we are working with. If they do decide to take a name that they think is a Black male, suddenly they ask for a record check. Like what is going on?

Toronto YETP counsellor Julez echoed Jackie,

Julez: If the employer is Black male youth-friendly, then I feel like there is more of an acceptance. But suppose it’s more like business casual/professional where you have to dress up, and there is a certain expectation of hiring someone who fits the business model, which usually not these young Black men, unfortunately. In that case, I find that there is not much openness for hiring and training the Black young men to meet their expectations. Most of these employers that we are getting ACB young men connected with are already open to having Black males working for them and because we are paying the employer to hire the young person. It is more of a win-win situation, in my opinion. Oh, we will give you this amount of money to employ our youth. Most of the time they are like, oh, this is a great opportunity cause it is only for like eight weeks, and then after that, the employer has no more commitment to the ACB male youth. The employer is not losing. They are actually gaining because they have another body
The stigma that many young ACB men face when dealing with white employers is not only based on physical characteristics, but also on what they have long understood marginalized Black men to represent. In settler-colonial countries like Canada, the Black man represents sin (Fanon, 1967a). Fanon argues that “the archetype of inferior values is represented by the Black man” (Fanon, 1967a, p. 166). The stigma surrounding young Black men ties to Fanon’s argument, as these employers often villainize Black men without having met them. They villainize Black youth when reading their names on resumes or discussing them with YETP counsellors.

Even when white employers decide to employ young ACB men, they do so for only a limited, two-week time period. According to Julez, all employers are contracted by the YETP to employ marginalized young people at the expense of the YETP. Often, when marginalized ACB male youth are hired, they become commodities in the relationship between the YETP and the employer. For instance, Montreal YETP counsellor Anita explained the incentive process for employers and the expectation,

Anita: What we do is offer a stash (an incentive) two weeks prior to hiring. Generally, most employers will apply, and we will offer the two weeks stash as incentive for the employers, so we can encourage them to invest in the young person. It entices the employer not to worry about paying to train the young person, and it gives them more reason to keep the individual. Employers don’t have to pay for two weeks while they’re training the youth. So, they are being paid by someone else and they can actually take the time to train the young person, which is what they would do any ways. We trust that the young person does not leave, and the employer keeps them.

Jackie not only echoed Anita, but she explicitly discussed the incentive process between marginalized ACB young men and employers,
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Jackie: The money we pay employers for Black young men is huge and encourages employers to employ these particular young men. It is already much harder for these young Black men to find employment already. Yet still there is a negative perception amongst employers about these particular young people. Many of these employers already believe these Black men have records, they’re violent, they’re aggressive. So, they might employ them for the two weeks, at our expense, but many of them let the Black men go after. It’s like they only employ them for the money.

Although employers are encouraged to maintain the youth’s employment, many employers release the ACB youth from their position after the two-week period. As such, these young men are deemed unsuitable for ongoing employment, but are seen as suitable for hiring when their labour is subsidised. Here, marginalized ACB men resemble the historical Black man of the past, who is only deserving of low-end jobs and whose labour is only beneficial if there is an incentive attached. Although YETPs are not extensions of formal slavery, their work involves selling the labour of young, Black men to employers who demonstrate bias and prejudice against marginalized, young ACB men. Regardless of the value that these young people bring employers, many employers’ minds are already made up, resulting in further barriers to employment for young, ACB men. The intersubjective and historical notions of Black masculinity are at play in many employers' decision-making processes. Their ideas about Black men have been shaped by normalized societal scripts that define marginalized Black men.

6.9 YETP Funders & The Neoliberal Reality

The struggles faced by many YETP counsellors who support young ACB men do not go unnoticed by funders. The role of funders is to provide YETPs with the necessary monetary support for their organizations to support marginalized youth to access employment. Although funders provide financial support, the funders I spoke with were attuned to the struggles faced by YETP counsellors who support ACB young men. For instance, when speaking with one of the funders, Christine, I realized that she held many frustrations,
Christine: YETPs claim that they're doing all these things to support young Black men and will write grant applications to say they are going to support young Black men. In doing so, they indicate that positive outcomes will be achieved. But it feels like a money grab, you know. So, I feel like from an outreach and intake stem point and what they present to us, the funder, they talk about young Black men as if they can save them from the anti-Black racism they encounter. However, they write the grants that way so they can get the grant money. It's probably the thing that will make your program look more like you are helping people. I don't know how to say this respectfully, but it seems like a money grab, and we worry about the outcomes later. To me, I do not think they are invested in the outcomes for Black male youth, but we know this is what will bring half a million dollars in the door, right.

When I asked Christine whether she was comfortable with my use of the word “exploitation,” she responded,

Christine: Totally, 100%, and just so you know, it's not only the employment programs to take that a step further. It's all the other programs as well. It is the dance. All of the youth programs, such as youth engagement programs, youth development programs, and the youth civic action program, you know. I feel like this cuts across several different problematic areas. I think the other thing that may happen is that programs don't recruit YETP counsellors representing the particular demographic of Black youth who rely on YETP programs. We end up missing young Black men because they don't see themselves reflected. I just want to mention that too, because many young Black men don't see themselves in many YETP programs in the city.

Christine informed me that she once was a youth counsellor for many years in the west-end of Toronto. Her thoughts she shares are rooted in her experience but also her close times with many youth serving organizations in Toronto, particularly Black led YETPs. Christine did mention to me that she feels some YETPs exploit ACB young men by attempting to tailor their grant applications to focus specifically on marginalized ACB men. She also goes on to mention that these organizations who provide a sense of manipulation to seek funds do not put into practice the work of providing the supports needed to address the social and economic barriers ACB men encounter. At this juncture, we must consider whether Christine recognizes how
neoliberalism is playing a role to encourage many YETPs to define how they are going to support but also encouraging YETPs to not practice what they commit to do for the young men. Christine’s assertion does not consider how the neoliberal parameters set by funding agencies create roadblocks for YETPs to provide the necessary support that the young men need to be successful in YETPs. Christine also mentioned to me that many YETPs do not educate these young men with an understanding of their unique lived experiences. For instance, Christine identified a lack of Black employment counsellors in these programs. As Christine mentioned, “the unique lived experiences of these youth may go unnoticed by people who do not understand the unique intersections of oppression that impact young ACB men, including their race, ethnicity and masculinity.” As it may hold some truth to what Christine is saying, she also does not consider that the funding agencies play a role in how YETPs are structured and how they execute outcomes for young people, all of which are based on the neoliberal measures embedded within the funding agreements between funders and YETPs. Given that the expected outcome is to employ ACB male youth, it is fundamentally incorrect to place blame exclusively on YETPs to ensure all ACB young men are able to sustain employment. Since neoliberalism continues to manifest within non-profit organizations (NPOs) and social spaces such as YETPs, these spaces demonstrate an internal contradiction, while not appreciating the struggles of marginalized Black male youth. The neoliberal narrative forces NPOs to affirm and reproduce insufficient and incomplete understandings of the experiences of marginalized Black youth. These narratives shape the opinions of the public, including funders, who are convinced that youth programs can help Black youth develop socially (Baldridge, 2019). Youth programs, including YETPs, suggest that YETPs can and do work to better the lives of young, marginalized Black men. In reality, this process simply reinforces insensitive “sets of policies and practices that affect their lives”
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(Baldridge, 2019, p. 17). Neoliberalism relies upon capitalism, racism, and patriarchy and is entrenched in racist discourse. These measures define opportunity among Black youth, a false outcome that, in many cases, cannot be met (Baldridge, 2019).

Another funder, Joan, recognized that ‘talking the talk’ is not enough to employ Black male youth. The reality is that ACB youth face social barriers, including anti-Black racism, limited education, and criminalization, resulting in fewer opportunities,

Joan: In my experience, I have seen ACB young men or adult men that have been criminalized have a more challenging time. Often, they are asked to disclose whether or not they were involved with the criminal justice system. In my experience as an employment counsellor some time ago, it was certainly harder for me to help those people out of an unemployment situation, especially in the more corporate environments, not so much in maybe trades or construction. But to get a job at a bank or to get a job working with vulnerable people or you know seniors or children any kind of work or office environment is certainly harder. A lot of them have not finished high school.

Racism carries out the work of neoliberalism, reproducing the oppression that marginalized young Black men encounter. This “occurs through historical and contemporary power-knowledge relations that inform the racial discourses used to govern communities of colour” (Baldridge, 2019, p. 18). As such, it is unsurprising that ACB male youth do not receive mentorship and support that speaks to their unique lived experiences, as they are governed under neoliberalism. Many ACB male youth cycle through YETPs multiple times as they are unable to comprehend essential working duties. Further, racist employers create barriers for these young men due to social stereotypes. Funding for one ACB youth ranges between $16,000 to $18,000 per YETP. Despite the good intentions of funders, YETP counsellors, and the few employers who work in solidarity to support ACB male youth, the neoliberal and colonial system, through its racist discourse, creates barriers for young ACB men. Christine further alluded to this,
Christine:  

*I don't think the resources are targeted to them. It may help one or two or a few young Black men, but I don't think most Black young men who enter these programs are actually leaving with what they would need and what they desire as the next step for their career trajectory. I don't think we are when I look at how much we invest in these types of programs. I don't think the programs are designed well, but we've had a 35-year relationship with the feds. I don't know if we have the opportunity to change it right now.” “My fear, to be honest with you, is that even as a secondary funder on behalf of the federal government, we don't write the rules. This means we also don't have a demographic-specific target other than youth being out of school or do not have employment experience. You know there's no demographical cut, so even if we wanted to customize, we would not be able to customize in a meaningful way because we are secondary funders. We can't even provide wrap-around supports that ACB male youth need.

Here, Christine does assert that YETP programs are forced to follow a specific approach to offer social supports to ACB young men. She also asserts that only a few individuals benefit from the services. Also, she informs this study that she does not write the rules. This indicates to the study that rules are designed by certain funders who are of a different social class and might not be aware of the ACB male youths’ unique needs to access the support they require in YETPs. This study recognizes that those who do write the funding rules are the ones reproducing the neoliberal ideology. In this case, “neoliberalism pretends to offer equal opportunity and access to social mobility but often operates within binaries of “good” or “bad,” “skilled” or “unskilled,” using racialized coded language that de-emphasizes the role of race (colour blindness) to focus on character and ability” (Baldridge, 2019, p. 18). The neoliberal social discourse that directs how YETPs are funded encourage YETPs to assimilate marginalized young people into the fabric of the white settler colonized nation-state. There is no mandate within YETPs to ensure that young ACB men succeed in getting jobs. Barriers imposed by many white employers work alongside a lack of ways in which to provide meaningful mentorship and support in YETP programing, resulting in young ACB men who remain marginalized with no work and limited
employment skills. The neoliberal discourse ensures the absence of meaningful mentorship and support supports that contradict the white settler society’s image of Canadian citizens. The colonial white settler ideology and its racist cultural assumptions are at work within YETPs, forcing Black youth to think in colonial terms, condemning their Blackness (Fanon, 1967a). Consequently, marginalized ACB male youth are trapped in a constant struggle for liberation, while many YETPs ignore structural oppression, opening “the door for damage-centered and deficit-oriented rhetoric and policies that position minoritized youth as needing to be contained” (Baldridge, 2019, p. 18).

