



***Who am I when a part of me is elsewhere?* Narratives of Transnational Homes and Multicultural Identities Among Black Canadian Youth**

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Abstract

Drawing on transnational homemaking and a qualitative research method, this paper explores how second-generation Black Canadian youth in Canada make sense of their multiple ‘home(s)’—Canada and the country of origin—and establish an empowering multicultural identity in the context of transnationalism. The findings demonstrate that the youth negotiate their multicultural identities in multiple, often distinct, cultural worlds. In this process, families and the ethnic community serve an important role in preserving culture and facilitating transnational attachments, as well as in helping youth challenge local and global inequities. This cultivates belonging within and across borders, fosters a sense of ‘home,’ and strengthens youths’ multicultural identity. This paper thus offers a better understanding of how transnational homes can be valuable sites of multicultural identity formation.

Keywords: Canada; multicultural identity formation; second-generation; transnational attachments; transnational homemaking

1. Introduction

Earlier writings on transnationalism, which refers to the process by which migrants build and sustain social, economic, familial, political, and religious links across borders (Vertovec, 1999), contended that assimilation would triumph transnationalism—particularly among the second-generation—suggesting that those born and raised in a ‘host’ society—in this case, Canada—are more likely to adopt mainstream culture and reject familial culture, thereby having fewer connections with their ancestral homelands and cultures (Portes, 1999). However, recent scholarship has demonstrated that although there is a reduction in cross-border connectivity, they continue to engage in transnational connections (Chacko, 2019; Goitom, 2017).

Despite the emerging literature on second-generation transnationalism as a subfield in migration studies (Brocket, 2020; Guitierrez, 2020; Lee, 2011; Levitt, 2009; Wessendorf, 2016), the scholarship on second-generation Black Canadian youth has yet to better capture the ways in which they initiate and sustain transnational attachments, engage in transnational social fields within and across borders, understand and conceptualize notions of ‘home(s),’ and establish their multicultural identities in relation to both their culturally pluralistic ‘host’ society and ancestral homeland. Few studies have highlighted how second-generation African youth establish their identities according to their socio-cultural experiences in Canada (Goitom, 2016; Kebede, 2019). However, these studies have not engaged the role of transnationality and familial homemaking practices in the formation of the complex dynamics of identity and ‘home.’

Identity and ‘home’ are crucial lenses through which social actors view, navigate, and experience the social world, relate to others, and derive a sense of self and belonging. According to Hall (1990), identity is a socially constructed and complex ‘process of becoming,’ shaped by socio-cultural, historical, and political experiences. Likewise, ‘home,’ within a transnational context, is a fluid concept and process of ‘home (re)making’ (Sandu, 2013). Identity extends beyond a fixed location and instead encompasses multiple places—real and imagined—of connections, experiences, and belonging that transcend national boundaries (Ahmed, 1999; Ahmed et al., 2003; Levitt, 2004). ‘Home’—or the understanding of ‘home’—can be an expression of one’s fluid identity and sense of self (Mallett, 2004). Hence, the question, “*Who am I when a part of me is elsewhere?*” is not uncommon to second-generation Black Canadian youth as connections to culture, origin, and family provide a link between place and identity. However, this link may be jeopardized due to the daunting task of bridging ‘new’ country (ancestral homeland) to birth country (Canada), and old heritage to new traditions (Goitom, 2016), as well as navigating simultaneous experiences of systemic anti-Black racism in Canada (James, 2012) and cultural disconnection in the ancestral homeland (Nketiah, 2020).

Drawing on transnational homemaking and a qualitative research methodology, this paper explores how second-generation Black Canadian youth make sense of their ‘home(s)’ — Canada and the ancestral homeland—to establish an empowering multicultural identity in the context of transnationalism. The findings demonstrate that while the youth are negotiating and forming their identities in multiple cultural contexts, their families and the ethnic community serve an important role in ensuring cultural continuity through transnational attachments. These efforts have cultivated belonging, fostered a complex sense of ‘home,’ and influenced self-conception. This paper thus offers a better understanding of the types of transnational activities second-generation Black Canadian youth engage in, the effects of these attachments on how they identify themselves and conceptualize ‘home,’ and how transnational homes can be valuable sites of multicultural identity formation.

