

“Why are we so Black?”: Nigerian families’ integration into schools in Canada

by

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Abstract

There is a paucity of research on the education integration experiences of non-refugee Black African migrants. This sometimes leads to the essentialization of the Black African immigrant experience. In Canada, Nigerian immigrants are mostly economic migrants (not refugees), and due to the colonial history of Nigeria, are predominantly English speaking. Given that Nigerian immigrants in Canada account for a significant number of Black Africans in Canada, and that they are largely overlooked in the research, it is necessary to explore the experiences of Nigerian immigrant families and their integration into the school system. It is in this context that this phenomenological study sought to inquire into the education integration experiences of Nigerian parents and their children in an urban city in Canada. The purpose of the study was to inquire into parents' experiences and their perceptions of their children's experiences as they integrated into schools in Canada. The study was grounded in Critical Race Theory and Intersectionality frameworks and used journaling and interview techniques to explore these experiences. Findings illustrated the potential of play, friendships, parental involvement, and positive attitudes of educators in fostering integration and belonging. It also illustrates how race, microaggressions, and lack of connection with others impeded integration. Suggestions included that schools should explore the potential for play in fostering belonging for newly arrived children. Also, teacher training education institutions and K-12 schools should adopt anti-racist and anti-colonial practices and approaches to engage with stakeholders.

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CHAPTER 1: Introduction

Background of the Study

Nigeria is the most populous Black nation in the world and a top source country for Black economic migrants in Canada. Between 2011 and April 2020, Canada admitted roughly 55,000 Nigerians with more than half of them admitted within the last three years alone (Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2020). Nigerians are also one of the largest populations of “Black African” immigrants (used in this research to refer to Black people who immigrated from the African continent as opposed to the Caribbean or the United States) in Canada. However, the majority of the research on the educational integration experiences of Black African immigrants focuses on those who: are refugees, do not speak English or are English language learners, have little formal education, have disrupted schooling or schooling experiences in a language other than English. Most of this research excludes the experiences of Nigerians who are mostly economic migrants (not refugees), and due to the colonial history of Nigeria, are predominantly English speaking. The lack of diverse research on the educational integration of Black African immigrants in Canada works to uphold the essentialized image of the Black person.

Importantly, most studies about Black African Immigrants have focused on the experiences of youths and adults. The experiences of young Black immigrant children (0-10 years of age) have been underexplored. The paucity of research on the perspectives of young Black immigrant children may be due to the dominant perception of children as innocent, intellectually deficient, and unaware, therefore not possessing valuable insights. Yet the realities of the lived lives of many children directly contradict this view (Nascimento, 2016). Young

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children are agentic and active participants in the course of their lives. They are cognizant of the goings-on in society, are capable of thinking, understanding, and making connections about events in society and how these affect their lives (Kessler, 2018; Suoto-Manning et al. 2018). It is therefore important to explore the experiences of Nigerian immigrant families and their young children as a distinct population within the kindergarten to Grade 12 (K-12) school system in Canada.

Because schools are the first point of socialization into Canadian society for many immigrant children, the extent to which schools successfully integrate children and families into the education system may influence children's conception of their place within educational spaces and the larger Canadian society. Although there is no generally agreed-upon definition of educational integration, for this research, integration is understood as "full and robust membership" (Alba & Holdaway, 2013, p. 2) of families and children, including immigrants, within the school community. *Integration* in this research refers to how immigrant families are welcome into educational spaces, made aware of the structures and workings of the school, and how they feel a sense of belonging within the school community. As "marginalized students, cannot be successfully educated in a system that requires a rejection of difference in order to succeed" (Loutzenheiser & McIntosh, 2004, p. 158), it is important that the school is welcoming and is a place where all children feel safe and valued.

As a new immigrant myself, I was interested in the experiences of Nigerian immigrant families in school spaces in Canada as a result of my interactions with other Nigerians who expressed concerns about their schooling experiences. In addition, as a graduate student, I am aware of the lack of research on the perspectives of Nigerians within the broader literature about the education integration experiences of African immigrants. Even though Nigerians in Canada

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constitute a large percentage of the Black African immigrant population, many of the experiences reported in the literature did not seem to me to apply to the majority of Nigerians in diaspora, for example, challenges with the English language, and trauma due to wars and displacement. The educational integration experiences of Nigerians may also differ from those of Black immigrants from the Caribbean, or the experiences of African Americans due to their differing migration histories and cultures. Additionally, reconceptualist theorists (for example Bloch, Swadener & Cannella, 2018; Cannella, 2000; & Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 2007) have challenged my image of children and compelled me to deconstruct the image of children that I held in my mind and to critically consider those deficit images. Therefore, my view of children is that they are strong, capable, and aware, and their perspectives are brought to bear through their parents' observations and perspectives of their children's experiences. As part of a qualitative research course work, I conducted a pilot study that informed this research.