6.10 Conclusion

This chapter demonstrated that the ACB young men in this study face barriers in formal education which impact their social capital. The continuous barriers experienced by these young men impede upon how the YETP counsellors attempt to respond to serving these young men in order to seek sustainable employment. This chapter revealed that many ACB male employers recognize the lowered social capital of the young men and demonstrate a genuine interest in the employment success of marginalized ACB male youth. The employers decide to mentor young Black men to increase their social capital, taking into account the many social oppressions and barriers they frequently face. Finally, this chapter discussed how neoliberalism is persistent within the relationship between YETPs and funders. The tension created by neoliberalism strains the relationship between funders and YETPS, making funders view YETP as not being supportive enough of ACB young men. However, the funders misrecognize how neoliberalism sets the parameters while ensuring YETPs follow its ideological direction. In the coming chapter, I discuss how young ACB men express their lived experiences of anti-Black racism and explore how young ACB men find it difficult to express their vulnerability with YETP counsellors.
Chapter Seven: Marginalized ACB Male Youth, YETPs & Employment: The Vicious Cycle of Attempting to Employ ACB Male Youth

The stigma that follows marginalized ACB young men interferes with the methods that many YETP counsellors use to provide adequate job training and find employment for these youth. The negative perception of young, marginalized ACB males’ masculinity is an embodiment of historical social understandings of Black masculinity. The general, stereotypical understandings of the race and gender of young, ACB men are part of the doxa of the contemporary social world, built upon a racist and colonial past. Many YETP counsellors who do not share the same social experiences as ACB youth, particularly those who are not ACB, view socially constructed Black masculinity as biologically determined. Within general Canadian society, ACB young men are commonly homogenized, contributing to the development of a social truth about the marginalization of ACB young men. The resulting injustices, ideas and meanings are then maintained without question (Bourdieu, 1998).

Many YETP counsellors fail to see any issues with their approach to supporting young ACB men and may engage in harmful behaviour, including unintentional displays of privilege and microaggressions. The counsellors’ unconscious approach “is never anything other than the forgetting of history which history itself produces by incorporating the objective structures it produces” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 78-79). In other words, some YETP counsellors are not conscious of the historical underpinnings of the portrayal of Black masculinity in mainstream society. While many YETP counsellors in the present study recognize and honour the humanity of ACB youth, all counsellors are trapped in a YETP culture, which mirrors the wider culture, that disregards the lived realities of young Black men. In the present study, the habitus of workers within many YETPs reflects “the system of disposition- a past which survives in the present”
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(Bourdieu, 1977, p. 82). The historical, stereotypical understanding of Black manhood thus plays out within many YETPs. Within the Canadian nation-state, YETPs are forced to align with the anti-Black, colonial mandate and are unable to challenge the ontological and assumed homogeneous nature of Black masculinity.

In the following passages, I discuss how young ACB men express their lived experiences of anti-Black racism. Youth participants have difficulty describing the social oppressions they experience in employment training within YETPs. Many YETP counsellors homogenize ACB men in YETP social spaces and provide inadequate support, complicating the employment training they receive. This chapter will also explore how young ACB men find it difficult to express their vulnerability with YETP counsellors. Participants indicated that they feel underappreciated while utilizing YETPs and as such, they do not feel comfortable being vulnerable with many YETP counsellors. The sense of vulnerability that the young men describe is their inability to trust some counsellors with their thoughts and feelings.

The white settler Canadian colonial ideology underlies many, if not all, social spaces within YETPs. The present chapter will also explore how the social ideology of whiteness compromises the employment training services received by ACB male youth. Further, white YETP counsellors fail to use practices that are relatable and intentionally benefiting Black young men’s employment development, resulting in inadequate employment training. These common YETP practices maintain the disempowerment of ACB youth while sustaining white supremacy, an ideal of white hegemonic masculinity, and class inequality, leading to inadequate supports that do not meet the needs of marginalized ACB male youth.
7.1 Who Am I?

The ACB young men who participated in the present study acknowledge that they experience anti-Black racism. Still, they struggle to describe the social oppression they experience in employment training. Marginalized Black males reflect the urban poor and the most disenfranchised people in society (Young Jr., 2011). Unfortunately, anti-Blackness and gender biases are always following them, mirroring how all Black men are viewed in the colonial social setting.

As mentioned, the concept of Blackness is a complex social reality among African descent people. The many ethnicities within the race category, such as African and Caribbean, contain different cultural and social experiences. The young men who participated in the present study represent many nationalities. Instead of labelling the young men as ‘Black’ exclusively, I signalled my appreciation of the diverse cultural realities of young men living between Ottawa, Toronto, and Montreal. I was curious about how participants felt they were labelled within YETPs and about their experiences with terms such as ACB or Black. I also wanted to understand how participants’ Blackness, masculinity and social class were recognized among YETP supports. The present research benefits from understanding what young people know about themselves and how others understand the cultural and social realities experienced by these young people. Before labelling participants as ACB, I asked them if they were familiar with the term and how they define their own identities. I did mention the term Afro-Caribbean Black and a few young men used the term the way in which I mention the term. One of the ACB male youth Christopher used the term shortly after I mentioned it to him. I cannot say for certain I influenced him, but he not only used the term but provided a further explanation following his use of the term. Christopher mentioned,
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Christopher: I associate with being Afro-Caribbean Black because I believe it is important to take pride in where you come from. I am of Haitian descent, so I rep the Caribbean to the fullest. I also rep being Black to the fullest because we're Black no matter.

I also asked these young people how they have come to know their own masculinity. When I asked Christopher, he describe his masculinity in the following way,

Christopher: As a Black man, I know I cannot be aggressive because people will be scared of me. When I think I am not facing racism, I actually am. It could be at a coffee shop, and the cashier is white, and she doesn’t want to help me, mainly because I’m a Black man. Sometimes I just try to block that out and be like, ok, that’s personal on your end, but I know that I’m good.

When I asked Toronto-based ACB male youth Courtney to speak about his race, he responded,

Courtney: I see myself as ACB. I guess when I look at my parents, I see them as ACB. My father is of Jamaican heritage but was born and raised in England. So that's the Caribbean, and also Jamaicans come from Ghana West Africa, and that’s kind of my thing. So, the Afro, I feel, is connected to the continent in that regard. My mother was born and raised in Guyana. So, it's Caribbean South American, so that would be why I identified with being Black.

When asked how he would describe his masculinity, Courtney explained,

Courtney: I remember one time I was walking to a job as a child and youth worker and getting pulled over. Like, walking and getting stopped by a couple of cops, really!?!? The police officers asked me where am I coming from? I’m like, “What do you mean, where am I coming from?” I said to my house. I'm going to work right now. The cops said that I fit the description of someone who did something at some bank or something like that. Then they asked me for like my ID. I guess they were suspicious because I was wearing a hat, a hoodie, a varsity jacket, some sweatpants, and Nikes. I guess I fit the description of the Black man they were searching for. They ended up getting another full-out description of the person, and they're like, “Oh, the suspect is wearing Black and gold Adidas.” I was like, “Sir, I'm wearing Black and white Nikes. It's not me.” They're like, “Oh, sorry. You know how it is.” Blah, blah. So, things like that to me is racism against my skin and manhood, and that's how I would describe my manhood.
When I asked Courtney how this made him feel, he shared,

Courtney: *Upset. Yeah, it just made me upset. Like, why are you inconveniencing me? And why are you putting that label on me, like I’m a suspect? I’m literally a very genuine, nice pure person who is going to a group home to be a youth worker. How I am treated at times is bullshit.*

The young men who participated in the present study taught me that the term “ACB” means a connection to the African continent and allows for the inclusion of varying ethnicities. It is important that we understand what the term “ACB” is doing to Black young people and others outside of Blackness. In other words, how do people’s intersubjective understandings of the term impact young, Black men? Christopher and Courtney’s experiences with racism both in the coffee shop and with police demonstrate a ritual of degrading Black masculinity. Both anti-Black racism and gender biases leveraged against young Black men is a ritual performed by others. The ritual involves repeating and demonstrating hatred and belittling, cementing stereotypical notions about Black men.

When I asked about their racial identities, both Christopher and Courtney appreciated the term “ACB,” as it brought them a sense of unity among people of African descent people and/or a sense of belonging within their immediate family. The term also helped them to take pride in being Black, which stands at odds with the social and political degradation of Blackness. The words represented within the term “ACB” are actively “appropriated” (Aho, 1998). As such, “they are used to articulate human needs and desires or to facilitate human interests” (Aho, 1998, p. 22). These young men have an interactive and reciprocal relationship with the term, as “like all artifacts, […] languages boomerang back to re-create their creators” (Aho, 1998, p. 22). This re-creation uses the terms “ACB” or “Black” to define people of African descent, ultimately
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homogenizing their lived experiences as one. The terms “Black” and “ACB” do not define these young people enough to recognize their ethnicity and individuality.

From two different Canadian cities, Christopher and Courtney came to know their Blackness through an orchestrated lumping of the experiences of all people of African descent. This homogenization reflects stereotypical notions about Blackness and generalizes the lived experiences of all ACB people. According to Fanon (1967b), “the object of lumping all Negroes together under the designation of ‘Negro people’ is to deprive them of any possibility of individual expression. What is thus attempted is to put them under the obligation of matching the idea one has of them” (p. 17). Although the term “ACB” has been coined in an attempt to acknowledge the cultural and social realities of people of African descent, it still “assumes that all Negroes agree on certain things, that they share a principle of communion. The truth is that there is nothing, a priori, to warrant the assumption that such a thing as a Negro people exists” (Fanon, 1967b, p. 17).