2. Theoretical Framework

This paper adopts ‘transnational homemaking’—a key concept in emerging transnational studies—as the theoretical framework (Sandu, 2013). It refers to the process by which migrants sustain connections to their ancestral homelands and (re)make the left-behind home in the host nation. Unlike earlier conceptualizations of ‘home,’ defined within the confines of ownership, private access, and gendered responsibilities, which suggest a physical structure located in a specific geographical location (Gilman, 1903), Sandu’s (2013) research follows emerging literature on newer understandings of ‘home’ (Ahmed, 1999; Ahmed et al., 2003; Boccagni, 2017; Levitt, 2004) and suggests three ideas to emphasize its fluidity:

transnational homemaking as (1) a means of cultural re-production, (2) a core community practice, and (3) a link between home(s) and identity.

Transnational homemaking as a means of cultural re-production involves a wide range of everyday material and non-material, actual and symbolic, cultural practices within and across national borders (Sandu, 2013). Deep connections with objects and the memories of home situate homemaking practices as rooted in the past and simultaneously performed in the present (Bonnerjee, 2023). Food, music, film, fashion, television, language, and homeland visits are some of the most conspicuous areas in which culture is practiced (Vertovec, 1999). These practices highlight the significance of the current lived home in both tangible and less tangible forms. They sustain the notion of, and emotions associated to, ‘home’ within broader social spaces, thereby uniting family members “here” and “there” (Marilla & Fresnoza-Flot, 2023).

Transnational homemaking as a core community practice refers to the ways in which individuals socialize and establish a sense of belonging, particularly through the creation and maintenance of relationships and social networks, such as ethnic communities and diasporic associations in the host nation, as well as connections across borders. Sandu (2013) posits that homemaking and cultural practices—such as cooking, gardening, reading, shopping, and watching certain television programs—create opportunities for connection and social interaction among those who share similar interests, and arguably, those who share common experiences and homelands. In fact, when such practices are re-enacted and re-lived, particularly by the first-generation, they are also transmitted to younger generations.

Transnational homemaking as a link between home(s) and identity refers to the ways in which homemaking practices can offer a secure base for individuals to ‘be’ themselves, ‘express’ themselves, and ‘make’ themselves, and therefore, feel ‘at home’ (Sandu, 2013). In the context of transnationalism and multicultural identities, a re-negotiation of identity involves a level of consciousness which links individuals to one or more nations; that is, in this case, one can be Canadian and something else (Vertovec, 1999).

Transnational homemaking creates fruitful connections between individuals, communities, and societies, bringing about local and global changes in the socio-cultural realms of both the countries of origin and destination. It offers a deeper understanding of the transnational homemaking practices that second-generation Black Canadian youth are exposed to and engage in, as well as the effects of their exposure on how they conceptualize ‘home’ and identify themselves.

3. Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research methodology to explore the in-depth cultural and social understandings that individuals have about the world and the meanings they assign to their experiences (Mohajan, 2018). This methodology offers a deeper exploration of complex socio-cultural aspects. It explains the ‘how’ and ‘why’ of social phenomena, providing us with a more nuanced analysis of the social world.

We followed a specific selection process to achieve our research project’s goal, which is to explore how Canadian-born second-generation Black English-speaking and Francophone young youth of African and Caribbean heritage who reside in Toronto, Ontario, draw on transnational migration as an anti-racist strategy to fight discrimination and find a place for themselves in the society. Between 2023 and 2024, we recruited and conducted semi-structured interviews with 32 youth representing diverse identities in terms of race, ethnicity, age, gender,

education and employment, and parents' nationality, education, and employment. Upon collecting and coding the data, we used content analysis (Berg & Lune, 2017) to identify analytical themes including those discussed in this paper—transnational homes and multicultural identity among the youth—and select 13 interviews to ensure the above-mentioned participant diversity. Since our methodology does not seek to generalize our research findings, our inclusion criteria centered in the meaning provided in the interviews and the identity diversity of the students, which allowed an in-depth understanding and analysis triangulated with the literature and theory.

