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# “Put It In Your Back Pocket”: Identity And Belonging Among Second Generation Racialized Canadians

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“PUT IT IN YOUR BACK POCKET”: IDENTITY AND BELONGING AMONG SECOND  
GENERATION RACIALIZED CANADIANS

by

Maya Nightingale-Fitzer, Honours Bachelor of Arts, Ryerson University, 2012

A Major Research Paper

presented to Ryerson University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in the Program of

Immigration and Settlement Studies

Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 2013

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Maya Nightingale-Fitzer

# **“PUT IT IN YOUR BACK POCKET”: IDENTITY AND BELONGING AMONG SECOND GENERATION RACIALIZED CANADIANS**

Maya Nightingale Fitzer

Master of Arts 2013

Immigration and Settlement Studies

Ryerson University

## **ABSTRACT**

Through interviews with four second generation Canadians, this Major Research Paper explores identity and belonging among second generation children (aged 18-30) of racialized immigrants in Toronto, Canada. Primary research questions include: (i) How do these individuals describe their identity? (ii) Do they have a sense of belonging in Canada; why or why not? (iii) Do they experience discrimination based on their ethno-racial identity? (iv) How does this impact their self-identification as Canadian and sense of belonging? The findings show that second generation racialized Canadians appear to hold multiple identities, forming a hyphenated or hybridized identity in which racialized identity and language/accent figure prominently. They also appear to have situational identities, with their identities shifting depending on the following various situational factors: (i) their location (including the country, city, and environment they are in), (ii) the individuals they are surrounded by including who they are speaking to, and (iii) the goal(s) of the situation.

**Key Words:** Second Generation Canadians • Racialization • Identity • Belonging

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## Introduction

Canada's second generation children of immigrants are an increasingly diverse and growing population. The adoption of the Point System in 1967, which eliminated racial barriers to immigration, opened Canada's doors to mass immigration from Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean (Reitz & Banerjee, 2006). This resulted in a shift in the source countries of the majority of Canada's immigrants and created an increasingly diverse society. It is estimated that by the year 2017, Canada's racialized population will be between 6.3 million and 8.5 million (Perreault, 2008). The children of immigrants, or second generation Canadians, include individuals who were born in Canada and have at least one parent born outside of Canada (Statistics Canada, 2010). The 2006 Census reported that there were approximately four million second generation individuals in Canada, who accounted for 15.6% of the population aged fifteen and over (Statistics Canada, 2010).

As such, the integration of this growing population of diverse and racialized Canadians is an emerging point of interest for researchers. This Major Research paper explores two areas of their social integration as defined by Reitz and Banerjee's (2006) analysis of the 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey (EDS): (i) to what extent do second generation racialized Canadians self-identify as Canadian and, (ii) do they have a sense of belonging in Canada? Through in-depth interviews with four second generation Canadians of diverse ethnic origins, this research revealed that while these subjects may feel 'Canadian' because they were born in Canada and identify with their definition of Canada's national identity, they also identify with their parents' ethnic identity. As a result of these hyphenated identities which incorporate both Canadian and

other ethno-racial identities, second generation racialized Canadians continue to be alienated, excluded, and Othered by dominant society. These experiences hinder their sense of belonging in Canada and also lead these individuals to assume diverse situational or 'reactive' identities depending on the properties of any given social environment.

## **Literature Review**

### **Second Generation Racialized Immigrants and Social Integration**

It is important to examine and analyze the experiences of second generation children of racialized immigrants separately from those of their parents (Reitz & Banerjee, 2006; Reitz & Somerville, 2004; Rajiva 2005). Their experiences are unique because for the most part they do not encounter acculturation-specific difficulties such as language barriers and cultural differences, because they were born in Canada, and are socialized and educated in mainstream society, but they do encounter exclusion and discrimination based on their ethno-racial identity (Rajiva, 2005). As such, second generation racialized Canadians must be conceived of as having distinct experiences from their immigrant parents many of whom spent a significant portion of their life in their country of origin (Reitz & Somerville, 2004; Rajiva, 2005). Unfortunately, the dominant approach of both academic and non-academic work on the issue is to assume that racialized people are all immigrants (Ali, 2008) and that we must address their problems as issues of acculturation (Rajiva, 2005).

The 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey (EDS) was the first nation-wide survey designed to measure individual attitudes and behaviours among first generation immigrants and their second and third generation offspring that are expected to reflect their social integration into Canadian society (Reitz & Banerjee, 2006). It was conducted by Statistics Canada in partnership with Canadian Heritage and had two main objectives (Statistics Canada, 2003). The first aim was “...to help us to better understand how people’s backgrounds affect their participation in the social, economic, and cultural life of Canada... [and the second goal was] to better understand how Canadians of different ethnic backgrounds interpret and report their ethnicity” (Statistics Canada, 2003). Some of the survey’s topics included ethnic ancestry and identity, place of birth, visible minority status, social networks, language knowledge, attitudes, and socioeconomic activities (Statistics Canada, 2003). Reitz and Banerjee (2006) argue that the EDS is in fact “...the best source of information on the social integration of minorities yet produced in Canada...” (p. 3). It is a “nationally representative sample of over 42,476 Canadians aged fifteen years and older living in private households in the ten provinces...” and it purposefully over-sampled non-European origin respondents based on their long-form Census to facilitate the analysis of ethno-racial minorities’ integration (Hou et al., 2010, p. 22-23).

Here, the term ‘integration’, specifically ‘social integration’, is conceptualized as different from the term ‘assimilation’. ‘Assimilation’ refers to a one-sided process in which the immigrant must assimilate into the receiving society (Hou et al., 2010). This model suggests a process of adaptation on the part of the immigrant in which traits that do not conform to those of the dominant group are considered to be a hindrance to the success of immigrants, as well as undesirable for the host society (Hou et al., 2010). The ethnocentric quality of this model is evident in its requirement that the immigrant adopt the behaviours, values, and way of life of the

dominant group. Canada, however, is not a culturally homogeneous society. Canada's official policy of multiculturalism actually encourages the preservation of homeland or ancestral culture. Therefore, with its requirement that the immigrant forfeit this attachment, assimilation is not an appropriate concept for the Canadian context (Hou et al., 2010). In comparison, the notion of 'integration' requires change on the parts of both the immigrant and the receiving society. It is a process that "...embodies both the adaptation of immigrants to their host community *and* the adaptation of these communities to immigrant-driven socio-demographic change" (Hou et al., 2010, p. 5-6). Therefore, to be socially integrated, one must be committed to and accepted within the host community (Hou et al., 2010). Reitz and Banerjee's (2006) definition of social integration also requires acceptance on the part of the receiving society because they argue that social integration can be measured by "...the extent to which individual members of a group form relations with others outside their group, which help them achieve individual goals, whether these are economic, social, or cultural in nature" (p. 21).

In attempting to shed further light on integration, the Straight-Line Hypothesis posits that each sequential generation of immigrants will become more 'Canadianized' and therefore less "...distinguishable from the mainstream in terms of socio-economic mobility, social interactions, and attitudes" (Hou et al., 2010, p. 9). The first generation immigrant is assigned a 'newcomer status' that is associated with a foreign culture and therefore distinguishes them from the dominant group (Hou et al., 2010). This status is thought to prevent them from ever fully integrating into their receiving society (Hou et al., 2010). The second generation, however, is born and educated in the host country and exposed to mainstream society for much of their life, so it is expected that they will be more socially integrated than their 'newcomer' parents (Hou et al., 2010).

Reitz and Banerjee's analysis of the EDS presents a stark contradiction to the Straight-Line Hypothesis and reveals significant racial divisions for second generation Canadians. The EDS measured the following three aspects of social integration: the strength of individual ties to Canada, the extent of civic participation, and overall life satisfaction (Reitz & Banerjee, 2006). Building on Reitz and Banerjee's (2006) work, the focus of my literature review and research project is an examination of the strength of individual ties to Canada among second generation racialized Canadians and will therefore focus specifically on those attitudes and behaviours measured in the EDS that reflect these ties. In particular it will focus on 'a sense of belonging to Canadian society' and 'self-identifying as Canadian' (Reitz & Banerjee, 2006). According to Hou et al. (2010) self-identification as Canadian reflects "...membership is local social networks (having Canadian roots) and perceptions of social acceptance and an 'identificational commitment' to Canadianness [which] comes with feeling secure and 'at home' in Canada" (p. 10).