When speaking with Courtney, he took the conversation regarding his ethnicity a step further, connecting Caribbean and English ethnicities to his Ghanaian roots. Further, the intersubjective notions of his parents inform his subjective understanding of his own identity. Courtney, like many of us, “may have to be told who and what we are, that we may not know ‘naturally’” (Macey, 1999, p. 8). Both Christopher and Courtney, young men from two different cities, allude to their informed identity as being ACB rather than becoming ACB. Being ACB is conceived as a given racial category, whereas becoming ACB is an identity that an individual takes on through political relations (Dei, 1997). This is significant, as it provides meaning to how young ACB people make sense of their social identities.
During my conversations with Courtney and Christopher, they indicated that they cannot escape the grip of the gender discrimination they experience as Black men. As men of African descent, “we are disposed because we are exposed. It is because the body is exposed and endangered in the world, faced with the risk of emotion, lesion, suffering, sometimes death” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 140). The lived experiences of Courtney and Christopher indicate that the doxa about their manhood means that their social oppression is “continuous and often unnoticed” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 141).

Although Christopher and Courtney understood their ACB identity through being ACB, I also spoke with young ACB men in Toronto who were unfamiliar with the term, an indication that they took up the term and were becoming ACB during the interview. During one of the focus groups among ACB male youth in Toronto, I was asked to define the term. I picked up on how they struggled to define Blackness during this conversation. When I asked the youth about their identities, I asked whether they identified as Afro-Caribbean Black, or “ACB” and what that means to them. The youth responded,

Kyle: So what does that look like... So, Afro pertains to Africa?
I clarified that yes, it did.
Kyle: So, like Afro Caribbean, it's either-or, or both?
Again, I clarified by stating yes to their inquiry.
Kyle: Ok, yeah
Johnson: Yeah, I identify myself to being Afro Caribbean.
Kyrie: Yes, I identify myself to be African.

When asked what it means to be African, Caribbean and Black, youth responded,
Kyrie: *To be honest, I don’t even know*

Johnson: *I think that it is where your ancestry comes from, like Africa or the Caribbean, then I think that’s what it means to be Black. Somewhere down the line, someone is from there.*

The search for a name, identity or label, such as ACB or Black, is continuously in a position to be undesirable because of the histories of racism/colonialism that inform the terms that are available. Fanon (1967a) mentions that it is the colonial discourse and practices which define Blackness. The colonial discourse marks Blackness as non-human while upholding forms of social oppressions which impact the African people in colonized nation-states. When speaking with the ACB young men in the focus group, they demonstrated that they were uncertain about defining their Blackness and did not immediately recognize or identify with the Afro-Caribbean Black identity. Both Kyrie and Kyle were unsure how to define ‘ACB’ for themselves but did not resist learning about the term. It is in this moment, for instance, these young men seek to understand themselves through labels that are always inadequate, and yet are all that is available to them in the confines of settler-colonial histories and current racist realities. I sensed that these youth were non-conforming to the ACB identity, and it is not a “mistake to say that words actually create the ontologies” (Aho, 1998, p. 31). Instead, the term was “‘already there,’ independent of human consciousness, awaiting names to disclose them” (Aho, 1998, p. 31). For many young ACB male participants, the term’s use justifies their identities, as it defines their identity, yet still many of them struggle to identify who they are beyond the term. Youth experience difficulties shaping their own understandings of themselves as ACB male youth that extend beyond their race and its common representations. Many, if not all, youth participants feel misunderstood because their Blackness has been defined for them based on inherited historical preconceptions and stereotypes. For many of these youth, knowledge of who they are “is not
really sought after” (Fanon, 1967b, p. 18). As a result, they “never rediscover what is important beneath what is contingent” (Fanon, 1967b, p. 18). Many young ACB men rely on specific terms to justify their identities, allowing non-Black people to define their identities within the confines of a white settler colonial social reality. Consequently, in the colonial reality, Blackness is redefined by white supremacy as a “quintessence of evil” (Fanon, 1963, p. 6).

7.2 The Sense of Feeling Ostracized in YETPs

Misconceptions about ACB men in YETP settings emerged throughout the present study, indicating that many counsellors fail to approach youth in meaningful ways that support their development of employment skills. The data revealed a cultural norm among many YETP employment counsellors, where counsellors homogenize ACB young men, addressing them in inadvertently degrading ways. Many counsellors accept the general definitions of Black masculinity within the white settler Canadian colonial reality. For instance, Christopher, a young ACB male in Montreal, discussed the cultural norms he has experienced in YETPs as a Black man,

Christopher: *Well, I find that you'll have the support you need if you happen to walk into the right place. Sometimes when you go to certain organizations, you just feel that support, you know what I mean. Other places you just don’t. It’s like those not-so-good places have counsellors who just want to get paid and are not really into helping people in the community, especially Black young men. You definitely feel the support when you have it, and you feel it when you don’t. If someone from an organization takes the time to call you after work to see how you’re doing, and actually cares about your well-being, then that’s somebody who cares. If they treat you like how everyone else treats Black young men, they don’t care; they are just here to pretend.*

Kevin, an ACB young man from Ottawa, echoed Christopher and provided more insight as to his feelings of dismissal within the YETP setting as a Black man.
Kevin: *They never talk about how my experiences as a Black man, never. No way. They do not even consider what I have to go through as a Black man, the racism I have to deal with. They would never teach me, or any other Black men in the program, how to be Black bro, straight up.*

In the experiences of ACB male youth who use YETPs, many YETP counsellors use the manufactured, white settler ideology. Further, young, Black male participants referenced an omission of supports that recognize their race and gender, which positively works towards their economic development within YETP practices. These young men discuss how the services they receive attribute to creating further barriers to their employment searches. Listening to Christopher and Kevin, who are both in different cities (Montreal and Ottawa) indicate that counsellors’ practices, whom they interact with are ineffective in providing employment support tailored to their social class, race and gender. Christopher goes as far to mention that he believes that the counsellors are only interested in collecting pay while failing to adequately serve his needs as a young ACB man.

When I observed interactions between YETP counsellors and young ACB men, I noticed that some counsellors use an insensitive and direct tone when speaking to youth. Some counsellors appeared to make ACB men uncomfortable when they were giving instructions about YETP schedules or workshop assignments. For instance, it was common to see certain counsellors single out young Black men among other youth to address their punctuality. Witnessing these interactions, I felt that it was not my place as the researcher to interfere. Despite many counsellors pointing to them about being late, the youth are still going to face racism in the workplace which may mean it does not matter whether they are on time or not. ACB young men still experience discrimination and criminalization because of societal perceptions of their social characteristics. These young, ACB men find themselves in a “shared cultural situation” (Butler, 1988, p. 522) with others who reinforce the villainizing, homogenized
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ideas surrounding their manhood. Do counsellors account for the lived realities of marginalized ACB men prior to contact with YETP services? Or do counsellors simply homogenize all ACB male youth, offering each youth the same services based on counsellors’ preconceived notions about Black masculinity?

7.3 White & Non-African Descent YETP Counsellors

The participants in this study mentioned that many YETP counsellors fail to recognize their unique struggles. ACB young men who participated in the study explained that many white YETP counsellors and counsellors who are not of African descent speak to them in demeaning or dehumanizing ways. The ACB young men in the study did not indicate that any ACB counsellors, male or female, lack understanding of their experiences of racism, classism, or their gendered experiences. Listening to these young men speak reminds this study that it is not individual white people who are the concern; it is the white settler social discourse that radiates anti-Blackness, influencing white and white-passing people to embody the colonized world that is white (Ahmed, 2007). Here, we must recognize and understand that whiteness as an ideology “is an effect of racialization, which in turn shapes what it is that bodies ‘can do’” (Ahmed, 2007, p. 150).

Toronto-based ACB male youth Courtney, who utilizes YETPs in the east end of the city, explained that he and many other ACB males face constant microaggressions within the YETP centre from white and non-Black counsellors. Courtney acknowledged that he experiences social oppression within the YETP,

Courtney: I think I’m acknowledged differently than other young people in the program. Like, comments that are directed to Black youth, from white counsellors, are “guys make sure you come on time” and like just acknowledging us and emphasizing on certain things to young Black men
Here, Courtney mentioned that he cannot fully describe what he is experiencing. Still, ACB young men undoubtedly receive different treatment than others in the east Toronto YETP setting. Specifically, Courtney points to the trope that Black men are often late, in comparison to non-Black youth in the program, an idea that harkens back to the stereotypical idea that Black men are lazy. Although these comments may be intended to encourage mindful time management among ACB youth, they are experienced as a microaggression targeted at ACB men in the YETP and may be considered a form of public shaming. These microaggressions are in line with the white settler ideology that considers Black men the ‘Other’, while homogenizing their lived experiences. According to Fanon (1967a) the Black man is comparison. Black men need to be compared and subsequently compartmentalized as the ‘Other,’ in iconic fashion, to demonize their existence. This contributes to the homogenization of Black men’s lived experiences and the dismissal of their humanity. The microaggression described by Courtney speaks to gender bias that intersects with racial discrimination. At first, this interaction may seem subtle; but in fact, it comes across as direct discrimination toward ACB men in YETPs.

Other ACB young people in the west end of Toronto echoed Courtney,

Terence: Just be inclusive for everyone.

Corie: Bonus points if you get what struggles us Black men are going through, you know. But I feel like the struggles we go through should be acknowledged like everyone else and taken seriously.

YETPs are supposed to provide ACB men an opportunity to feel a sense of belonging in their programs which provides young people with social and employment supports. However, collectively, participants in the present study explain that many YETP counsellors fail to
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recognize their unique struggles, which are incomparable to non-Black youth, or those of a different social class. As mentioned by ACB males, Corie and Terence, there is a sense among YETP counsellors that they do not recognize how include Black young men in the YETPs. As I receive the information from these two young men they are also indicating because their social hardships are unrecognized, they feel their unique experiences are not taken seriously.

If workers fail to recognize the intersectional realities among youth who utilize YETPs, they are engaging in the dangerous practice of grouping all users' experiences together, resulting in further marginalization. For instance, Steinbugler et al. (2006) mentions that it is impossible to decipher Black men and women's lived experiences in programs if they are grouped as one. Historically, the lived experiences of Black people have been contingent upon their gender, race, social class and sexuality. In the case of Black men within colonized nation-states, the inferior treatment they have received throughout history must be understood by those who work with them (Fanon, 1967a).