4. Analysis and Discussion

The analysis reveals that second-generation Black Canadian youth negotiate and embrace their multicultural identities which meld the various cultural and racial layers of their belongingness and understanding of 'home.' This is enacted through their engagement with their cultural heritage in both the homeland and 'host' society. The findings demonstrate that the youth are consistently navigating multiple cultural worlds; however, families and the ethnic community are important agents in preserving culture and facilitating transnational attachments. These efforts cultivate a sense of belonging within and across borders, as well as offer a nuanced understanding of the link between home and identity.

4.1 'They can tell you're not from there': Navigating cultural worlds

Participants revealed experiencing covert anti-Black racism, or microaggressions—a term coined by Chester Pierce (1974) to describe the subtle, automatic, and sometimes, unconscious ways that Black people experience discrimination from non-Black counterparts—in Canadian society, and cultural disconnection in the ancestral homeland. The youth expressed the following:

Vivian: In grade 10, we read "To Kill a Mocking [Bird]" ... the white savior in it [was] trying to stop the people from killing the black man over a crime ... It was very uncomfortable. The teacher wasn't equipped to deal with the questions ... and I remember there [weren't many] black students in the class; that [was] the only book we ever read with black people ... [Also], they [educators] had tried to stream me into a lower class cuz I was struggling in [math]. But, if I had just gotten a tutor, I would have been fine. My mom had to speak up for me ... [it] was me and another white classmate who were struggling. We went to [the] guidance [counsellor] and that classmate got a long list of tutors...

In the education milieu, the youth experienced limited and/or a misrepresentation of Blackness in reading materials and applied-level course streaming. The narrative which Vivian shared about reading "To Kill a Mockingbird" is a novel about a white lawyer who fights for the justice and protection of a Black man who is falsely accused of raping a white woman. The lawyer is identified as the protagonist, alluding to the white saviour complex—a common narrative of colonialism. Vivian highlighted that this was the only book her class had read with a Black character, and reading it aloud made her and the few Black students in the class feel uncomfortable and misrepresented. It was also noted that the classroom teacher was not equipped to deal with the conversations and questions that arose in response to the themes of the novel, namely racial prejudice and inequity. Open conversations with peers in this context were thus limited, and feelings of exclusion and discomfort were disregarded or suppressed.

Racist attitudes towards Black youth based on racial and cultural stereotypes also appeared in neighbourhoods and other societal spaces:

Samir: [H]aving braids or twists like mine make me sometimes look like a thug, but I know who I am, right? I know I'm not that type of guy. I'm always calm, [with a] calm demeanor. I speak to everyone in a fluid manner. I can articulate myself well, so ... they would see that ... and then break that stereotype in their head. And that's why I rock the hairstyle.

Samir's wearing of a Durag—a hat Black youth often wear—and having braids and twists, exposed him to multiple racial and cultural stereotypes from non-Black individuals, such as the 'thug' stereotype which is associated with being short tempered and violent. However, Samir embraced his Blackness and proudly wore his hair in a way that empowers him. In fact, while Durags are traditionally worn by Black males to protect their braids from frizziness or friction when they sleep (McMillan, 2017), they have become a statement of resistance against stereotypes and a symbol of Black liberation and identity (Shilton, 2024). However, such stereotypes generated additional microaggressions, such as surveillance in shopping malls and unpleasant looks from non-Black people.

The youth who disclosed these microaggressions were aware that these experiences were 'low-key' and they had only recently begun unpacking these experiences and dealing with the complex emotions associated with past encounters. It is worth noting that some youth did not report (or were reluctant to report) racism. Perhaps this was due to the seemingly benign nature of microaggressions whereby biased and exclusionary comments are stated in, ironically, gentle ways. Hence, while one youth labelled repeated name mispronunciations as microaggressions, another labelled it as a 'normal' part of growing up in Canadian society. It also suggests that the youth may re-interpret these encounters as racism in the future.

Beyond these experiences in Canada, the youth also reported feeling disconnected in their ancestral homelands. The following participant narrative illustrates the depth of disconnection as it relates to the challenges associated with forming a multicultural identity in two cultural worlds:

Kathy: When I go there [Nigeria], they hear my accent ... we don't have the same mannerisms, some of us don't have the same mentality, we have different experiences so, a lot of us are very, very different in the way we speak, the way we reason. So, when I am there, I'll come with [a] North American mentality or if I make a comment about something ... they'll laugh—they'll hear my accent and they'll be like 'oh, I don't know what you are saying,' or, they'll tell me 'no no no, this is not how we do it here, this is not America. This is Nigeria' ... feeling like you're not Nigerian enough ...