It must be noted that Reitz and Banerjee's (2006) analysis of the EDS distinguishes between first generation immigrants who recently arrived and those who have been in Canada for a longer period of time, but the authors do not specify what constitutes "a longer period time". Therefore, for the purpose of comparing second generation Canadians' integration with that of their parents, this review will use the findings regarding the integration of longer-term immigrants. It can be assumed that if their children were born in Canada and over the age of fifteen at the time of the survey (the minimum age requirement for the EDS), they would have to have been in Canada for at least fifteen years prior to participating in the EDS.

One might assume that inevitably Canadian-born children of immigrants would have higher levels of integration into Canadian society than their parents for several reasons. Not only

have they grown up in Canada and therefore have more social and cultural capital, but they also do not face some of the barriers their parents face such as credential devaluation and language difficulties. While Reitz and Banerjee (2006) did find that second generation racialized Canadians have higher levels of self-identification as Canadian than their parents (56.5% versus 34.4%), they had significantly lower levels of self-identification as Canadian than non-racialized second generation Canadians (56.5% versus 78.2%). What is more troubling is the fact that second generation racialized Canadians had substantially *less* of a sense of belonging than both their parents (44.1% versus 61.8%), and non-racialized second generation Canadians (44.1% versus 57.3%) (Reitz & Banerjee, 2006). Therefore, this is an important area requiring further research.

### **Theories of Identity in a Global Age**

The findings concerning self-identification and belonging may reflect the fact that while the Straight-Line Hypothesis assumes that each sequential generation of immigrants will become more ‘Canadian’ and therefore less tied to their ethnic origins, global processes have facilitated the maintenance of multiple ethnic identities and national attachments among immigrants (Hall, 1996; Somerville, 2008; Sodhi, 2008). Hall argues that “...old identities which stabilized the social world for so long are in decline, giving rise to new identities and fragmenting the modern individual as a unified subject” (p. 596). Today, the individual is not conceived of as having an essentialized ‘centre’ of the self which remains identical over their lifetime, but rather an individual's identity is thought to be fragmented and constantly shifting (Hall, 1996; Sundar, 2008 ; Sodhi, 2008). It is composed of several, “...sometimes contradictory or unresolved

identities”, that are not fixed, but are continually shaped and transformed “in relation to the ways [they] are represented or addressed in the cultural systems which surround [them]” (Hall, 1996, p. 598). Therefore, the individual can assume different identities at different times (Hall, 1996; Sundar, 2008; Sodhi, 2008).

Hall (1996) attributes this shift in the nature of identity to globalization’s compression of time and space. Rather than one’s experiences and interactions being solely tied to ‘presence’, meaning localised activity in which time and space largely coincide, today space is increasing ‘torn away’ from space (Hall, 1996, p. 621). One can interact with others who are ‘absent’, yet are connected to you through time by technology such as the telephone, the internet, and television (Hall, 1996). This means that even though one is still ‘rooted’ in a place, they can move across space and interact with other cultures that may then stabilize or create a shift in their own identity (Hall, 1996).

Despite extensive empirical studies, there is a persistent divide amongst academics as to whether the transnationalism, outlined above, of second generation immigrants consists of real, substantial ties, such as regular contact with those in the homeland, or if it is simply symbolic, in the sense of nostalgia and memories mediated by their parents (Somerville, 2008). Somerville’s (2008) study of eighteen second generation Indo-Canadian youth found that children of immigrants actually grow up in a ‘transnational social field’ that involves consistent cross-border connections between Canada and their ancestral homeland. These material connections (such as telephone calls, internet communication, and trips to the homeland) and symbolic transnational connections (such as identifying with their parents’ homeland) actually contribute to the second generation’s construction of identity (Somerville, 2008). The multidirectional flows of these activities serve to ‘activate’ their transnational social field and shape their process of identity

formation (Somerville, 2008). Through these activities, the second generation is able to express their multiple attachments and their sense of belonging in more than one nation (Somerville, 2008).

Ali's (2008) study on fourteen second generation racialized youth in Toronto also found that the second generation is engaging in regular transnational activities with their parents' country of origin. While Somerville's (2008) study only looked at the experiences of one ethnic group, Ali's participants were from diverse ethnic backgrounds, which suggest that high levels of transnationalism may be common for all second generation immigrants, not just those of a particular ethno-racial background. Though this discussion may complicate the debate on identity development, it does not take away the need to examine the kinds of local conditions that influence the identity development of Canadian-born racialized individuals with immigrant parents. At the same time, the multicultural and transnational contexts are a part of the everyday lives of these individuals, as will be discussed below, in relation to the importance of dealing with multiple "home" locations. Although the idea of "home" is beyond the scope of this paper, it is important to note this as a feature of the transnational experiences of the second generation.

### **Second Generation Canadians and Cultural Identity**

Second generation Canadians' multiple attachments are a result of growing up in two different cultures. While they spend most of their time immersed in mainstream Canadian society, they are also exposed to their parents' culture on a daily basis in their home (Sodhi, 2008). While these two cultures do not necessarily conflict, for some second generation Canadians, reconciling the norms and values of Canadian culture and that of their parents can

pose a challenge. This is especially common for second generation Canadians who come from collectivistic cultures, such as those in South Asia, because Canada is an individualistic society (Sodhi, 2008).

Growing up in a multi-ethnic environment may result in an individual incorporating aspects of both their ancestral culture and the dominant culture into their identity. This produces a 'bi-cultural' identity. Earlier research on biculturalism emphasizes the outcome or achievement of a stable identity (Berry, 1997). Recent research, on the other hand, has conceived of biculturalism as a lifelong process that is constantly shifting and evolving. Sodhi's (2008) study on second generation Indo-Canadians found that bicultural identity formation does not ever culminate in the individual achieving a static ethnic identity. She argues that this identity evolves throughout an individual's lifetime and can shift based on "...various familial, community, and societal variables...[as well as] significant events in one's life" (Sodhi, 2008, p. 190).

While Sundar agrees with Sodhi that identity formation among the second generation is an ongoing process, she does not consider their identity formation to be solely tied to particular milestones or events in life (Sundar, 2008). Rather, her study of twenty-six South Asian-Canadian youth revealed that they make strategic decisions in *every day* social situations as to whether to, as one participant put it, '*brown it up*' or '*bring down the brown*' (Sundar, 2008, p. 251-252). In other words, they decide whether to 'do Canadian' or to 'do South Asian'. Sundar argues that their identities are "fluid, flexible, [and] multidimensional" and this enables them to either foreground or underplay different ethnic or racial aspects of their identity to meet the expectations and demands of specific social situations (Sundar, 2008, p. 258). This ability to express their identity in strategic ways is considered to be not only a means of mediating the barriers and discrimination they continually face in Canadian society due to their ethno-racial

identity, but also as a way of achieving a sense of belonging in both mainstream society and their ethnic community (Sundar, 2008).

Second generation racialized Canadians' interactions with mainstream society as well as with their ethnic community influence which national and/or ethnic identification predominates (Sundar, 2008; Rajiva, 2005). In most cases, the greater their sense of exclusion from one nationality, the more they will identify with the other (Sundar, 2008). Experiences of discrimination may encourage a second generation Canadian to identify more with their ancestral culture than with the dominant Canadian culture. But at the same time, experiences of exclusion within their ethnic community may lead that individual to seek more interactions with mainstream Canadians and as a result, identify more with Canadian culture than their ancestral culture. It is for this reason that Sundar conceives of second generation identities as somewhat of a process in that they are flexible and constantly shifting "... in response to the qualities of different situations as well as events that happen over their lifetime ... and [as a result of] changing personal interests, evolving relationships with family and members of the South Asian community, and factors in the broader society" (Sundar, 2008, p. 264).