Although youth participants did not describe Canada as a white settler colonized nation-state, they did understand that anti-Blackness and gender biases are systematically reinforced through microaggressions similar to those they experience every day, even within the context of YETPs. Kevin, who is based in Ottawa, mentioned that greater social systems appear to disadvantage and work against Black men, an ideology that seeps into YETPs and the services they offer,

Kevin:  

Bro, to be honest, cause we are all trying, you know. Me, you or whoever the Black man is, it is the system that is against us, right. You know what I mean. Whether you sell crack or whether you're fuckin this and that, you as a Black man still have to face the fucking bullshit, no matter where you go, even here.” [...] “So, you will understand, you know what I'm talking about, you know what I mean.” [...] “We all have different mentalities, but we all have one goal right, that goal is to make sure we live happily after that's why we're doing all this employment stuff. But everywhere you
Here, Kevin has identified misandry noir within the colonized Canadian nation-state. The “Black man is locked in his body” (Fanon, 1967a, p. 200) and is always defined as a Black man based on stereotypical notions within a colonial white settler ideology. Identity is manufactured through physical and mental continuity and is predicated upon values, norms and ideals (Ricoeur, 1992). The norms that define marginalized ACB men through Canadian social discourse disrupt their livelihood and stigmatize how they receive social supports, even employment training. Even when ACB men attempt to succeed, this social discourse presents their identities as both fixed and unfavourable within social spaces.

7.4 Being Vulnerable Is Not Easy

Tafari was one of the first young ACB men that I interviewed in Montreal. During our interview, I sensed that Tafari was not comfortable being vulnerable when discussing how he is viewed and treated within the YETP he utilizes. Although he mentioned his beautiful working relationship with one specific YETP counsellor, he did allude to how he does not feel accepted by most employment counsellors within the YETP space. When I asked Tafari what YETPs could do to make him feel more comfortable, Tafari responded,

Tafari: No. A part of me wants to give you my thoughts, but the other part of me does not want to. I want to provide you with the reason, but it’s not you. It’s because I don’t feel like it’s going to go anywhere. I will say this, it’s good to acknowledge the problem, but if we do so too much, ones will identify as the problem. Does that make sense?

When I asked Tafari what benefits he saw for ACB young men who access YETPs, he responded,
Tafari: *They don’t [have benefits], at least not this one. These programs are not focused on race and ethnicity that way or Black men, for that matter. Even if they try to, they don’t work no matter what. Generally, I think it does a great job of offering jobs, but I have a lot of things that I would like to give advice to make things better.*

I asked Tafari what advice he would give,

Tafari: *What advice, to teach people to create jobs for Black youth, but I feel I wouldn’t know how to formulate it. I would write it down and send it to you if you want to know because, knowing myself, since I can’t pinpoint it, I will get pissed, and we are going to waste time.*

Tafari recognizes YETP counsellors will not understand or appreciate his vulnerabilities, so he does not share them in the YETP space. His inability to be vulnerable may stem from the general idea that men should not be vulnerable. The common characteristics that associate to men is dominant and aggressive. However, these pervasive characterizations leave no room for men to express their vulnerabilities under the gaze of mainstream society. The inability of Black men to be vulnerable erases their “actual lived experience from theory; and the violence and death Black males suffer in society” (Curry, 2017, p. 29). For young ACB men in all three cities represented in the present study, the inability to express their vulnerabilities makes them unable to discuss “the material disadvantages Black males face due to incarceration, unemployment, police brutality, homicide, domestic and sexual abuse throughout society” (Curry, 2017, p. 29). Tafari, along with other young Black men in the present study, performs his masculinity as prescribed within western mainstream society. These youth face dehumanization through their intersubjective encounters with many YETP counsellors who do not understand their social realities, leaving them unable to be vulnerable. In other words, people’s pain, silence and the perception of these things are not solely their own but are enabled or disabled based on shared cultural situations (Butler, 1988).
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When marginalized ACB young men attempt to speak about their social struggles and experience dismissal, they may inadvertently reinforce the negative outlook that many people hold toward them, further discouraging vulnerability. Black men are locked into their Blackness and are labelled with a series of socially prescribed defects from the moment they are born (Fanon, 1967a). It is “evident that for us, the true desalination of the Black man implies a brutal awareness of the social and economic realities” (Fanon, 1967a, p. xiv) that impact them. The marginalized ACB young men who participated in the present study live with social realities that are built upon a long history of how Black men have been treated in Canada.

Youth participants in the present study partially recognize that expressing their vulnerability is challenging. As such, they reserve the opportunity to be vulnerable. Still, those who work closely to support them, including some YETP counsellors, try to apply their knowledge, but miss the mark on how to adequately do so. These young men struggle for liberation in places that should recognize their humanity and increase their social capital and employment prospects. In reality, many YETP counsellors maintain an understanding of Black men originating from historical and intersubjective stereotypical social truths about Black masculinity. Spurling (1977) argues that conceptions of self and other people result from their experiences with others. It is our experiences that are enmeshed with other people which creates intersubjective meanings and means of communication. The social truth about marginalized Black men is based upon perceived disparities that has been fashioned as a common truth. ACB participants point to how their identities have been fixed as the ‘Other’. Christopher, a youth participant, explained how hard it is being a Black man in Montreal,

Christopher:  
*When it comes to being masculine as a Black man, it is tough to be vulnerable because we’re constantly being called soft when we are trying to talk about how we feel. Then once we talk about how we feel, we’re considered not masculine enough. I think that right there should stop if we*
want to solve problems, if we want to become the family man, if we want to meet the right girl, if we want to have good relationships with each other, or be the right to be human. It’s like we can’t give ourselves off too easily to other people. We always have to be aware that there is a boundary for us to share how we feel. It is a boundary that you just don’t cross.

Obi, an ACB youth from Toronto, echoed Christopher,

Obi: We’ve been stripped of so much opportunity, and we have like such a burden of trying to be providers, or like being in a place where we can make our money. Even during our struggles, we have to be brave. We have to be strong. We are over-sexualized, like we need to be a man who has ten women. The way many of us have been raised is really tough. Many of us are conditioned not to have feelings. There’s a lot of issues among us because of our ego, and we’re violent towards each other. So, I love the man Dem we’re great, but at the same time, we have our own issues within ourselves, and it’s all because of the pressures and systemic things that are affecting.

The colonized world robs Black men of the ability to be vulnerable. They have learned and gained a sense that discussing their lived experiences is problematic and unappreciated.

Black men are surrounded by a sense of certain uncertainty (Fanon, 1967a). Coupled with low-income status, many of these ACB male youth are raised in tough circumstances where they become desensitized to their feelings. As Obi indicated, many marginalized, young ACB men are violent towards each other as a means of expressing themselves because it is the only way they know how. Many YETP counsellors disregard youth vulnerabilities and speak to youth in demeaning ways due to outward perceptions of Black men in mainstream society. While they must focus on getting these young men employment, they fail to recognize the challenges these young men experience and are unable to provide the necessary support. Kevin, a young ACB man from Ottawa explained,

Kevin: Ok, my relationship with a few workers here is not right at times. For instance, let’s say I tell them I have this situation, and what I need to solve is something. After I say what I am saying, they say some weird shit. They never listen, and they never ask me questions. These workers go straight to
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their solution. They say, ‘Ok, this is what we're gonna do, we're gonna get that for you’. Like, how do you put it that way? They never tell you ‘I'm sorry you have this much on your plate’; you know what I mean. So, it's hard for me to appreciate the type of help they are offering me. They never listen to what you have to say; you know what I mean.

Respecting Kevin’s experience, I noticed that his description mirrors Tafari’s experiences. Although these young men were interviewed separately, their lived experiences with utilizing YETPs are similar. For these marginalized young people, white settler ideology determines their identity from “anecdotes, and stories” (Fanon, 1967a, p. 91). It is challenging to access meaningful employment support if ACB men feel unappreciated and are unable to be vulnerable in YETP spaces. Although the primary objective of YETPs is to find employment for young people, the present analysis indicates that the disregard of their lived experiences further disadvantages young ACB men. Johnson, an ACB young man from Toronto who was utilizing a YETP, also reported feeling unappreciated,

Johnson: It should just be inclusive for everyone, including Black men like me. The messed-up part about this place is that they have people who are teaching the program and have no idea about who I am or what I go through. They have no counsellors who I can relate to. Say if an Indian person came into the employment program, they have a counsellor who is Indian to accommodate them, the Indian youth and the Indian counsellor can relate with one another. It's simple if a person understands you, then they can help you. If they do not, then nothing matters.

Christopher from Montreal echoed Johnson,

Christopher: I don’t care about a false sense of equality. I care more about how they demonstrate meeting people, me and other Black male youth in the program where we are at. If your demographic in the programs is Afro-Caribbean Black males, then obviously, it would make sense to have Black counsellors. I would appreciate some representation in that sense because there's more relatability and understanding, and that goes a long way.

Unsurprisingly, Kevin, a young ACB man from Ottawa, was in line with both Christopher and Johnson:
Kevin: *They never ask me about what I have to deal with as a Black man. If they are not asking, then how will they ever know? It’s not that hard when you think about it. How can they even relate to what it feels like being me? Straight up. There are no Black people in here, so that is an example of the level of care they have.*

Given the perspectives of these youth, it is problematic for many YETP counsellors to match them with jobs at institutions that continue to dismiss their unique lived experiences. These marginalized ACB young men encounter myriad forms of discrimination, stemming from anti-Black racism, classism, and gender biases. Additionally, they contend with YETPs that often dismiss their lived experiences. As such, these youth struggle to feel belonging within YETPs, adding to the lack of belonging they experience within Canadian white settler mainstream society. Johnson suggests that South Asian youth entering the program access support with relative ease because there is a South Asian YETP counsellor to accommodate them. This study indicates that there are not many ACB counsellors in YETP organizations. Instead, ACB counsellors in many of the YETPs that I visited were far and few between. Meaning, many of the YETPs there were one or two ACB counsellors among white and non-African descent counsellors. When there were many more ACB counsellors in one YETP it was organized and operated by ACB executive directors who hired ACB counsellors. In many cases, Black male youth in YETPs do not have the opportunity to connect with ACB counsellors who can support them and better understand their lived experiences.