The participants often felt hypervisible due to their accents, values, mannerisms, experiences, and outsidership; they were different from the local people and therefore, felt uncomfortable. Despite experiences of disconnection, participants were highly knowledgeable about *why* they felt the way they did. Different governmental bodies, schooling systems, societies, and cultures are the most prominent factors that contributed to youth not feeling, at least authentically, Nigerian or otherwise.

In Canada, how the youth are perceived is shaped by what it means (as per dominant ideologies) to be Black and 'something-Canadian' (for example, Nigerian-Canadian) in a white-dominated society. Their Blackness subjected them to experiences beyond their control and often positioned them at the bottom of the racial hierarchy. Likewise, their 'Canadianness' made them hypervisible in the ancestral homeland due to the significant differences between themselves and their native-born family members by virtue of their connection (or lack thereof)

to place and culture. However, in spite of experiences of microaggressions and cultural disconnection, second-generation Black Canadian youth attempt to identify themselves in ways that empower them. In so doing, they negotiate the hybridity of their multicultural identities with the support of families and communities.

4.2 Families and communities as catalysts for transnational attachments

In the simultaneous tug-of-war between connection and disconnection, belonging and out-of-placeness, and the 'here' and 'there,' families and the ethnic community were identified as central to preserving culture and facilitating transnational attachments, as well as helping youth challenge local and global inequities. This theme demonstrates that aspects of cultural identity are reinforced in and by the family and ethnic community.

4.2.1 'My house is very Jamaican': The role of family

The youths' parents belong to first-generation migrants, a group whose practices of cultural re-production represent childhood memories and experiences (Sandu, 2013). Participants revealed that parents are highly influential in passing down cultural values and building bridges across cultures and generations through transnational homemaking practices in the adopted land. Participant narratives revealed the following when asked about their exposure to their culture at home in Canada:

Rainbow: The food ... the language ... we speak English, but I find that half the time, we're speaking Patois at home ... we do eat North American food, but my favorite food is Ackee and Saltfish ... we're just short of having a flag in our house [but] we have it somewhere ... My house is very Jamaican.

Zakia: When I am home with my mom, [it is our] favorite music [Somali music]. We always listen to it.

Kathy: I was definitely raised as a Nigerian girl ... my mom made sure that I always had [Nigerian] clothes. If she was making clothes in Nigeria, she was making [it] for me...

Ethnic food is often one of the last cultural habits that change in an individual's life and is the most significant symbolic attachment that individuals have with their 'homelands.' Connection to ethnic food promoted identity formation as traditional foods helped youth better identify with their ancestral homelands. Participants also maintained attachments through language. Many claimed to understand and speak their parents' languages—some fluently and some 'broken.' Phone calls with family members in the ancestral homeland likely prompted youth to communicate with their relatives in their native language. Likewise, parents who primarily spoke in their mother tongue raised children who were more familiar with the language. Regardless of the circumstance, all participants expressed a strong desire and motivation to either learn their mother tongue or improve their existing language skills as it connected them to their parents and heritage.

Participants also disclosed growing up in homes whose parents would regularly play music in their native languages, such as Twi Gospel, Afrobeat, and Soca. This early and continued exposure influenced participants' music preferences. Some found this enjoyable and felt a connection to not only their culture, but also to their parents and their places of origin. Furthermore, participants expressed an appreciation of their ethnic attire which they sometimes wore in Canada. For example, Kathy claimed a strong connection because her mother would

design and make traditional clothes for her since she was a child. Each of these connections highlight the multiple ways in which parents pass on culture to their children.

Parents also encouraged the youth to engage in multiple socio-cultural transnational attachments such as visiting their homelands and communicating with family ‘back home’; both of which are strongly influenced by parental values and teachings. Homeland visits often served the purpose of (re)connecting with the place their parents and extended family members were born and raised. Most of the youth in this study went back at an early age, some visited more recently, and others have never been but expressed a desire to visit. Of note, Amari shared that he wishes to be more educated and immersed in St. Lucian culture and history:

When I retire, I want to move to St. Lucia and get my own house. As a kid I wish I was able to go there a lot more because I am not very educated about St. Lucian history ... but I love my culture, and I love the people there. The vibes are always so good, and I just want to be more involved ... so I always say [that] when I get older, [I] am going to try to live there for maybe six months at a time, start learning about my own history, where I came from, [and] where all my family is from.