Second generation racialized Canadians' identities also shift depending on their geographic location. In each of their studies, Sundar (2008), Sodhi (2008), and Somerville (2008) found that second generation Canadians' national identification depends on whether they are in Canada or in their parents' country of origin. For example, the youth in Sundar's (2008) study explained that when travelling abroad, especially to their ancestral homeland, they feel more 'Canadian' when confronted with locals and their way of life. Yet, when in Canada, they feel as though they can never lose their hyphenated identity and that their 'brown-ness' automatically emphasizes their South Asian nationality and sets them apart from 'real'

Canadians (Sundar, 2008). As Rumbaut explains, "...perceptions of exclusion from the mainstream mediate self-identities...feelings of belonging are partially ascribed" (Hou et al., 2010, p. 22). Therefore, interactions with the dominant society that leave second generation racialized Canadians feeling Othered, deter them from feeling truly Canadian because neither they nor the 'real' Canadians see them as belonging to the nation or as sharing a national identity.

### **The Ideology of Multiculturalism and Canadian National Identity**

Examining the very definition of Canada's national identity and its implications may explain why second generation racialized Canadians are self-identifying as Canadian and possessing a sense of belonging to a much lesser degree than their non-racialized counterparts. The experiences of exclusion and discrimination of the second generation are significant in that they reflect "...how we continue to construct our ideas of who is and is not a 'real' Canadian" (Rajiva, 2005, p. 25). As Rajiva (2005) explains, "In place of language difficulties, foreign credentials, and cultural alienation, second generation subjects have to struggle with a discourse of national belonging that is flexible enough to exclude them even when they talk, act, and 'live like everyone else'" (p. 26).

In Canadian society, there is a formal commitment to multiculturalism which upholds the belief that all people, regardless of their ethno-racial backgrounds, are equally 'Canadian' (Kobayashi & Johnson, 2011; Ash, 2004; Henry & Tator, 1994). This commitment, however, has not produced an "...open *social* interpretation of Canadian identity" in the broader society (Taylor, 2007, p. 128). Kobayashi and Johnson (2007) argue that "...multiculturalism is often

expressed as a form of separation from the dominant norm of ‘whiteness’ in Canadian society” (p. 3). Until the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, deliberate measures were taken to “...produce and sustain a white Canada” (James, Saul & Taylor, 2007, p. 158). This White Canadian identity was constructed over time through “...legislative enactments, government policies, social choices, legal determinations, racism, and xenophobia” (Ash, 2004, p. 399). This resulted in the creation of an ‘imagined community’ of exclusively White Canadians despite the historical presence of various ethno-racial identities in Canada. Canada’s immigration policy was central to the maintenance of this White identity. Up until the post-World War Two period, Canada’s immigration policy “...tended to be based purely on ascribed characteristics of prospective immigrants, in particular race and national origin” and as a result, Canada was able to ‘protect’ this identity from those immigrants whose identities were considered to be incompatible or inferior (James et al., 2007, p. 158).

These negative feelings towards racialized people have been passed down from each generation to the next (Henry & Tator, 1994). Reitz and Banerjee’s (2006) analysis of the EDS also found that second generation racialized Canadians reported experiencing higher levels of perceived discrimination than both their parents and their non-racialized counterparts. One’s perception of discrimination can be used to measure their perception of inequality in society (Reitz & Banerjee, 2006). Respondents to the EDS were asked the following question: “In the past five years, do you feel that you have experienced discrimination or been treated unfairly by others in Canada because of your ethnicity, race, skin colour, language, accent, or religion?” (Reitz & Banerjee, 2006, p. 10). The results showed that 42.2% of second generation racialized Canadians responded ‘Yes’, in comparison to 35.5% of their parents and only 10.9% of non-racialized second generation respondents (Banerjee & Reitz, 2006, p. 11). Reitz and Banerjee

offer an explanation as to why experiences of discrimination are more pronounced among the second generation. They argue that since the second generation grew up in Canadian society, they are likely to have higher expectations for equality than their parents who arrived post-childhood (Reitz and Banerjee, 2006). The fact that they would be treated differently because of their appearance may come as more of a shock to the second generation after growing up in a society that prides itself on multiculturalism.

Ali's (2008) study appears to confirm this theory. The second generation racialized participants in Ali's (2008) study grew up in low-income neighbourhoods in Toronto and attended ethnically-diverse schools. As such, they believed in the ideology of Canadian multiculturalism because the diverse people they encountered on a daily basis and their lack of experiences of racism in their "micro-environment" were seen as representing a multicultural Canada (Ali, 2008, p. 91). Therefore, Ali (2008) argues that they will be much more likely to be disappointed when they realize that their race and ethnicity "...limit what they can or cannot achieve in a context where power and privilege are still controlled by the White immigrants who arrived in Canada many generations ago..." (p. 91) and that "... they are still outsiders in Canada" (p. 101).

### **Racism and Racialization**

Henry and Tator (1994) argue that despite multiculturalism and a commitment to an egalitarian and democratic society, in Canada there are also "...attitudes and behaviours [that] include negative feelings about people of colour that carry the potential for differential treatment or discrimination" (Par. 2). These exist in the collective belief system of Canada's dominant

culture and are therefore also present in Canada's mainstream organizations and institutions (Henry & Tator, 1994).

Multiculturalism policies cannot recognize or address the fact that racism and racialization are deeply engrained in our dominant ideologies (Kobayashi & Johnson, 2007). *Race* is a social construct. Kobayashi and Johnson (2007) argue that the concept of race is "...the result of a history of racialization in which human beings attributed significance to phenotypical characteristics in order to justify the creation of differences and inequality" (p. 5). Racialization refers to "...historical acts through which people's bodies are inscribed with symbolic meaning and on this basis, people are assigned social places" (Kobayashi & Johnson, 2007, p. 4). For instance, racialization determines who is and is not allowed to belong to the Canadian national identity. Racialization is an ongoing process and as a result, racial categories are constantly shifting and being constructed and reconstructed based on evolving social, historical, economic, cultural, and political contexts (James, et al., 2007).

While it is now widely-accepted that 'races' are not biological, the concept of race continues to hold social significance because individuals continue to perceive skin colour as being "...significant for assessment, explanation, and interaction" (James, et al., 2007, p. 155). This significance has importance implications for how we construct and define concepts of nationalism (James, et al., 2007). While definitions of nationalism are quite varied, it is widely-accepted that it involves two primary components. First, "...[it] defines, at least roughly, the territorial boundaries that the nation has a right to control and [second, it defines] the membership boundaries of the population that makes up the nation ... these membership boundaries are set by members of the nation themselves, generally by an intellectual or political elite ... They establish the *we* that possesses the right to control the homeland (and as a result the

*they* that does not share this right)” (Barrington, 1997, p. 714, emphasis in the original). It can be concluded that Canadian multiculturalism policies have failed to overcome the deeply engrained idea that ‘real’ Canadians are exclusively White (Ash, 2004) and today, ‘real’ Canadians continue to be constructed and presented as White (James, et al., 2007; Ash, 2004; Dua, et. Al., 2005).

When a nation’s identity becomes intrinsically linked to a particular race, even those who were born in that nation and whose family has been in that country for generations, are marked by their skin colour that will forever set them apart from the ‘true members’ of that nation (Gilroy, 2007). Gilroy argues that conceptualizing Canadian identity as being linked to one race, is a form of racism because it is able to “...line up ‘race’ with nationhood, patriotism, and nationalism”, effectively denying a great portion of the Canadian population from ‘belonging’ to Canada because one’s skin colour is assumed to define their culture or nationality (Gilroy, 1992 as cited in Hall, 1996, p. 618). Ali (2008) echoes this notion by arguing that the discourse of multiculturalism limits options for self-identification because it “...impose[s] ethnicities and races on non-consenting people when they geographically relocate...” (p. 92). Taylor (2007) takes this one step further by arguing that Canadian society not only imposes a race or ethnicity on anyone who does not look Anglo-Saxon, but also an “unwarranted immigrant identification” (p.129). Rajiva (2005) explains the dangers of approaching the study of second generation Canadians under the assumption that racialized people are all immigrants and that we must address their problems as issues of acculturation. This assumption reinforces the notion that all racialized people in Canada are immigrants and therefore will always be seen as outsiders of the Canadian nation. To approach the issue from this angle, ignores the experiences of those who are “...rac[ialized] and ethnicized without being [an] immigrant” and despite being born here,

continue to face exclusion and discrimination based on their race or ancestral culture (Rajiva, 2005, p. 26). Thus, second generation racialized Canadians grow up in a society where simply due to the colour of their skin, they can never been seen, or even conceive of themselves, as being entirely Canadian.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Methods**

This research project seeks to explore the experiences of second generation racialized young adults in Canada by addressing the following questions (See Appendix A): How do they describe their own identity and how does this description differ from their description of Canada's national identity? How do they define 'belonging'? Do they have a sense of belonging in Canada; why or why not? Do they experience discrimination based on their ethno-racial identity? How does this impact their self-identification as Canadian and sense of belonging?