### 7.5 Whiteness & YETP Counsellors

To understand how ACB young men are supported in YETPs, we must understand the intersubjective realities that occur between YETP counsellors and young ACB men. Although ACB male youth in the present study have offered a wealth of information by sharing their lived experiences.
In the present study, YETP counsellor participants represent different ethnic and racial backgrounds, and different genders. As such, they approach ACB young men differently based on their social characteristics. Some YETP counsellors who identify as white women provide services based on their own lived experiences, which stand in stark contrast to Black men’s experiences in Canada. For instance, Julia, a YETP counsellor in Ottawa, was often unable to answer questions about the lived experiences of ACB male youth. When I asked how the gender and race of low-income ACB men impacts their employment opportunities, she responded,

Julia: *I don't know how to answer that question.*

When I asked Julia to describe her relationship with the ACB young men she supports, she responded,

Julia: *Um, well, I guess as an employment specialist.*

Fabiola, another YETP counsellor, offered a similar response,

Fabiola: *I think we, as a centre and a program, strongly consider the social, political and economic status of the residents of those in the neighbourhood.*

Many white YETP counsellor participants did not recognize the impact of anti-Black racism on Canadian people of African descent, and also the lack understanding of the heterogeneity among young ACB men. They also did not know how to respond to questions about the social, political, and economic experiences of ACB male youth. As an interviewer, it was particularly surprising to me that Fabiola was unable to expand on her thoughts on the economic status of youth, considering she works in an employment training program. I took note of the inability to speak about the experiences of marginalized ACB young men demonstrated by
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these white YETP counsellors. These are examples of how YETP counsellors view youth through a white settler gaze, which invisibilizes the lived experiences of ACB young men. These counsellors contribute to “the erasure of race and racism as explanatory vehicles by which to provide an alternative understanding” (Jiwani, 2011, p. 65). Removing these vehicles results in an incomplete analysis, dismissing the impacts of anti-Black racism. These counsellors appear to consider only the importance of connecting young, ACB men with jobs in a white settler social reality. This approach erases “both racism and sexism as fundamental discourses” (Jiwani, 2011, p. 65) that allow us to understand the barriers to and facilitators of employment faced by young ACB men.

Although many counsellors were ignorant of the Black experience in Canada, not all white YETP staff were. Jackie, a YETP counsellor in Ottawa, recognizes that working with ACB male youth requires paying attention to their specific cultural and social lived experiences,

Jackie:  

I don't think all youth employment programs consider young Black men. I think most employment programs expect Black young men to fit into a box. I get it: if you’re not from the Black culture, you often don't understand the social barriers for these youth for most white people. Yeah, you hear there's a lack of access or racism in this whole system. But how are you as the counsellor handling it for these young men in your role as an employment counsellor? Not experiencing it is one thing, but not informing yourself as a human being in this line of work and not showing the ability to understand these young people is another thing. The problem is that our employment training services are developed from a very white privileged perspective, which does not help these youth.

Jackie, a white woman and YETP counsellor, acknowledges that white ideology is disruptive in YETP spaces. In contrast, many white YETP counsellors are unable to support young ACB men or understand how their Blackness operates in the confines of whiteness. I had the pleasure of learning about Jackie’s approach when working with marginalized, young ACB men. She informed me that it is essential for her as a white woman in Ottawa to meet ACB
young men where they are at, rather than expecting them to fit into a predetermined timeline.

Jackie explained that her approach is intentional, and results in better outcomes,

Jackie: So, specifically for this program, I do in-person outreach. I've been working in Ottawa housing neighbourhoods for about 20 years. So, I go to various neighbourhoods, and I go where they are. So, I'm in stairwells, tunnels, corners. Wherever the guys are, that's where I am, and that basketball programs, empty apartments, trap houses, I knock on doors.

When I asked Jackie why she used this approach, she explained,

Jackie: Because those are the guys who need support the most. They are not connected to programs or services compared to other young people. Also, young Black men refuse to go to different community programs because the youth workers and counsellors are already judging them because they are from the hood, and they are Black men, right? So, no fault of their own, they're not very active and very well-known to take their initiative and go to programs and services, so I go to them.

When I asked Jackie whether her approach worked, she responded,

Jackie: Absolutely, it's effective. When I put my boots on the ground in the neighbourhood, there are enough people who know me, which adds credibility to me. People automatically start to trust me, and I build a rapport. When I do knock on the door of a trap house, it's not “Yo. There's a cop at the door.” Instead, it's “Jackie's at the door,” right. Then they opened the door, and I pitch to the idea of working legit. I'm like, “I heard you guys were looking for work.”

Jackie’s approach accounts for the lived experiences of marginalized, young Black men and intentionally seeks to understand their subjective realities. Jackie intends “the discourse she is examining to be meaningful to someone perceiving it” (Simms, 2003, p. 34). Unlike many white YETP counsellors, Jackie is “doing something intentionally, acting with a certain intention” (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 68). Jackie is intentionally supporting marginalized ACB men, helping them to obtain future employment. This intentional approach is “an explicit reference to the future” (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 68), a future where young ACB men are able to leave the street life and maintain meaningful employment. Jackie appreciates her first-hand experiences visiting the
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By contrast to Jackie, when speaking with YETP counsellors Julia (Ottawa) and Elisha (Montreal), I asked them to describe their relationships with the ACB men they support. I was interested in how they intentionally approach these young men in their search for employment. Both women acknowledged their whiteness in their responses. When I asked whether they thought that ACB young men require specific accommodation based on culture, class, race, or gender, Julia responded,

Julia: I think that is very difficult for me to answer as a white person. Um, I do not know what someone’s accommodations are if they do not tell me. If somebody asks for accommodation or made me aware of it, then I can help.

Here, Julia states that she is unable to know what accommodations are required by young ACB men if the youth do not tell her. However, is it not plausible for her to inquire about the well-being of ACB youth? When asked the same question, Elisha also referenced her whiteness in her response,

Elisha: I will never be a role model. It’s just not the same. The previous director, who is an older Black woman, has a son. I feel the way she would interact with some of the Black youth she works with was more like a motherly approach. It was a different type of relationship that I know that I can’t have. It’s just not the same. I don’t think they will ever see me as a motherly figure or a role model because our experiences are not the same. I do think the fact, you know, my parents are immigrants, I’m Greek. I’m white, of course. It’s just not the same reality.

As white women, Julia and Elisha recognize the need to be professional and act as mentors for ACB young men. Both women explicitly mention their whiteness to explain their ignorance, or their inability to support young ACB men’s employment development, both as an educator and/or mentor. Both counsellors fail to recognize how race and racism operate in the
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lives of ACB young men. For instance, Julia uses whiteness to excuse herself for not pursuing knowledge or demonstrating interest in racialization. Simultaneously, Elisha uses her whiteness to justify her inability to act as a role model to ACB young men in her program. Again, “whiteness is an effect of racialization, which in turn shapes what it is that bodies can do” (Ahmed, 2007, p. 150). Julia and Elisha’s whiteness structures their “mode of operation” (Ahmed, 2007, p. 150). In other words, if their “world is made white, then the body-at-home is one that can inhabit whiteness” (Ahmed, 2007, p. 150). Both Julia and Elisha’s interpretations of the world through the white gaze are reason enough to justify their inability to accommodate ACB young men through their educational YETPs. Their lack of attentiveness to racialization in this manner, particularly among the ACB young men’s lived experiences, also reinforces a white settler social discourse which omits an appreciation for Black lives in Canada. This practice omits the need to discuss race explicitly, in ways that would intentionally support Black youth. Instead, the practices of Elisha and Julia promotes a “colour-blind approach in which silence about race allows white supremacy to continue unchallenged” (Baldridge, 2019, p. 197).

7.6 Sustaining Canada’s Racial Segregation

Across the many YETPs that I visited, I learned that these youth-centred organizations do not mean to do harm. YETP counsellors such as Elisha and Julia are following the doxic prescription that tells them how to help ACB young men a particular way. The prescription is to assimilate marginalized young Black men to white, middle class norms. The reality is that the consciousness of these counsellors does not recognize this unintentional assimilation of ACB male youth. It is hard for them recognize because it is so far below their consciousness. YETP practices in this sense ignores the young Black men’s habitus, which is different from the doxic prescription that the YETP counsellors commit to. YETPs ignore the importance of strategizing
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ways to support the employment development of ACB male youth, appreciating their Black Canadian experiences. This lack of support functions to keep ACB youth disempowered while sustaining white supremacy and class inequality. Although YETP organizations explicitly mention that they focus on employing marginalized youth, they do so without recognizing the cultural and social realities surrounding Blackness in the Canadian nation-state. The social environment of YETPs reinforces a neoliberal and white settler ideology that fails to acknowledge the racial, class, and gender realities faced by young, marginalized ACB men. This failure extends to many counsellors who remain ignorant about the social realities faced by ACB male youth. YETPs identify young ACB men as visible minorities, stripping them of their heterogeneous identities. YETP counsellor Julia discussed the intake process and how YETPs define ACB youth within their program,

Julia: I find that our intake form does ask the youth about racism, and it serves as the option when we ask people to fill out the form. There is a check box that requests ACB male youth and other youth to self-identify their ethnicity. I find that most people will not tick that box, and I often wonder if it's because they don't want to do it in front of me or if it's like a generally awkward thing.

When I asked what ultimately prompted ACB youth to select the box, Julia responded,

Julia: Some people say what does racialization mean, and I’ll read the definition. We recognize that it's a factor in Canada that impacts people, so it's up to you if you feel it applies to you. Tick it, and if you feel you’re not racialized, then it's up to you. You know, but it's just a factor that the government collects data on.

Unfortunately, ACB young men “will become abnormal at the slightest contact with the white world” (Fanon, 1967, p. 122). YETPs align with the Canadian practice of politically segregating the white majority from visible minorities. Many marginalized ACB young men in YETPs are perceived as the ‘Other’ and are identified based on the white settler social script fashioned for them. Julia highlights that she does read the racial categories and definitions
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outlined on the YETP intake form. Her instructions position Black young men “in relation to the civilizing language: i.e., the metropolitan culture” (Fanon, 1967, p. 2). These young people often fall into the category of low-income status and many lack formal education, impacting their comprehension skills. To account for this, Julia reassures these youth by reading the definition of racialization on the intake form. In doing so, she hopes to encourage them to select the box which defines them based on Canadian national standards. Although Julia’s approach may be perceived as harmless, she still unintentionally neglects the realities faced by ACB young men, including how their Blackness operates in the white settler reality. The professionalism being offered by Julia “is the educating and training ground for entry into society” (Fanon, 1967, p. 127) for these young men.