Similar sentiments were expressed by other participants who proclaimed their desire to visit their ancestral homelands as often as they could for as long as they live. They also shared hopes for their future children to have strong ties with these countries. These desires were rooted in youths’ experiences and relationships with friends and family in their homelands, as well as their ongoing and continued exposure to their respective cultures in their homes in Canada.

Upon homeland visits, those who had recently visited were more likely to maintain close ties with their families and friends ‘back home.’ Many asserted their efforts to remain connected with family members through technology, namely WhatsApp group chats, Instagram direct messages and stories, Facetime, and regular telephone calls. Others remained connected to their ancestral homeland by gaining more political and cultural knowledge, as well as understanding the importance of the remittances their parents sent ‘back home.’ In fact, after visiting their homelands, the youth were more aware of the privileges they had in Canada and considered themselves “lucky” to be living in a “first-world country” unlike their extended family members. Through these efforts, multicultural individuals retain a sense of identity with, and care for, family members who live overseas, thus promoting the welfare of family members and preserving the transnational family structure. These patterns thus emphasize that parents have made active efforts to connect their Canadian-born children to their heritage through the material and non-material aspects of culture such as food, music, fashion, language, and homeland visits.

The analysis of participant narratives aligns with Sandu’s (2013) conceptualizations of transnational homemaking as a means of cultural re-production and as a link between home(s) and identity as they manifest through youths’ attachments to the material and socio-cultural aspects of cultures and homelands, as well as their active participation in social, economic, and political activities that transcend national borders. Those who engage in these connections are not only replicating and promoting their parents’ culture in Canada, but also forging a multicultural identity by selecting and elaborating on certain cultural facets that they believe enriches their lives. Existing scholarship on second-generation transnationalism further supports these findings (Chapman & Beagan, 2013; Goitom 2016, 2017; Nyamnjoh, 2018; Williams-Forson, 2014). By doing this, the youth develop a complex multicultural identity that draws from both their ancestral homeland and their country of birth, thereby redefining the notion of ‘home’ which exceeds national borders, and instead, builds a new, hybrid ‘home’ and identity. Through this, they develop a consciousness of who they are, where they come from,

where they reside, and how they interact with the world and the people around them. Transnational attachments, such as these, thus symbolize youths' alternative—dual and multiple—sense of belonging.

4.2.2 'A breath of fresh air': The role of ethnic communities

Participant narratives have demonstrated that ethnic communities also offer spaces to explore and learn about culture and religion, and challenge local and global inequities with like-minded individuals, while simultaneously connecting with youth of the same or similar background(s). It is within these spaces that the youth felt comfortable and confident to simply be themselves and express themselves:

Kathy: We could be as loud as we want to, as quiet as we want to. Speak about so many issues ... I learnt so much about myself ... it was just nice to be able to interact with people where [the] cultural barrier is not there—where it was just *natural* ... when you have a circle of people around you who are from the same background as you, it's like a breath of fresh air. It's a nice feeling, where we can talk about similar interests ... things that I can't necessarily talk about with my non-Black friends ... So, it's nice to have that other alternative to go to.

Rainbow: there is a sense of camaraderie. There is a sense of love. When you go to these places [events and festivals], there is a sense of understanding ... almost everybody around you gets it. That's why I like going.

Nathalie: one of them [friends] who brought me to church, I'm still really close with them. As a group, we usually attend church events ... I teach Sunday school ... I'm also in the choir. I'm also a cell leader. I'm also a board member ... The connections I made while I was there [is] what really kept me in the church.

Most participants grew up in communities and attended schools with members from their ethnic groups. They had friends of similar ethnic and religious backgrounds whose parents had also migrated from the same country. Friends of similar ethnic backgrounds provided participants with a sense of understanding, acceptance, and belonging. Of note, the type of friends that participants had influenced the extent of their transnational ties; that is, youth with friends of similar ethnic backgrounds felt closer to their culture and their parents' place of origin.