Without seeking to test a pre-established theory, this research took a qualitative approach to explore these broad questions of *how* second generation racialized Canadians describe their identities both independently and in relation to their description of Canada's national identity; *why* they may or may not have a sense of belonging in Canada; and *how* experiences of discrimination may impact their self-identification as Canadian and their sense of belonging in Canada. One-on one-interviews with four participants enabled me to examine a small number of cases in-depth and to gain a temporal picture of the experiences of second generation racialized

Canadians. The semi-structured interviews allowed me retain flexibility in conducting the interviews, enabling me to modify or add to my list of questions or topics of interest both during and between interviews. The interviews also enabled me to respond to information provided by the participants by asking follow-up questions that been both pre-determined and developed on the spot. This flexibility lead to the identification of new topics or issues that were relevant to the research questions (Archer & Berdahl, 2011).

In light of the sensitive nature of my research questions the interviews allowed for a more private environment which made participants comfortable and more willing to disclose their personal information and opinions. The interview setting also facilitated the development of a sense of rapport and trust between me and the participants which helped me gain access to the topics of interest, despite their personal and private nature. When conducting research that may be considered as socially sensitive because it intrudes into the private sphere or involves very personal experiences, ethical considerations must be central to the research design (Archer & Berdahl, 2011). Archer and Berdahl (2011) explain that “...the ethical guidelines governing social science research throw up three interconnected lines of defence ... confidentiality, informed consent, and the right to withdraw” (p. 104). Pseudonyms were used to ensure anonymity and confidentiality and audio material was destroyed after transcription (Archer & Berdahl, 2011). Each participant read and signed the consent form prior to the interview and they were given the opportunity to ask questions regarding the research project. I constantly remained cognisant of the social pressure that can exist in interview environments and that can compel a participant to reveal information or opinions that they would rather not reveal. As such, participants were reminded prior to and during the interview that they have the right to skip over any questions or to withdraw their participant at any point.

I used a non-probability sampling approach because I am not attempting to make broad generalizations about second generation racialized Canadians based on my research findings (Archer & Berdahl, 2011). I used purposive sampling to recruit all four participants (Archer & Berdahl, 2011). In conducting my analysis, I used an inductive process that enabled me to identify the themes and explanations that emerge from the data as it was analyzed (Archer & Berdahl, 2011). This enabled me to employ both existing theory as well as to develop new theories to explain my findings.

After conducting my interviews I began by first transcribing my audio recordings of the interviews and then reviewing my transcripts as well as my notes taken during the interviews. I then began with an open coding procedure to initially review my raw material and to get a general sense of the major themes and patterns in the material. Though I generally aimed at a Grounded Theory Approach (Archer & Berdahl, 2011), I eventually approached the data with a set of preconceived categories and codes based on the findings in the literature review which I then sought to fill, and enhance. I then identified potential relationships between the themes by turning to the research discussed in the literature review. This review provided theoretical support for the hypotheses I developed during my initial review of the material regarding the relationships between the themes identified. I then re-engaged the raw material with the set of broad themes identified during the open coding phase and specific coding categories that capture these themes under which I classified particular passages from the interviews (Archer & Berdahl, 2011). I then compared my additional interview material with the established codes in order to confirm these codes as well as to develop new codes. I continued to do so until I reached ‘category saturation’ (Archer & Berdahl, 2011) and determined that each category was independent of the other categories and no new themes seemed likely to emerge.

## **Participants and Their Characteristics**

Through in-depth interviews with four second generation racialized individuals living in the Greater Toronto Area, I explored how they self-identify in term of ethnic, national, racial or cultural groups as well as whether they have a sense of belonging in Canada. All of the participants were born in Canada and had spent the majority of their lives living in Toronto, Ontario (See Appendix B).

## **Results**

The interviews revealed two main themes. The first was that second generation racialized Canadians appear to hold multiple identities, forming a hyphenated or hybridized identity in which racialized identity and language/accent figure prominently. The second main theme found is that they also appear to have situational identities; their identities shift depending on the following situational factors: (i) their location (including the country, city, and environment they are in), (ii) the individuals they are surrounded by including who they are speaking to, and (iii) the goal(s) of the situation.

### **Multiple Identities**

None of the participants self-identified solely as Canadian. Three of them described themselves as having a hyphenated or hybrid identity comprising of elements of both a Canadian identity and that of their parents' country of origin.

I identify myself as an Indo-Canadian, so I always want to retain my parents' side but I also identify as Canadian because I was born and raised here. (Rosie)

Esteban, the fourth participant, however, explained that he always refers to his identity as being "Black", but also that:

I've always considered myself to be Trinidadian or St. Vincent. Of course I let [people] know I'm Canadian, but always I stick to my roots.

### **The Hyphen**

Out of the three participants who described themselves as having a hyphenated identity, only one emphasized that he identified more with his parents' ethnic identity. Dominic explains that while he might have felt more Canadian when he was younger, experiences that left him feeling that he did not belong in Canada led him to adopt a stronger Lebanese identity. He explains:

So you become just you know just Lebanese, just your ethnic origin. You don't become the Canadian-Lebanese anymore, and you definitely don't become just the Canadian. So I felt like those experiences definitely made me want to be more Lebanese...

This feeling was a source of hurt for Dominic, as he explains that Canada is his home and that he does feel a sense of belonging here to a certain extent. However, it's external indicators such as racial, ethnic, and audible differences which are evident in daily interactions that lead him to feel as though an identity is forced upon him by others.

Dominic explains that once he started university he began to resist Canadian culture and began “completely just calling myself Lebanese ... as a resistance to the culture that kind of tells you that you do not belong.” He attributes this to his learning about the racial, economic, and socio-political underpinnings of a hyphenated identity. This deep consideration of his hyphenated identity and its consequences are likely a result of his university education and his studies of sociology. Dominic had expected that in a university setting, students and professors would be more educated and aware of the idea of hyphenated identities, but he found that:

I had to continue to teach people you know what my cultural identity meant and why I was Lebanese and why not as Canadian. And it’s mostly from the outside responses or outside contingencies that have shaped my identity.

Dominic also identifies the difficulty of identifying as Canadian in a post-September 11<sup>th</sup> society with a heightened consciousness of Muslims. He explains that since Lebanon is an Arab country and many people associate Arab countries with Islam, people often assume that he is a Muslim. He explains:

I know my community even myself even though I’m not a practicing Christian, I do identify as a Christian Lebanese Canadian because it signifies, it’s just a cultural indicator of what part of Lebanon my parents originate from, specifically what kind of culture is embedded in that identity or that name.

This equation of Lebanese people with Islam and the ensuing fears attached to the religion have resulted in Dominic being subject to offensive and discriminatory encounters. He describes an event that took place at his first job in which he told a co-worker that he was of Lebanese origin and she retorted with “Oh so you’re really a terrorist.” And when she noticed his

expression she continued “Oh no I’m just joking you know like Arabs, terrorism...” But needless to say, Dominic was insulted, offended, and felt like the target simply due to his parents’ country of origin and its equation with Islam.

### **“But, where are you from?”: Racialization and Language/Accent**

For Dominic and Sierra, daily interactions in which they were asked “Where are you from?” left them feeling as though it was assumed that they were not born in Canada.