7.7 YETP Counsellors Attempt to Resist the White Settler Ideology

Many counsellors who participated in the present study acknowledged that most YETP organizations do not attempt to integrate unique ways to support the employment development of ACB male youth into their practice. As a result, rather than receiving impactful support, young ACB men face barriers to sustaining employment. Some white and racialized counsellors involved in the present study expressed concern that the practices of YETPs align with the expectations of whiteness,

Dailene:  

*I think our organization needs a cultural competency lesson. They have done one in the past, such as anti-oppressive practice workshops. But I do not think that a one-time thing is enough. I think such training needs to be drilled in people’s minds and how they practice youth work. I do not know how many times I have said it would be beneficial for people, but there has got to be something ongoing. We can encourage people to do lunch and learns about cultural competency, anti-Black racism, anti-oppressive, Islamophobia; any of these would prove to be beneficial in our working environment. I personally think, in my opinion.*

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Dailene is a racialized Muslim woman in Ottawa who points out that the culture of YETPs is steeped in white settler ideology, which forms the institution of YETPs. As a result, “racialized experiences are denied, and the political claims arising from such experiences are cheerfully relinquished” (Thobani, 2007, p. 7). In this sense, regardless of the push for strategizing ways to support the employment development of ACB male youth, while appreciating their Black Canadian experiences within YETPs, it is challenging to overcome the influence of white settler ideology within the Canadian nation-state.

Despite the long-established ties between the white settler ideology and YETPs, many employment counsellors seek to challenge white settler neoliberal tactics within the spaces of YETPs. Their attempts to advocate for ways to support the employment development of ACB male youth, are often met with resistance by employers and at times some YETP counsellors.

Toronto YETP counsellor, Julez, spoke to this,

Julez: *Youth employment programs are important if they are done correctly. Our programs have a lot of support that ACB youth can benefit from. However, if the worker or the organization does not care to provide meaningful support, it can disengage the youth. However, if administered properly, it will engage ACB youth, and they will benefit.”* […] “Many times, I have seen counsellors not want to help certain individuals and mention things about the youth that aren’t necessarily positive. Often, what I have seen with these agencies is their inability to provide supports and then send Black young men on their way with no employment and close their file."

These tensions not only exist between ACB male youth and YETP counsellors, but also between counsellors themselves. Some counsellors recognize the issues with cultural insensitivity within YETPs, while others do not. Generally, counsellors fail to recognize how neoliberalism silences racialization within YETPs, impacting how ACB young men receive support. Blackness does play a role in how some counsellors decide what supports they are able to offer or provide. Some white counsellors reference their whiteness as a reason to ignore that
“Black men have their variety of racial difference, also constructed from ideas about violence and dangerous sexuality” (Collins, 2004, p. 27). These white counsellors adopt misconceptions about Black young men that have been dictated by a white settler narrative that shapes both their thinking and approach towards the ACB men they are meant to serve.

7.8 Conclusion

In this chapter I discussed the stigma that follows ACB young men interferes with how they receive services with in YETP. Marginalized ACB men continue to be unappreciated and their learning outcomes continue to be threatened as they enter into YETPs that fail to account for the impacts of their social class, racial and gendered identities. The race and gender of young, ACB men are part of the doxa of the contemporary social world, built upon a racist and colonial past. This chapter uncovered that many YETP counsellors fail to see any issues with their approach to supporting young ACB men and may engage in harmful behaviour, including unintentional displays of privilege and microaggressions. The reality is that many white YETP counsellors are not conscious of the historical underpinnings of the portrayal of Black masculinity in mainstream society. The youth participants mentioned in this chapter that they do experience social oppression within YETP, where that receive inadequate support, complicating the employment training. Also in this chapter, the youth mentioned that it is difficult for them to express to express their vulnerability with YETP counsellors. The sense of vulnerability that the young men describe is their inability to trust the YETP counsellors. The following chapter I will discuss this study’s conclusions and practical recommendations that YETPs should consider as best practices to support the young ACB men they serve.
Conclusion Chapter: Appreciating the Differences Among Marginalized ACB Male Youth

This dissertation poses pointed questions and encourages ongoing dialogue, enabling us to rethink methods of support for marginalized ACB male youth as they search for employment opportunities using YETPs. Given the results of the present study, I recommend that YETPs and other informal learning institutions adopt a heterogeneous approach when supporting marginalized ACB young men, whose social circumstances are unique and substantially differ from those of other youth. YETP counsellors and others who work to support marginalized, ACB young men are encouraged to consider racism, gender bias, ageism, and classism as barriers faced by these particular young people in formal learning institutions. These barriers impede the learning abilities of youth, impacting how they achieve and maintain employment.

Results from the present study also indicate that employers should rethink and reframe their hiring practices, which reflect anti-Black racism, classism and gender biases. Employers should transition to hiring qualified ACB male youth without discriminating against them. The present research deepens our understanding of marginalized ACB young men’s un(der)employment realities and how the barriers they encounter prevent them from feeling that they belong in the white settler Canadian economy.

Further, this dissertation allows marginalized Black male youth to have a voice among middle-class people who view them as threats to the Canadian economy. YETP counsellors, employers and funders collectively shared their perspectives about the un(der)employment realities of marginalized ACB male youth. Perhaps most significantly, marginalized Black male youth with lower socio-economic status demonstrated their courage by expressing their
vulnerabilities, including sharing the particular type of marginalization they experience as Black
men and their struggles to gain employment.

8.1 Un(der)employment Of Marginalized ACB Male Youth

The marginalized ACB male youth who were interviewed in this dissertation have
courageously shared what it means for them to negotiate their right to be treated fairly while
seeking employment through YETPs. The anti-Black racism, classism and gender biases
underlying the Canadian labour market dominate and regulate employment access for young,
marginalized Black men. Youth participants who utilize YETPs have shared their frustrations
about perceptions of their race and manhood within the Canadian nation-state. This has
complicated how they experience formal education and why they do not receive suitable
education. Due to low literacy levels resulting from structural violence in formal education, the
ability of young Black men to seek and sustain employment is negatively affected, as many of
them are unable to carry out tasks that are commonly performed in most employment settings.
When these young men do eventually obtain employment through YETPs, they are often trapped
in low-paying menial labour positions reflective of unfair stereotypes about Black masculinity.
This type of work degrades their humanity and selfhood and is reminiscent of historical
examples of Black men serving in slave-type conditions of employment. Further, young ACB
men in the present study have discussed their problematic relationships with many white YETP
counsellors and employers. The young men discussed that many counsellors and employers
stigmatize them, making it difficult for them to receive services through YETPs or access
employment opportunities. The shared lived experiences among these youth are social norms,
which are maintained as the white settler ideology dehumanizes and binds these Black men to
the slavery that dehumanized their Black male ancestors (Fanon, 1967a). The dehumanization
faced by these youth when they seek employment demonstrates that these youth are ‘Othered,’ not solely by their race, but by different social intersections including their gender.

This study encourages all audiences to challenge the practice of homogenizing ACB male youth, which contributes to misunderstanding their lived experiences. This dissertation aims to illustrate how Black youth do not all share the same lived experiences. For instance, Black male youth experience the social world differently than Black female youth, as gender is a defining social characteristic. This is because anti-Black racism impacts people differently based upon their other different social characteristics. From an intersectional perspective, it is the unique combination of social traits – race, class, sexuality, gender, age – which results in specific forms of social oppression (Dunne & Atrey, 2020). Anti-Black racism, which is oppressive, may be experienced differently based upon a person’s social characteristics. The present study acknowledges that the unique lived experiences of discrimination faced by young, marginalized ACB men contribute to the employment barriers they face. The present study aims to deepen scholarly understanding about the unique social oppressions faced by young, marginalized ACB youth, particularly anti-Black racism. Further, the present study aims to identify how classism and gender-based discrimination interact with employment training received by young, ACB men. Results reveal that the employment training experienced by young ACB men should be perceived as non-accommodating for these young men and is a barrier for these youth to assert themselves in the Canadian economy. Refusing to consider the impacts of social oppression on the ability of young Black men to secure employment maintains and reinforces white settler-colonial ideology, which marginalizes and oppresses these youth.
8.2 YETP Employment Counsellors, Employers, & Funders

The incorporation of multiple voices in the present study demonstrates how youth, employers, counsellors, and funders, as a community, make sense of their relationship which is meant to support the youths’ economic development. Aho (1998) suggests that the word “community” is a signal to people who have a shared commonality, either by blood, geographical location, or by their devotion to the same cause. All participants in the present study represent a community of people who are committed to identifying and securing employment opportunities for ACB young men. This study considers how participants experience a sense of loss when they are unable to find employment for Black male youth. The interviews in this study were conducted in an attempt to understand the community from the perspective of all participants. I wanted to know how youth feel “grounded, anchored and secure” (Aho, 1998, p. 83) in the community. It is also important to recognize how these young men, as the colonized, are de-alienated, and viewed as equal to every human being (Fanon, 1967a).

The YETP counsellors, employers and funders are an intricate part of this dissertation. It is essential to understand how young ACB men are perceived by those who are supposed to support their employment development. This dissertation investigated how these groups of non-youth participants understand the social characteristics of marginalized ACB young men. I wanted to know how these supportive adults respond to the vulnerability of youth and establish positive relationships while connecting them with employment. Employers in the present study demonstrated that some employers see great benefit in employing and mentoring young ACB men. The employers in this study indicated that their role as employers extends beyond being the ‘boss.’ The employers who I interviewed were unique as they did not view themselves as the
boss of the young, marginalized men, but mentors who are willing to educate them on life and employability skills. This study recognizes that these skills that the employers demonstrated are based on their experiences as Black men who shared similar life experiences as the young men. As such, these skills are not easily teachable. Rather, these skills that the employers demonstrate were based on their lived experiences. For other employers to adopt this sensitivity, they would have to commit to recognizing the value of demonstrating a genuine sense of vulnerability where the youth can gain a sense of trust. The employers must also recognize the need to be mentors for these young men, which may extend past regular working practices. Employers are encouraged to invest in these young men and teach them how to appreciate work but also treat them as people who deserve adequate employment.

Incorporating the perspective of funders in this study was an attempt to understand the hierarchy within YETPs. I wondered whether funders, who are perceived as the top of the YETP hierarchy, are aware of the unique social circumstances faced by ACB male youth. To what extent do funders understand the lived realities of these youth? I learned that the funders are far removed from the daily operations of the YETPs, but, to some extent, have an understanding of the practices because some of them once were in YETP counsellor roles. Christine, for instance, discussed the need for YETPs to provide additional mentorship for ACB male youth in the programs, but many funders are not aware of the need for the additional mentorship. I also learned that funding and the logistical planning gravely impacts the effectiveness of the YETP outcomes, which omits the requirement to add the mentorship that ACB male youth need to thrive in the programs. As such, the planning homogenizes all youth who enter the program, disallowing a heterogeneous approach to support ACB male youth.
This study takes into account the complexities of how YETPs receive funding from funding agencies. The funding YETPs receive is tied to logistical parameters which dictate how services should be extended to young service users. In turn, the funding can affect the community programs’ ability to serve marginalized young people. This present study found that there is a tension between funders being a force for neoliberalization of organizations. I have learned that neoliberal ideology penetrates these youth-centred organizations, which shape and mold youth for capitalism, and does not address ACB male youths’ social, political and economic barriers. The YETPs apply for funding, and if they win funding contracts, they arbitrarily commit to the funders’ neoliberal logic that wants to produce job-ready people who are relied upon to conduct the work needed for employers and for the Canadian economy. The funders are blinded by neoliberalism and are unable to recognize the anti-Black racism, gender biases, and economic barriers that ACB male young people experience, particularly in relation to employment discrimination. Although one funder in this study recognizes the need to support ACB male youths’ economic development in YETPs, it still remains difficult to respond to these young people’s needs because neoliberalism is tied to the funding parameters. As it currently exists, the funding criteria only permits a model that homogenizes all youth who enter the program, including ACB male youth, disallowing creative solutions to address their economic barriers.