Ethnic communities are also essential as they create community spaces in the host society which reproduce and extend the culture of the homeland, such as cultural festivals and religious institutions. Some participants emphasized attending cultural events and festivals such as Caribana, Jerkfest, and Afrofest. Others attended community places of worship, such as a church or a mosque, on a regular basis where they gained knowledge of and appreciation for their faith. These spaces empowered the youth against the backdrop of local and global inequities, such as anti-Black racism or a sense of a disconnection in the homeland. This is because the ethnic community, and its various groups, provided educational, cultural, and social activities, digital platforms and campaigns, and other associated opportunities such as leadership training which allowed them to meet others, learn from them, and stay connected to culture, as well as engage in long distance nationalism by representing one's own culture through material facets such as clothing, music, and national flags. Ethnic communities played a key role in helping youth raise cultural and religious awareness, eradicate misconceptions and fight injustices experienced by ethnic and religious groups, and/or simply create spaces of inclusion and belonging. It is through these involvements that second-generation Black

Canadian youth are becoming powerful agents of change who are actively creating a positive image of their ancestral homelands in Canada and reclaiming their Blackness.

Rainbow's narrative complements Kathy's description of communal spaces as *natural* and authentic; there is an unsaid yet known and felt sense of acceptance in a space where heritage, race, religion, and experience are common. The narratives discussed in this section echo Sandu's (2013) conceptualization of transnational homemaking as a core community practice. Ethnic communities in Canada not only allow second-generation Black Canadian youth to maintain strong links with their ancestral homelands, but also allow them to feel a sense of comfort in their heritage, 'make themselves at home' (Sandu, 2013), and facilitate multicultural identity formation. The aspects of cultural identity that the youth expressed and engaged in within their familial homes—such as culture, religion, and food practices—were reinforced in and by the community. Existing scholarship posits that ethnic communities initiate and maintain cultural ties and social relationships, as well as connections to a shared ancestral homeland for all generations of immigrants in the 'host' society without crossing borders (Chacko, 2019; Goitom, 2017; Kebede, 2019). These perspectives reveal that communal spaces promote solidarity as they bring people together and allow them to explore their histories, cultures, and religions, as well as challenge inequities through awareness, education, and action. Communities may serve as 'mini homelands,' or alternative 'homes,' where youth can 'be' themselves and 'express' themselves, and therefore, feel 'at home.' Communities thus offer a sense of (extended) family.

4.3 'Home is where my heart is': The link between home(s) and identity

The connection between 'home(s)' and identity is rather multifaceted as it influenced how youth perceived and identified themselves, interacted with the world around them, and formed social and emotional bonds. Participant narratives suggest that 'home' is characterized by authenticity, community, comfortability, connection, inclusion, and familiarity. The youth revealed the following:

Amari: I think of myself as St. Lucian. I've been living in Canada even though I was born in the [United] States, and my citizenship is American, [but] I still don't see myself as American. I've been living in Canada my whole life, but I do see myself as a St. Lucian boy ... whenever I go there [St. Lucia], out of all the places I've been, I feel the most at home. I feel the most like myself when [I] am there... It's not like I don't feel like myself here [in Canada] but it's just a different type of feeling that I don't know how to explain. Just as soon as I get to St. Lucia, I feel like that's where home is, that's where my heart is. I am a Canadian boy as well [because] I've grown up here my whole life, [but I am] more St. Lucian than Canadian or American.

Evan: I liked how different it [Kenya] was from Canada and how close we are with our family. So, we lived in a small village where I spent most of my time, and we would just be able to walk next door and talk to my cousins or talk to my aunts and uncles, and that's not something that we can do in Canada. We have to plan it [and] drive over. But, over there, we all lived in the same neighborhood.

Since familial heritage has been identified as central to conceptualizing 'home' and exploring identity, visiting familial homelands has allowed youth to explore and experience a different aspect of themselves which neither exists nor could exist anywhere else. It has allowed them to dive deeper into their backgrounds and better understand their identities when living in a specific space and having connections to another. This suggests a link between home(s)

and identity whereby place and space, and the experience connected with them, shape belongingness and the sequence in which participants listed their identity markers.