Yea just I feel like in Toronto and in Canada we have this- when people ask me where I’m from they’re not expecting the response Canada they’re expecting I guess my ethnic background and even if we don’t phrase it properly because where you’re from is like assuming that I wasn’t born here. (Sierra)

While Dominic grew up in a very diverse neighbourhood, when he moved to what he refers to as “a predominantly White neighbourhood” he was asked the same question much more frequently:

So they’d ask “oh were you born there or born here?” and you would say you were born here. And yet again that ascribes that Canadian slash or hyphen identity. And then as I got older I began to realize that it was an indicator that I don’t belong or that I was different, unique, separate, whatever type of discourses around that but I began to see it as being different as separating myself, not seeing myself as belonging. And that name kind of gave it me, that Lebanese name, it’s always a reminder that you’re not Canadian,

you don't belong here, your culture your ethnicity, your race had only began to start to settle here. So it was an indicator.

Dominic points out that because he is a second generation Canadian and therefore speaks English just like other native Canadian, he believes this question of his origins stems entirely from his colour of skin. He believes that when people see a skin colour other than White, they automatically assume that he is not Canadian because of their idea of who a Canadian is. He describes his response to this question as follows:

I automatically identify myself as Lebanese when somebody asks me. And that is because I feel like it's a forced identity onto me because of my colour, because of my race and I get that question asked often and I remember actually it's not only amongst my peers but amongst authority.

Dominic described an experience in which he was interviewing for a research position at his university and was asked where he was from in the interview by the White, male professor he would be working for. Specifically:

[T]aken aback from that question, I said I am Canadian I was born in Canada, I'm Canadian. And he began then to badger me with more questions about where I was from and he began to ask me okay if you were born here where were your parents born and I say why does that matter and he said well that's part of your, you know, ethnic identity. And I say well they weren't born in Canada, they were born somewhere else. He asked where. And I said just not born in Canada and it's none of your business. And I felt that it was a forced identity on me and I felt really uncomfortable by it so I say that I'm

Lebanese and I say that I'm a Lebanese-Canadian almost as a resistance to the kind of racial pinpointing that other ascribe to you or to myself.

Despite the frustration they felt when asked this question, both Dominic and Sierra explained that they often feel as though it is assumed that they are Canadian due to their accents, their ways of speaking, and the fact that they live in Canada.

[I]t's usually assumed that you were born in Canada but they want to know more, they want to dig deeper and see your roots, so I usually don't say the Canadian side I just say Lebanese and they automatically assume "Okay so you're Lebanese-Canadian". They put two and two together that I'm a second generation immigrant based on your accent, based on the way you present yourself, the way you can communicate with others. (Dominic)

With my age group it's really just asking "oh what's your background?" so it's kind of assumed that I'm Canadian, I get that vibe from people that ask. But I don't really feel the need to display that I'm Canadian because I feel like I'm here, I've grown up here. I'm Canadian. I don't really need to. (Sierra)

Both Sierra and Dominic exercise agency in how they choose to respond to this question. Their reaction to the question depends on who is asking the question as well as what their motive appears to be. Sierra explains that if the person asking seems to be implying that they don't think you could be from Canada because they have view of who Canadians are, she will 'play around with them' until they ask her outright, "What is your background? Where is your family from?" Dominic also gauges the intention of the asker. He explains that:

[I]t becomes a gauge of what type of, almost what kind of game they're playing, if they're asking and they're kind of defensive trying to separate themselves from you,

your automatic, you know ethnic resister comes in you say “No, not Canadian, I’m this I’m that”.

However, if the asker is someone they are meeting for the first time and they appear to be genuinely interested in hearing their story, both Sierra and Dominic will answer that they were born in Canada and then flip it around and ask where the asker is from. Dominic reports:

[T]hen you tell them and the next question I ask them is “well, where are you from?”  
That’s interesting, you know, we’re all settlers, where’s the first settler from?

Even being asked where his parents are from indicates to Dominic that the person is still implying that he does not belong here, because they are still trying to “get at” his roots or his origin. While this does not offend him, he feels that it still indicates what he refers to as his “dis-belonging”.

Sierra, Dominic, and Esteban also discuss how they are seen by the natives of their parents’ country of origin. Each of these participants explained that while they may look like natives and understand a lot of the country’s culture, their accent immediately gives away the fact that they are not a local.

They know right away that I’m Canadian because of the accent. But I look Trinidadian.  
(Esteban)

[T]hey don’t see me as Lebanese. Because your accent isn’t Lebanese. Yes you speak the language, yes you are part of the community. But at the same time they call it you’ve been Canadianized, you’ve been Westernized. (Dominic)

Only one participant addressed the implications of, in his words, “dis-belonging” to both Canada and their parents’ country or origin. Dominic discusses the idea of a third space or identity:

I find the in-between space is something that you experience because of your dis-belonging to two different groups... Because you kind of need a belonging, a sort of attachment. So you end up attaching yourself to this idea of a liminal space where you inhabit a metaphorical space of belonging through a hyphenated identity. And it becomes your indicator that ‘okay, so you’re not really Canadian, you’re not really Lebanese but you’re somewhere in between the two’. And it becomes intelligible to people. They see your liminal space when you’re describing... the hyphenated identity becomes a sort of intelligible phenomenon that other people understand, they understand “Okay, so you’re Lebanese-Canadian, you’re not really Canadian, you’re not really Lebanese, you’re this person”. It’s a construct.

This space is not only a way to help others understand who you are, but is also a way to understand yourself. It is a means of exercising agency to establish a self-identity in a world in which they do not entirely belong to either of the societies they can relate to. Despite acknowledging that it is a “non-existent” space, Dominic explains its purpose:

[It is to] understand where you can pin yourself. Not where other people can pin you, but where you can pin yourself as well. Having control over your own identity.

This liminal space appears to be a space in which second generation racialized Canadians may find a sense of belonging and a way to make sense of their identities. As Dominic explains:

I feel that I belong the most honestly when I’m around more Lebanese Canadian youth, second generation youth. That’s when I feel the most, I belong. It’s because they can

share, they can speak to that intimate knowledge of that hyphenated ethnic identity ... it's more so the metaphorical space, it's not really a boundary or a set land but it's a space where you kind of feel like you belong it's other people with that same identity and that's where I think I belong the most or I feel the most comfortable.

Still, Dominic highlights the diversity of identities among the second generation:

[I]n the second generation youth there's the ones who are more Canadianized, and the ones who are more Lebanese. And then there's conflict within the two, right?

### **Situational Identity**

While the interviews revealed that the participants hold multiple, different identities simultaneously, they also appear to have situational identities. Their identities shift depending on the following situational factors: (i) their location (including the country, city, and environment they are in), (ii) the White or racialized individuals they are surrounded by including who they are speaking to, and (iii) the goal(s) of the situation.

#### **Location:**

Several participants describe how their identities shift depending on whether they are in Canada or abroad. Sierra explains that the first time she really referred to herself as "Canadian" was when she was Europe. She explains:

That's when I became Canadian and I guess my heritage wasn't the first word I thought about.

Being in their parents' country or countries of origin can also result in a realization that these individuals feel more of that identity than they had previously thought. Dominic explains that he "absolutely, definitely" feels more Canadian when he visits Lebanon. He explains:

In Canada, it's race that makes you not belong. In your native country quote unquote, it's your new culture, your new ethnic identity that makes you different, not so much race, more so the ethnicity.

A participant's identity may also be impacted by their location within the city or the neighbourhood that they're in. For example, Sierra discusses how growing up in a primarily White and upper class neighbourhood often left her feeling as though she had to "tone it down". She would avoid discussing her home life and cultural traditions that were different from those of her White peers so as not to emphasize her difference even though she acknowledges that everyone knew she was different. She made a concerted effort to "act like a Canadian" because she felt as though she had to. In this sense, Sierra equates "acting Canadian" with what she calls "acting White". She explains:

I'm West Indian we are very loud people, always laughing loud, talking a lot, that's just part of the culture. Whereas I'd be told you need to laugh quieter, you need to not talk too much. In class, the teacher would say this. I wasn't aware I was talking loud, I was just talking. In that kind of environment you're just like "ooh it's like standing and like not standing out ... Whereas in high school everyone was from everywhere and everyone was loud!