The YETP counsellors who participated in this study play a more active support role for young ACB men when compared to the employers and the funders. Counsellors are the first point of contact for the young men who access YETPs. Often, counsellors are the only point of contact, as youth do not have the opportunity to interact with funders and are overlooked by discriminatory employers. The close relationships between YETP counsellors and ACB male
youth may either contribute to positive employment outcomes or continued economic oppression. As such, the YETP agencies should provide training that supports the YETP counsellors who work with ACB male youth. Also, agencies and funders should take the initiative to learn about and recognize the unique challenges faced by these young men. Strong, trusting relationships between YETP counsellors and ACB youth can foster better, more effective employment support. When youth feel safe and recognize the benefit of being vulnerable with the counsellors, counsellors are able to better support their employment development.

8.3 The Importance of This Work

When we study Black male youth, we must acknowledge how Black masculinity is perceived in the colonial landscape and pay attention to the historical underpinnings of Black manhood. We need to recognize that anti-Black racism does not impact all people of African descent in the same way. Instead, Black people experience anti-Black racism, coupled with other forms of discrimination, amplifying the type of oppression they experience. The social status held by impoverished Black male youth gravely hinders their employment opportunities, as anti-Black racism, gender-bias, and classism combine to negatively impact their chances of being hired. By recognizing systemic discrimination that negatively stereotypes Black masculinity, we see how white settler discourse has formed a dominant narrative that is embedded in employment discrimination. Although Canada claims to be a diverse and inclusive country, the Canadian ideology does not consider how employment discrimination ‘others’ these young men, leaving many of them feeling as though they do not belong. It also does not recognize how ACB male youth experience school-based discrimination, which sets them up for failure even before they are trying to find employment.
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These young people experience multiple forms of racism that are different from anti-Indigenous racism or Islamophobia. ACB young men carry a historicized anti-Black masculinity that has been villainized and normalized within the Canadian nation-state. Young Black men also face classism, where they are perceived as lower class and undeserving of employment. They routinely and continuously experience barriers to education that complicate their literacy, comprehension and employment development. For these reasons, YETPs should rethink how they serve marginalized ACB male youth in their programs.

To this end, I offer the following recommendations specifically for Youth Employment Training Programs in Canada:

1) YETP administration and funders should be more conscious of the extra emotional labour invested by both Black and non-Black counsellors who support marginalized ACB male youth. Black counsellors juggle multiple roles to support these young people and find themselves acting as informal educators to help many interested Black males complete high school, in addition to gaining employment. This study found that few white counsellors see value in helping these young men and do not take initiative to spend time in areas where marginalized ACB youth reside. The few who do so are often able to build relationships with youth and encourage them to see the benefit of paid work. Most often, the extra labour taken on by counsellors is not compensated by YETPs.

2) YETPs are encouraged to focus on partnerships with anti-oppressive and anti-racist employers who see a benefit in employing ACB youth. YETPs should also support employers who want to mentor and train ACB youth while providing transitional skills that will benefit youth in future work experiences.
3) I strongly recommend that YETPs begin a dialogue with local high schools, partnering to support the educational development of young, ACB men. Many marginalized ACB young men enter YETPs unprepared. Their chances of finding suitable employment are lowered due to the structural violence they experience in high school, which complicates their learning in adulthood. Meaningful partnerships between high schools and YETPs can help to further the educational and economic development of youth.

8.4 The Need to Acknowledge the Lived Experiences of Marginalized ACB Male Youth

We must be aware of how the Black man continues to be a slave to history (Fanon, 1967a). Past notions of Black manhood in colonial countries, such as Canada, continue to hold strong today. The historical oppression that marginalizes Black men guides mainstream thinking into the ongoing villainization of Black manhood. The reality is that “at certain moments the black man is locked in his body” (Fanon, 1967a, p. 200) and Black males and their bodies are objects of worldly consciousness (Fanon, 1967a). We must be aware of how social constructions of Black masculinity create barriers for the social, political, and economic mobility of Black men. We need to consider the various social locations that accompany Black manhood, including age, social class, and gender. While all Black men face anti-Black racism, they experience varying degrees of discrimination, which can be motivated by different social characteristics.

This dissertation urges YETPs to acknowledge differences among Black men and refrain from homogenizing their lived experiences. YETPs need to develop awareness of anti-Black racism and adopt an intersectional framework in order to correctly identify the social oppressions experienced by marginalized ACB male youth. This will guide YETPs in creating and implementing the best practical employment support measures for these young people. As such, YETPs must also acknowledge the existence of neoliberal white settler ideology within their
own employment programming. This will allow for YETPs to shift away from this harmful ideology and strategize ways to support the employment development of ACB male youth, while appreciating their Black Canadian experiences.

8.5 Why Should YETPs Care About Marginalized ACB Male Youth?

Once being a marginalized male youth and experiencing barriers in formal education and employment, I do not lose sight of my past social hardships. For instance, I remember when I was sixteen and in search of work, I did not have enough suitable clothing to impress employers. At times, I wore baggy jeans and t-shirts to meet potential employers. I was often overlooked as a possible candidate for jobs in retail or restaurants, as those were the employment opportunities that interested me. When I had a chance to submit a resume, I never received a call back from employers. In combination, these hardships were due to my lived experience of low socio-economic status, coupled with my race and gender, which were seen as ‘bad for business.’ Curry (2017) notes that the stereotypes that plague marginalized Black men have become political and are used to justify economic barriers against low-income Black males. The unfortunate reality for marginalized Black male youth is that general, mainstream society believes they are destined to be savages.

I am using my lived experience to crystalize how the employment barriers I experienced as a young marginalized ACB male are still a social and economic reality for marginalized ACB male youth today. I also acknowledge that my economic barriers and the stereotypical assertions based upon my race, gender, and social class are tied to what Paul Ricoeur (1965) calls history and truth. Ricoeur (1965) states that history is viewed as true knowledge because it is positioned as an objective type of thought. The historicized and stereotypical notions surrounding marginalized Black men are considered to be true because of the continuous practice of
stereotyping Black men. Stereotypes about marginalized Black males, which are assumed to belong to a historical reality, really belong to philosophical notions about stereotyping marginalized Black men. Here, the practiced philosophical normalization of stereotyping these youth is used to justify oppression and block their economic development. From a phenomenological perspective, the historical narratives that oppress marginalized ACB male youth are a conscious truth in broader Canadian society. Ricoeur (1965) urges us to consider:

The method of providing successive approximates, which is practiced here, permits us to decipher concurrently the notions of history and truth, to unfold in depth the various levels of significance based upon this sort of proscenium that is constituted by historical objectivity. (This method of giving various meanings is likewise practiced in “Truth and Falsehood” and in True and False Anguish). (p. 6)

What we witness here is a practiced philosophical notion about Black men that is based off of falsehoods. This is then historicized as a dominant truth, positioning Black men as victims of this history and truth (Fanon, 1967a). It is essential to recognize the significance of this process, as it implies that the stereotypical history about marginalized ACB young men is an actual truth. Consequently, the actuality of this sense of historicized truth confirms its realization through viewing Black men as symbols of sin (Fanon, 1967a).

The present dissertation poses concerns about un(der)employment among marginalized ACB male youth. The anti-Black racism, gender biases, ageism, and classism experienced by young ACB men who seek employment do not appear to be resolving. The image of young Black men within the Canadian colonial setting is sustained philosophically, which is a practiced history. I argue that if the cemented social falsehoods about young ACB men are not addressed,
they will continue to fester, and the economic challenges they face will remain unsolved. If informal learning centers, including YETPs, do not consider the practiced history of marginalized young ACB males, YETPs will continue to provide inadequate support to these young men. Further, YETPs will continue to perpetuate stereotypical narratives about ACB men, promoting the white settler ideology.

What is required for the success of YETPs is an active, anti-oppressive and anti-racist practice, which leads with an intersectional approach. In particular, YETP counsellors are encouraged to be mindful that Black masculinity is a subordinate gender role tied to historical, philosophical meanings and stereotypes. YETPs need to recognize the misconceptions about marginalized ACB young men that remain pervasive in Montreal, Toronto, and Ottawa. There is an urgent need for these YETPs to recognize how misconceptions about these young men and Blackness work to compromise their economic development. YETPs should reflect upon and review strategic plans to ensure that they include specific training and employment opportunities that humanize young Black men. These employment centers should seek out employers who recognize employment discrimination and embrace opportunities to work with these young men. YETPs should also focus on recognizing ACB counsellors’ extra labour supporting Black male youth. Many of the counsellors in this study acknowledge the value of working extra hours with the youth. However, these counsellors face extreme burnout as they take on the role of employment counsellors, academic educators, and mentors. YETPs are encouraged to recognize these multiple roles in order to avoid high turnover and/or disengagement of counsellors.

YETPs, employers, funders, and the broader community can learn from this research that to support these young men, the community must perceive them as equal and deserving of
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employment. The goal is to encourage people to view these young men as worthy of economic opportunity and dispel misconceptions surrounding these young men.

8.6 Appreciating Vulnerabilities of ACB Marginalized Male Youth

It is essential that Canada begins to acknowledge the anti-Black racism that manifests in its social, economic and political discourses, creating barriers for marginalized ACB young men. As a researcher, I reject the oppressive, anti-Black, economic barriers which impact ACB male youth. I also stand for equal opportunities for ACB male youth in both formal and informal learning institutions. These institutions impact how ACB youth access employment opportunities. The present research leaves no room for anti-Black racism, sexism or classism, and builds on the work of scholars such as Carl James, George Sefa Dei, Wesley Crichlow and Rinaldo Walcott, who have, and continue to, illuminate social injustices encountered by Black Canadian men. I agree with Dei and James (1998) who ask critical questions in order to foster inclusivity for marginalized Black male youth in Canada. In order to foster inclusivity and support the economic liberation of Black men in Canada, we must focus on solutions for anti-Black racism, gender discrimination, ageism and classism.