Many identified as Black first, followed by their ethnicity (e.g. Somalian, Nigerian, St. Lucian, Ghanaian, Ethiopian, Trinidadian, Jamaican) or ethnic region (e.g. East African), and their nationality (i.e. Canadian) last. Others stressed a hybrid identity; their identification is not simply 'Canadian' or 'Jamaican'—for example—but rather 'Jamaican-Canadian.' Identifying oneself in these ways connected the youth to a part of their self, history, and family that exists elsewhere in the world. This identification also allowed the youth to interact with the world, their communities, and those around them in ways that are meaningful to them. However, when they travelled to their ancestral homelands, they identified solely as 'Canadian.' Identifying as 'Black' or by their ethnicity in their ancestral homelands felt redundant because the local people in these countries (or regions, to be specific) had the same (or similar) skin hue and the same (or similar) cultural values. Identifying as 'Canadian,' however, distinguished youth from the locality, and instead, connected them to the place they were born and raised and have strong emotional ties—the place they were most familiar with. This suggests that how youth choose to identify is often context dependent.

Participants further demonstrated that most youth who had disclosed experiencing racism were more likely to identify with their ancestral homelands compared to those who claimed to not experience racism. This is because experiences of racism were directly tied to feelings of exclusion and alienation, both of which do not align with the notion and feeling of 'home.' This suggests that experiences of racism in Canada may encourage youth to have connections with their ancestral homelands and sustain ties with their heritage in an effort to acquire a sense of belonging. For many youth, ancestral homeland visits were enjoyable because acceptance, community, and connection to culture made their experiences memorable; these factors set the homeland apart from the 'hostland.' For example, Evan asserted that a unique, yet appreciated, aspect of Kenya was the authenticity and closeness he had with his extended family without western formalities; this is what made Kenya (which is not home), perhaps, feel like home.

Accordingly, participants' attachment to (a) home(s) was influenced by their experiences within, memories of, and emotions attached to a particular place. Their emotional attachment to the place(s) they considered feeling 'at home' is central to the process by which they derived a sense of identity from their surroundings. 'Home' is also relational as it is a space which includes important people: friends, family, and neighbors. The participant narratives uncovered how connection to and the feeling of 'home' are rooted in youths' level of exposure to their ancestral homelands. Youth who participated more in their culture felt more connected and had a desire to maintain that connection. In this way, the link between home(s) and identity influenced self-conception and strengthened the construction of multicultural identities, thereby cultivating belonging within and across borders.

The participants' construction of the notions of 'home' and identity follows Sandu's (2013) conceptualization of transnational homemaking as a link between home(s) and identity as transnational homes serve as sites of multicultural identity formation and negotiation. Multiple 'homes' may be one such way participants 'escape' feelings of out-of-placeness and exclusion as they connect the youth to multiple nations and cultures; they are both 'here' (in Canada) and 'there' (in their ancestral homelands). 'Home' was also an experiential feeling where the notion of 'home' became synonymous with the place where one 'feels at home' (del Carmen Ernstberger & Adaawen, 2023). Participants' identification and connection to their ancestral homelands indicated that it was the place they either experienced a different 'sense of home' or felt most 'at home.' Thus, we note a state of 'in-betweenness' of multicultural

identity; however, within this ‘in-betweenness,’ the youth have multiple homes and identities, leading to a sense of simultaneous belonging in two or more nations.

5. Conclusion

“Who am I when a part of me is elsewhere?” is a common question among second-generation Black Canadian youth who are negotiating their belonging and identity in more than one country and culture. Drawing on transnational homemaking and a qualitative research method, this paper examined how second-generation Black Canadian youth in Canada make sense of their multiple ‘homes’ to establish an empowering multicultural identity in the context of transnationalism. Findings demonstrated that experiences of racism (in Canada) and cultural disconnection (in the ancestral homeland) complicated multicultural identity formation. However, families and the ethnic community served an important role in ensuring cultural continuity through everyday transnational attachments, and cultural events and festivals. These efforts fostered a sense of ‘home,’ which was characterized by authenticity, community, comfortability, connection, inclusion, and familiarity, and strengthened youths’ multicultural identity, thereby cultivating belonging within and across borders.

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