So to achieve the goal of not sticking out at school, Sierra purposefully toned down those qualities that she felt were not in line with those of the dominant Canadian identity. She also

made a concerted effort to fit in when she was younger, but now does not consciously try to because she "does not care". However, she admits that she does in fact care, but some days wishes that did not. Despite this, Sierra feels as though these experiences:

[M]ake me aware of my identity, it makes me aware of me being Canadian, makes me aware of what I'm potentially gonna have to deal with. But it hasn't hindered me being... it fact it makes me say more like 'yea I'm Canadian'.

## **The Company you keep: Racialized or White**

### **Around racialized people**

Both Sierra and Dominic discuss how their identity shifts depending on who they are talking to. In particular, it shifts depending on whether they are talking to other racial minorities or to White Canadians. When working at a centre for newcomers in Toronto, Sierra was surprised to discover that being in that environment led her to newly resolve her strong Canadian identity because she saw that others were referring to her as Canadian:

I need to start referring to myself as Canadian because if I don't then other people won't refer to me as being Canadian. And that doesn't mean that I have to not be Trinidadian.

This is fluid, however, because when in the presence of immigrants, Sierra finds herself unhappy with being labelled the "token Canadian" because of the implications of inclusion that accompany this label. In this situation, Sierra tries to show her understanding of their experiences of exclusion by purposefully emphasizing the fact that she is "...different here too!" Sierra explains:

But you have that whole other aspect to your identity that they don't have, so you kind of put it in your back pocket, like I don't need this right now.

The significance of this quote is captured in the title of this MRP: Sierra likens this ability to being like a chameleon because she is able to strategically fit with different groups as she chooses to emphasize either her Canadianness or her otherness. She is unsure as to whether this ability should be regarded as a good thing, however, she states that this ability to foreground a certain identity is what enabled her to 'belong' with the White girls growing up. She acknowledges that this made her less different than her Black peers and this is why she could fit in with her blond/White friends.

In the presence of non-White individuals, Dominic feels like even more an outsider because of what he calls "that authoritative White person [who] is still internalized" in all of their minds. To Dominic, this internalization means that:

[A]mong other racial minorities, you're not Canadian, if anything you're even less Canadian because you're among people who are not even seen as Canadian so you kind of agglomerate into the group that is *definitely* [said with emphasis] not Canadian, so going from one person being in a White group and being somewhat Canadian to going into a group of racialized people you are definitely not Canadian because you're all together, so there's still even in the absence of a White individual, there's still that White individual there because that Whiteness or the idea of Whiteness has been internalized in you.

## **Around White People**

While Dominic may feel somewhat Canadian in the presence of White people, being among other racial and ethnic identities leads him to feel even less Canadian than before. Sierra, on the other hand, explains that she “all of a sudden” feels less Canadian when in the presence of people whose family has been in Canada for generations, though she does not specify if that only includes White Canadians. Also, Sierra feels as though she has become desensitized towards being the only non-White person at an event because she grew up in a predominantly White neighbourhood and almost all of her friends were White. However, when it is pointed by someone that she is the only non-White person in attendance, she then feels as though she is standing out and she feels “weird” about it.

Additionally, Dominic finds that in general regardless of his adoption of a Lebanese-Canadian hyphenated identity:

In terms of everyday convos with people, everyday experiences, interactions I do not consider or see myself as Canadian at all ... I see myself as Other.

## **Who is your "own" group? Stereotyping and Self-Exclusion**

Sierra also discusses her experiences with other Black people in Canada. Sierra describes how her friends react if she does not act in accordance with stereotypes about Black people. They will say “Oh, you act White”. For example, if she were to suggest that she and her friends go skiing, she would be asked why she wants to do that because her friends perceive skiing to be a White activity. She distinguishes between something being a “White thing”, such as skiing, and

something being a “Canadian thing”. Here, she describes skiing not as a Canadian thing, but as a “White person thing to do”. Sierra explains that this type of “self-exclusion” is motivated by the fact that racial minorities believe that would likely encounter racism if they engaged in “White activities” because it is going against a stereotype and:

You don’t look like the kind of person who would do that ... when people say you don’t look like the kind of person who would do that, they’re referring to the colour of your skin. Or like the make-up of your body which might be ... but if you don’t look at the kind of person who would be doing that, you’re not gonna go and be the only person that’s doing that so people can tell you that you don’t look like the kind of person that does that.

So to avoid this racism, they purposefully exclude themselves before they are excluded by someone else on the basis of their “acting White”, by both their community and the mainstream Canadian community:

When people go against the norm, they’re kind of asking not necessarily to be excluded but that line is going to be drawn to like put you in a box. And if you do participate in activities that people that look like you are excluded from then you start to be excluded from the other group because they’re like “why are you associating with that?” (Sierra)

Sierra does not believe that this exclusion stems from national identity, but rather from the proliferation of stereotypes in the media that do not portray Black people engaging in “White activities”. Esteban echoes this observation when describing his former friend:

I have one friend, he’s Black. He tries really hard to put on this image that ‘Okay I’m Black, I have to act a certain way, do certain things, talk a certain way, go to certain

parties. So he will only go to reggae parties. And I'm the kind of person, I like to go to all kind of parties. He only likes to go to clubs that play reggae music. I've tried to bring him out to other kinds of parties and expose him to other things. And every time I do, we get into a fight because he's mad because he's not enjoying himself but the reason he's not enjoying himself is because ... thinks he shouldn't be doing certain things because he's Black.

Sierra also describes how she feels that she has been excluded the most from the Black community with which she identifies even if it is due to her own self-exclusion. She explains:

Like that Black culture that still all over the world that if you don't understand it or participate fully in it that's your exclusion. So I feel like I've been more excluded that way than other ways. And sometimes you don't notice you're being excluded. You really have to sit down and say oh I'm not in that.... and it can almost be self-exclusion, like other people aren't necessarily pushing you away from doing certain things but you yourself will say oh I'm not doing that because ... you're self-proclaiming stereotypes on yourself and excluding yourself which will make people eventually stop asking you.

### **Analysis and Discussion**

This analysis will discuss the following themes derived from the research findings: (i) hybrid and hyphenated identities, (ii) the implication of these identities in Canadian society, including racialization and exclusion, and (iii) situational identities as reactive identities. The

following analysis will address each of these themes as well as their links to the relevant literature outlined in the Literature Review.

## **Identity**

The findings regarding the participants' identities as being hyphenated and hybridized show that while second generation youth may self-identify as Canadian to a degree, their identities also incorporate elements of their parents' ethnic identities. The strength of their connection to their parents' ethnic identities varies greatly. However, this variance may depend on how that individual is received by the dominant culture in society. For example, while Dominic considers himself to be more Lebanese than Canadian he feels as though this Lebanese identity has been forced upon him by members of Canadian society. Dominic's self-identifies primarily as Lebanese and this may be conceived of as his adoption of a reactive identity. Rather than calling himself Canadian, these interactions leave him resolved to call himself Lebanese because he is never accepted as simply 'Canadian'.

These central issues around reactive identity arise in many ways from the literature. To begin with, this finding supports Hall's (1996) argument that rather than being static and essentialized, identities today are comprised of several, "...sometimes contradictory or unresolved identities", that are not fixed, but are continually shaped and transformed "in relation to the ways [they] are represented or addressed in the cultural systems which surround [them]" (p. 598). Therefore, the individual can assume different identities at different times.

Hall (1996) further argues that one of the most influential sources of an individual's cultural identity is the national culture into which they are born. The very purpose of a national

identity is to create a sense of connection among individuals who are only bound together by a nation state so that they will feel as though they belong to a shared identity (Hall, 1996). National cultures are in fact discourses which seek to unify very different members of that state through narratives, symbols, and traditions that are meant to construct a national identity that all members can ascribe to (Hall, 1996). While a national identity or culture seeks to unify differences, or at the very least *present* them as unified, the reality is that “modern societies are cultural hybrids” (Hall, 1996, 617). There are multiple races and ethnicities present in Canadian society, which are excluded from those mainstream notions of Canadian identity presenting Canada as a homogeneous, White nation (Hall, 1996). This is evident from the results of the interviews in this study, in that while each participant does self-identify as Canadian to a degree, they also identify with additional ethnic and/or racial identities. In some cases, these other identifications are much stronger than their identification as Canadian.