Formal educators, YETP counsellors, and employers who educate, mentor and/or employ marginalized ACB male youth need to recognize that these youth encounter anti-Black racism on a daily basis. The marginalized ACB young men who participated in this study shared that they routinely face anti-Black racism in both formal and informal learning institutions. It is crucial for educators and employment counsellors to understand that persistent employment discrimination caused by anti-Black racism can lead to mental health concerns. David Williams and Ruth Williams-Morris (2000) explain that consistent anti-Black racism can adversely impact the mental health of Black people. Racial discrimination impacts Black people’s mental health in
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three particular ways. The first is through truncated socio-economic mobility, limited access to desirable resources, and a marginal living that negatively affects mental health. The second is the constant onslaught of anti-Black racism that can bring about both physiological and psychological concerns. The third involves the acceptance of normalized cultural stereotypes that lead to negative self-concept and impact psychological well-being. The work of Williams and Williams-Morris connects to Fanon (1967a), who explains that Black men in colonial settings are consistently reminded that they are unwanted parasites, creating an inferiority complex which psychologically impacts Black men. With this knowledge, it is imperative that educators, YETP counsellors and employers of young Black men consider how they can be contributing to the mental health concerns of ACB young men.

While it is essential to find effective methods of supporting ACB young men, YETP counsellors and employers need to understand the risks of providing support, in that inappropriate supports may contribute to negative mental health consequences. The present study has highlighted that ACB young men find it challenging to be vulnerable with many white counsellors. ACB youth participants explained that they experience anti-Black racism in the form of microaggressions. Further, these young men are oppressed in the Canadian nation-state in every facet of their lived experience. This study demonstrates how these youth have normalized racial discrimination to protect themselves. Many youth laugh when they experience anti-Black racism, failing to realize how the oppression has impacted them. A few youth used our interview to vent about the anti-Black racism they have experienced. Supporting these young men requires an understanding of the privilege and power that counsellors and employers hold. YETPs are encouraged to develop and maintain safer learning spaces, where Black youth feel...
comfortable being vulnerable and sharing their experiences. In turn, this will ensure that counsellors feel more comfortable supporting the youth.

8.7 Recognizing Neoliberalism

The YETP spaces that marginalized ACB male youth utilize to obtain employment opportunities are entrenched in neoliberalism. Jodi Melamed (2011) discusses the concept of neoliberal multiculturalism, which is a global racial formation presented as an ethical approach to multiculturalism. Melamed (2011) argues that neoliberal multiculturalism “posits neoliberal restructuring across the globe to be the key to a post-racist world of freedom and opportunity” (p. 138). While neoliberal multiculturalism is supposed to create a post-racist world, in reality, it does not. Instead, it is “signifying systems and cultural repertoires that produce and fix the meaning of human bodies and human groups within the biopolitics produced by neoliberal calculations” (Melamed, 2011, p. 138). I bring attention to Melamed’s idea of neoliberal multiculturalism to demonstrate that neoliberalism can redefine itself without changing meaning. Neoliberalism continues to define racialized groups, continuing the work of classical neoliberalism.

I do not introduce neoliberal multiculturalism as something new within the present study. However, I want to draw attention to the many YETPs that define their organizational practices as anti-racist yet accept stereotypes about ACB young men in many of their programs. Many of the young men who participated in this study have mentioned that they do not feel a sense of belonging in YETPs. Participants also stated that they experience public shaming in front of other young people in the program. Many counsellors and potential employers who subscribe to anti-Black employment discrimination continue to devalue young Black men based upon their social status. When devalued, these young men are unable to exercise many social, political and
economic rights (Melamed, 2011). Marginalized ACB young men who utilize YETPs are at risk for lasting employment implications. My study reveals that these young people are often matched with menial, labour-intensive employment opportunities as a result of negative perceptions of their work ethic and abilities. Based on the evidence from the interviews, YETPs align with neoliberalism, often “downplaying […] structural explanations for inequality” (Baldridge, 2019, p. 176).

The question remains, how do marginalized ACB young men assert themselves within YETPs without feeling as though they don’t belong? How do they go about gaining suitable employment which will provide equal opportunity? There are harsh consequences among ACB young men if YETP counsellors and employers fail to recognize their marginal conditions. Can Black youth-focused YETP programs such as Youth in Motion (Montreal) and Careers Education Empowerment (Toronto) provide foundational and best practices to white-dominated YETPs who work with marginalized Black young men? These programs are widely recognized within their respective cities as Black YETPs with Black counsellors. The staff in these programs are creative, always implementing strategic methods to support the needs of marginalized ACB male youth. CEE, for instance, implements a 3-day retreat for marginalized ACB youth in the program. The days away help with relationship-building between youth and counsellors, leading to trust and a deep understanding of the social, political and economic needs of ACB youth. These YETPs recognize that particular support is required for the employment success of ACB youth.

Finally, how do we implement and mobilize the practical recommendations from this dissertation into the practices of YETPs? It is clear from this study that the young participants are identifying their social and economic oppression. However, will YETP counsellors and
Many of the youth participants in the present study highlighted that the work of YETPs is essential. In certain circumstances, the young people discussed lacking a feeling of belonging in YETPs; however, this is not the general experience of all youth. While certain YETP counsellors and employers maintain neoliberal logic and cause harm within YETPs, there are practices YETPs can follow to provide positive and ongoing support to ACB youth. An approach that has been met with success in YETPs is to have ACB representation within the staff team, ensuring that ACB counsellors are hired and that they use a heterogeneous approach when working with ACB youth. Another promising approach involves hiring counsellors from different races and ethnic groups and encouraging counsellors to recognize when to take space and when to make space to accommodate ACB young people. One white YETP staff participant in the present study demonstrated her commitment by showing up in the neighbourhoods of ACB youth to engage them in mentorship. Her actions demonstrate an effort to build a relationship of solidarity with the young people and the community members. Predominantly white-led YETPs should recognize that the ‘one shoe fits all’ approach does not work. Young, marginalized ACB male youth must deal with anti-Black racism, gender biases, ageism and classism. Findings from the present study indicate that YETPs need to focus on active anti-oppressive and anti-Black racism training in order to educate new and existing staff. These organizations should be aware of Canada's ongoing homogenization of the lived experiences of “visible minorities.” This study calls for YETPs to recognize that anti-Black racism is not the only social oppression faced by ACB male youth. Finally, this study calls for YETPs to learn how marginalized ACB male youth are defined by historical notions of Black masculinity within the Canadian colonial nation-state.
8.8 Final Words

In this doctoral study, I have argued that marginalized ACB male youth experience anti-Black racism compounded by classism, ageism and gender-based discrimination, all of which complicate their utilization of YETPs and, ultimately, their ability to gain and sustain employment. The masculinities adopted by Black male youth are based on historical and stereotypical portrayals of manhood, complicating their social, political and economic lives. The normalized version of Black masculinity in colonized white settler Canada suggests that young Black men are undeserving of employment opportunities. This barrier strains the abilities of YETP counsellors to support young ACB men in obtaining employment. All of the young men interviewed within the present study are aware of the social oppression they encounter and are vocal about how social barriers impede their search to find work. Throughout this study, the youth plead with those who support them to understand how they, as Canadian citizens, struggle to grow economically in Canada.

The present research encourages more engagement and understanding of anti-Black racism with an intersectional approach. This study urges us to understand that homogenizing the lived experiences of Black youth can cause harm and promote misconceptions about their lived experiences. Frantz Fanon (1967a) reminds us that:

[…] the black man is not. No more than the white man. Both have to move away from inhuman voices of their respective ancestors so that a genuine communication can be born. Before embarking on a positive voice, freedom needs to make an effort at disalienation. At the start of his life, a man is always congested, drowned in contingency. The misfortune of man is that he was once a child. (p. 206)
Like Fanon, I urge people to refrain from thinking about people based on their race alone. Instead, we should intentionally focus on the individuality of people. I use this assertion from Fanon to encourage YETP counsellors who support the economic development of Black male youth to think critically about what humanness means in the context of not only race, but gender and social class, as I have discussed in this dissertation. Counsellors must be mindful of how white supremacy and its ties to neoliberalism, along with the white colonial ideology, deny a realization of these marginal ACB male youths’ intersectional realities. It is important to recognize that “meaning cannot be fixed and that one group can never be completely in charge of meaning” (Hall, 1997, p. 236). Further understanding of this denial uncovers how these young men’s humanness is imprisoned in structural violence that is social, political and economic.

While I did not fully explore the human agency of youth involved in this study and how they resist the structural violence and stereotypical assertions against them, many young Black men trust Black YETP counsellors to support them as they develop both employment skills as well as other life skills, including education. It is through these meaningful relationships that many marginalized young men resist the anti-Black racism and gender biases that they face. Hall (1997) reminds us that with an acknowledgement of difference there is meaning and without meaning there is no concrete way of understanding. James et al. (2010) notes that Black Canadians’ experiences of anti-Black racism cause their lived realities to go unrecognized and unacknowledged. Their unique social experiences are positively different. Should YETP counsellors adopt this critical thinking, it will be beneficial for their relationships with young Black men, as it will contribute to the adoption of a heterogeneous approach, which is not to suggest we should adopt a colour-blind approach. Instead, there should be an acknowledgement
of race and racism, while considering young people’s many social characteristics, such as gender and social class, that make up their individuality.

This study acknowledges the challenges ahead as we create more inclusive YETPs for marginalized ACB male youth. YETP counsellors and employers may not see immediate value in accounting for the social oppressions encountered by young Black men. This may mean that YETPs should work to attract new, capable and willing counsellors to work with these young men. It certainly means that YETPs should seek connections with employers who denounce anti-Black racism and other forms of social oppression. Embracing these challenges serves as an example of working from an active anti-oppressive and anti-racist framework. Generally, recommendations from this study involve YETP counsellors and employers committing to create an inclusive employment learning environment for Black male youth.

Finally, I present this dissertation as a complete critical analysis that utilized Bourdieusian cultural sociology, phenomenology, intersectionality and a Fanonian analytic. These theories helped deepen my understanding of marginalized ACB male youth and their utilization of YETPs in three Canadian cities – Toronto, Montreal and Ottawa. This study contributes important and novel information to the Canadian body of literature focusing on Black masculinity in Canada, which furthers our understanding of best practices when supporting Black male youth.
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