As Gilroy (2007) explains, conceptions of a shared identity, in this case a national identity, create patterns of inclusion and exclusion through the political process of defining the basis upon which the ‘imaginary connection’ will be defined. It involves debates among the collective group as to how boundaries will be defined and enforced, and this process of defining the collective identity becomes a question of power and authority when it comes to realizing this identity in a political form, such as a nation (Gilroy, 2007). However, when a nation’s identity becomes intrinsically linked to a particular race, even those who were born in that nation and whose family has been in that country for generations, are marked by their skin colour which will forever set them apart from the ‘true members’ of that nation (Gilroy, 2007). With such an exclusive ‘pure’ identity, there is a sense of security and a fear of others who do not share that identity because they inherently corrupt and compromise its purity (Gilroy, 2007).

Gilroy argues that conceptualizing Canadian identity as being linked to one race, is a form of racism because it is able to “...line up ‘race’ with nationhood, patriotism, and nationalism”, effectively denying a great portion of the Canadian population from ‘belonging’ to Canada because one’s skin colour is assumed to define their culture or nationality (Gilroy, 1982, as cited by Hall, 1996, p. 618). In this sense, the “...political language of identity levels out distinctions between ... the person you choose to be and the things that determine your individuality by being thrust upon you” (Gilroy, 2007, p. 283). Thus, one may self-identify as Canadian, but their skin colour prevents them from being perceived and accepted as Canadian. It is for this reason that Rumbaut argues that “...perceptions of exclusion from the mainstream mediate self-identities ... feelings of belonging are partially ascribed” (Hou, et al., 2010, p. 22). Therefore, as seen from the interviews in this study, while second generation racialized Canadians may self-identify as Canadian to varying degrees, they are still made to feel as outsiders who do not belong to Canada’s national identity simply by way of their skin colour and ancestral heritage.

Rajiva (2005) further argues that “in place of language difficulties, foreign credentials, and cultural alienation, second generation subjects have to struggle with a discourse of national belonging that is flexible enough to exclude them even when they talk, act, and ‘live like everyone else’” (Rajiva, p. 26). Second generation racialized Canadians grow up in a society where ‘Canadianness’ is conflated with Whiteness (Rajiva, 2005) and as such, simply due to the colour of their skin, they can never be seen, or even conceive of themselves, as being entirely Canadian. Therefore, the experiences of exclusion and discrimination of the second generation are significant in that they reflect “...how we continue to construct our ideas of who is and is not a ‘real’ Canadian” (Rajiva, 2005, p. 25). This matches with the sense from the participants in this

study, who explain that despite being born in and identifying with Canada, and possessing Canadian cultural capital such as a Canadian accent, in day-to-day interactions their racialized identity prevents them from being seen as entirely Canadian. This is evidenced by the fact that two participants consistently referred to regularly being asked the question “Where are you from?” In addition to this, though one participant (Sierra) had difficulty distinguishing between ‘Canadianness’ and ‘Whiteness’, she still explains that she would classify “acting Canadian” as “acting White”.

One reason why second generation racialized Canadians may feel less of a sense of belonging than their parents is the fact that they have grown up in a ‘context of difference’ (Rajiva, 2005). While their parents arrived in a ‘context of difference’, many of them brought with them a strong sense of identity and belonging tied to their homeland and as a result, could draw from this experience when they encountered discrimination or ‘Othering’ (Rajiva 26). On the other hand, the second generation “...develop in contexts of outsider-ness and have never been anything other than visible minorities” (Rajiva, 2005, p. 26). As such, they have a much greater desire to belong (Rajiva 26). This arose in the interviews in which the respondents described their sense of being outsiders and how they cared despite pretending like they didn't, and through being hurt by the exclusions.

Therefore, while Dominic may wish to identify predominantly as Canadian, his interactions with the dominant society over the course of his life leave him feeling Othered, and deter him from adopting a Canadian identity to the degree he would like, because neither he nor the ‘real’ Canadians can conceive of his belonging to the national identity simply due to the colour of his skin and his ethnic origins. As Sundar (2008) explains, interactions with mainstream society often determine which national identification predominates. The greater their

experiences of exclusion or Othering from one nationality, the more likely they are to adopt the other nationality as their identity.

But at the same time, experiences of exclusion within their ethnic community may lead that individual to seek more interactions with mainstream Canadians and as a result, identify more with Canadian culture than their parents' nationality (Sundar 2008). For example, as Sierra discusses the reactions from her non-White friends towards her engaging in "White activities" it is clear that she considers their comments to be exclusionary. She is not interested in their self-exclusion, so she actively seeks friends who do not "...put you in a box" (Sierra).

### **"But where are you from?"**

Two of the participants discussed their feelings towards this question in-depth. Ash (2004) articulates her experience of growing up as the child of a racialized immigrant in Canada:

There is an ironic coming of age for all Canadians of colour: the moment when you first become aware that you are not seen as a Canadian. That you will forever have to justify your presence in a country in a way that white Canadians, and even newly-arrived white immigrants never will... 'Well, where were you born?'... 'You're not from here, are you?'... 'Okay, but where are your parents from?' (p. 399)

For Dominic and Sierra, daily interactions in which they were asked "Where are you from?" left them feeling as though others assume that they were not born in Canada and that they must be 'something' else, or from somewhere else. They both note that they speak English just like any other native-born English-speaking Canadian, so it must be the colour of their skin that motivates

this question. This question was not only posed in informal social environments, but also in formal environments such as the job interview in which Dominic was asked by the interviewer “where are you from?” His simple reply “Canada” resulted in his being asked follow-up questions regarding his origins because the interviewer would not accept his first answer. While Dominic regrets not speaking out against this interviewer, he also explains that he is hesitant to ever label an experience as “racism” because of the implications of, in his words, “calling the race card”. He feels as though labelling something as racist is not only stigmatized, but would also signify that he does not belong in Canada which would cause him embarrassment.

Here, Dominic highlights the contradiction that Henry and Tator (1994) argue exists in Canada’s multicultural society which is that despite the dominant belief that racism no longer exists in a democratic and meritocratic society such as Canada’s, there are still negative feelings towards racialized individuals that carry the potential for differential treatment or discrimination. Therefore, Dominic’s hesitation to label an event or action as racist stems from an awareness of this widespread denial of the persistent existence of racism in Canada today. Here, the differential treatment is the very fact that this question was posed to him and that he was forced to give an answer other than “from Canada”.

Despite feeling as though his identity has been ascribed, Dominic continues to exercise his agency as he creates a metaphorical “in-between” space for his identity which is neither entirely Canadian, nor entirely Lebanese. It is in this space that Dominic is able to best understand his identity. While he acknowledges that it is in fact a construct, he also feels as though this space gives him control over his own identity and enables him to achieve a sense of belonging among other second generation Lebanese-Canadians.

### **Situational Identity as Reactive Identity:**

Three of the participants in this study frequently described their identities as shifting depending on the following situational factors: (i) their location (including the country, city, and environment they are in), (ii) the individuals they are surrounded by including who they are speaking to, and (iii) the goal(s) of the situation. The participants interviewed appear to make both strategic and nonstrategic decisions on a daily basis, as to which identity they should foreground in their interactions. Unlike Sundar's (2008) conclusion that these decisions demonstrate second generation Canadians' control over different situations, this study found that in addition to this, these individuals may in fact also feel more of one of their identities depending on the environment. In this sense, their self-identification is reactive to the qualities of a social environment

The findings of this research regarding identity shifts dependent on geographic location echo the findings of Sundar's (2008) study of twenty-six South Asian-Canadian youth. Both Sierra and Dominic note that the first time they felt truly Canadian was when they were abroad. Dominic found that in Lebanon, his ethnic identity is what separates him from the native Lebanese people. He realized that his "ethnic identity", specifically his beliefs and values, is not as Lebanese as he previously thought. This realization may have further spurred Dominic's creation of his "in-between identity". Dominic feels as though he will never be able to lose that hyphenated identity, regardless of how he identifies himself, simply because of the colour of his skin.

Participants also describe how their identity shifts depending on whether they are in the presence of other racial minorities or immigrants, or in the presence of White Canadians. Sierra's

experiences in different group settings clearly illustrate the reactive components of identity, and the need to either downplay or emphasize specific aspects of your identity, in order to connect with people around her. Sundar (2008) argues that the multiple identities possessed by second generation Canadians are in fact a source of ‘identity capital’, which she defines as “...the varied resources deployable on an individual basis that represent how people most effectively define themselves and have other define them in various contexts...” (p. 269). Second generation racialized Canadians are able to draw from their identity capital in order to strategically underplay or foreground different aspects of their multi-dimensional ethno-racial identities in order to meet the expectations and demands of specific social situations (Sundar, 2008). In Sierra’s case, she is able to make herself appear more ‘Canadian’ or more ‘Other’ depending on who she is around. Despite this, it seems as though she holds very little power over how these situations make her feel. Sundar (2008) argues that this ability to express one’s identity in strategic ways is a means of achieving a sense of belonging in both mainstream society and in one’s ethnic community. However, Sierra may feel more accepted or that she belongs when she emphasizes one of her identities but she is still trying to act as though the other half of her identity, or the other half of her hyphen, does not exist or exists to a lesser degree and is therefore not able to be her true self.

Both Sierra and Esteban describe their experiences with other Black people in Canada and the pressure felt by themselves and by other Black second generation Canadians to not “act White”. Sierra conflates “acting White” and “acting Canadian”. This “acting White” has real implications for Sierra’s sense of belonging to the Black community. She explains that at the expense of not acting according to stereotypes, she has felt excluded by the Black community. These experiences truly emphasize the “in-between” space that Dominic identifies. Second

generation racialized Canadians who hold hyphenated identities exist in a society in which they are in between two cultures and two identities, never being allowed, or allowing themselves, to fully belong to either one.

Finally, these complex strands of analysis can be linked to Reitz and Banerjee's (2006) analysis of the Ethnic Diversity Survey (EDS). In their analysis of the EDS, Reitz and Banerjee (2006) found that only 56.5% of second generation racialized Canadians self-identified as Canadian. None of the participants in this study identify solely as Canadian. Rather, each of the four participants considers themselves to possess several racial and/or ethnic identities which make up their unique hybrid or hyphenated identity. Reitz and Banerjee (2006) offer an explanation for this finding. They argue that it is important to study the link between the social integration of racialized Canadians and racial inequality and discrimination in Canada. They posit that high levels of perceived discrimination and vulnerability among second generation racialized Canadians may be the reason behind this finding. As mentioned in the Literature Review, 42.2% of second generation racialized Canadians feel as though in the last five years, they "...have experienced discrimination or been treated unfairly by others in Canada because of [their] ethnicity, race, skin colour, language, accent, or religion..." (Reitz & Banerjee, 2006, p. 10).

Reitz and Banerjee's (2006) findings echo those of this study in which participants consistently refer to feelings of exclusion, Othering, and stereotyping due to their ethno-racial identity. These experiences hinder their ability to self-identify as Canadian and prevent them from feeling a sense of belonging in Canada. While two out of four participants in this study confirm that they have a sense of belonging in Canada, at the same time they point to experiences in which they felt that they did not belong simply due to their ethno-racial identity.

Not only does this complex and multifaceted identity hinder their sense of belonging in Canada, but it also hinders their sense of belonging to the racialized group with which they identify. Despite this, second generation racialized Canadians may be able to achieve a sense of belonging in the presence of other second generation racialized Canadians. While Dominic did point to feeling even less Canadian in the presence of other racialized individuals, he also explains that in the presence of other second generation Lebanese-Canadians, other individuals who exist in the same liminal space as he does, he feels the most that he belongs because only they "...can speak to that intimate knowledge of that hyphenated ethnic identity".

## **Conclusions**

This conclusions section will highlight the main themes derived from the research findings and their implications and will present several new questions for future research. The interviews revealed two main themes. The first was that second generation racialized Canadians appear to hold multiple identities, forming a hyphenated or hybridized identity in which racialized identity and language/accent figure prominently. The second main theme found is that they also appear to have situational identities; their identities shift depending on the following situational factors: (i) their location (including the country, city, and environment they are in), (ii) the individuals they are surrounded by including who they are speaking to, and (iii) the goal(s) of the situation. Participants consistently reference their exclusion from Canadian identity due to their ethno-racial identity and these experiences hinder their sense of belonging in Canada. The tenuous connections to Canadian identity held by some of the participants in this

study suggest that despite Canada's policy of multiculturalism which posits that all people, regardless of their ethno-racial backgrounds, are equally 'Canadian', the reality is that Canadians are still constructed and presented as being White and as having a European background.

This small-scale qualitative study generally requires larger studies to develop the suggestive themes fully. In this study, I was able to capture some of the elements of how second generation racialized Canadians define/describe Canadian national identity, how they describe their own identity, and how this description differs from their description of national identity. I was also able to get at some aspects of how they define 'belonging' and if they have a sense of belonging in Canada, including reasons for their reactive sense of belonging. It was also clear that they experience discrimination based on their ethno-racial identity, and that this has complex consequences for their self-identification as Canadian and sense of belonging. Given that there were only four respondents, this study contributes to the growing literature in this area, and both points to the limitations of the study, and opens up new questions.

The first area of future research identified in this study is on gender differences in identity. This research did not focus on such differences; however the interviews suggest that these differences could be quite significant, particularly in terms of belonging. The second area of future research is on intra-racialized relations of individuals who deal with differences between them and the racialized group with which they identify. This research suggests that this exclusion could be just as salient to identity development as exclusion from the dominant group. Finally, future research must explore the second generation racialized population as being a new and unique category, in terms of their identification and sense of belonging among other individuals who hold the same hyphenated identity. Given this number of interesting questions, the field of identity development among second generation racialized Canadians and its

consequences is certain to grow and provide clearer answers to academics and policy makers regarding the importance of their integration into Canadian society, and in particular their ability to call themselves 'Canadian'.

## **Appendices**

### **Appendix A: Interview Questions and Demographic Questionnaire**

#### **Questions related to ethnic/cultural/national identity:**

1. How do you identify or describe yourself in terms of your relevant ethnic, national, racial or cultural group?
2. Has this changed over the course of your lifetime? Why or why not?
3. What does Canadian identity mean to you? What does it mean to be Canadian?
4. How are you reflected in this identity? If you do not see yourself reflected in it, please explain why this is the case.

#### **Questions related to belonging:**

1. How do you define 'belonging' in society?
2. Where do you feel you belong in terms of your ethnicity, culture and/or nationality?
3. Do you feel that you belong in Canada? Can you explain why or why not?
4. Have you ever felt excluded or discriminated against based on your identity? If yes, can you describe how and where?
5. Have these experiences impacted your sense of identity and/or your sense of belonging in Canada?

## Demographic Questionnaire

1. Age \_\_\_\_\_

2. Gender M F

4. When did your parent(s) immigrate to Canada?

Parent 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Parent 2 \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Parents:

Parent 3 \_\_\_\_\_

Parent 4 \_\_\_\_\_

5. Where did they immigrate from?

Parent 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Parent 2 \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Parents:

Parent 3 \_\_\_\_\_

Parent 4 \_\_\_\_\_

6. I currently reside in: \_\_\_\_\_ (city)

## Appendix B: Participant Characteristics

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>Parent 1: Country of Origin</b>	<b>Parent 2: Country of Origin</b>
Sierra	Female	20	Toronto, ON	Canada	Trinidad
Esteban	Male	20	Toronto, ON	Trinidad	St. Vincent
Rosie	Female	27	Toronto, ON	India	India
Dominic	Male	22	Toronto, ON	Lebanon	Lebanon

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