Statement of the Problem

Canada continues to receive an increasing number of African immigrants yearly. These immigrants and their children contribute to the economic strength and cultural diversity in Canada. Despite the important role schools and educators play in fostering integration and a positive sense of belonging, schools continue to be structured on the assumption that everyone is a member of the same nation. Within this "imagined community" (Anderson, 1991) there is an assumption that every member of it shares common values, ideas, histories, and realities. When schools are structured on this assumption of sameness, it excludes those who represent differences. By structure I mean, the curriculum, the teacher population, the teaching styles, the methods of assessment, the grouping of children, parental engagement, and discipline, among other things. The way the structures of schools privilege the voices, knowledge, identities, and

ways of being of some over others, is evidenced in the texts that are assigned, the curriculum that is developed and taught, the history that is highlighted, and that which is excluded, and in the ways that some children are regulated differently than others. These are the “hidden curricula” (Apple, 2004) that serve to protect and preserve cultural hegemony, thereby rendering the identities and lived experiences of many children invisible and unvalued.

The schooling experience may be particularly alienating for Black children whose phenotype immediately places them on the margins and puts them at greater risk of bullying and victimization, drop-out, lower academic performance, streaming into low-level courses, and funneling into the criminal justice system (Giroux, 2013; James, 2019). Effective partnerships between parents and the school and parental involvement in children’s education have been found to lead to positive outcomes for children (Codjoe, 2007). For immigrant families, this partnership or involvement may be hindered by several factors including language barriers, cultural differences, lack of understanding of how the school system works, and unfriendly school climates (James, 2019; Li, et al., 2016; Massing, et al., 2016). Since Canada continues to welcome many Black African immigrants, it is necessary to explore their experiences within Canada’s K-12 education systems. The successful integration of Black African immigrants has both short and long-term implications for their feelings of belonging, their academic performance, and for their success in Canadian society.

Researchers have explored the schooling experiences of Black immigrants, (for example, Bitew & Ferguson, 2010; James, 2019; Oba, 2018; Schroeter & James, 2015), and the experiences of specific African populations including, Ethiopians (Bitew & Ferguson, 2010), Somalis (Stachel, 2012), and Sudanese (Magro, 2009) immigrants. Although researchers have explored the economic integration of Nigerians (Domfeh, 2018), the identity and alienation of

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Nigerian youths in the United States and Canada (Awokoya, 2012; Balogun, 2011), and the experiences of Nigerian health-care professionals in Canada (Adekola, 2017), no research (to my knowledge) has explored the educational experiences of Nigerian immigrants as a distinct population in Canada. Given that Nigerians in Canada account for a significant number of both the Black, and Black African populations¹, and that they are largely overlooked in the research, it is necessary to explore the experiences of Nigerian immigrant families and their integration into the school system.

The experiences of older Black African children, usually those between the ages of 9 and 18 years (Dooley & Thangaperumal, 2011; James, 2019; Stachel, 2012) are privileged in the literature. Therefore, this research aims to gain insights into the experiences of young, elementary school-aged Nigerian children (ages 5-11 years, or children in kindergarten to Grade six). Although I believe that children are aware and cognizant of their experiences and can relate them, the COVID-19 pandemic and the required physical distancing measures made it unfeasible to carry out active research with children at this time. Therefore, I interviewed parents of young children (online) about their perceptions of their children's experiences in school spaces. Although I did not interview children directly, the details that parents provided, offered valuable insights into children's experiences within the school system in an urban Canadian city.

¹ Black refers to all Black-skinned people in Canada regardless of their origin (Africa, Caribbean, or the United States of America). Black African refers specifically to Black people who have migrated from Africa. The 2016 Canadian census data shows that 68,680 people reported being Nigerian (including those who reported being Ibo, Edo, and Yoruba). While it is difficult to calculate the exact number of Black people in Canada, the 2016 Census data showed that Nigerians are among the largest population of Black people in Canada.

Research Purpose and Questions

Education should serve as a means of social mobility and equality but as scholars have pointed out, schools act as sites of cultural preservation and colonial reinforcement (Allen, 2017; Kanu, 2006). In a pilot study I conducted with Nigerian immigrant parents (as part of course work and approved by the university ethics board for inclusion in this study [see appendix L], this understanding was echoed by one of my participants who claimed that “that is how they do things here.” “They” referred to the school authorities who are predominantly White, and “here” meaning Canada, which is different from “there”, participants’ home country (Nigeria). The participants felt that they did not have a say in the way things were done and that their experiences and suggestions were not valued or validated. This feeling of not belonging may affect immigrant parents’ willingness to take a more active role in the process of their children’s schooling and has direct implications for children’s experiences of belonging within the school system. It is in this context that I sought to explore the experiences of Nigerian parents and their young children as they engaged in the process of integration into the education system. The research questions that guided this study are:

1. What are the perceptions of Nigerian immigrant parents of their children's experiences of integration into the school system?
2. What are the experiences of Nigerian immigrant parents as they themselves become familiar with and observe the integration of their child(ren) into the education system?
3. What factors aid or hinder parents’ and children’s integration into the education system?
4. What factors encourage or discourage parents’ and children’s feelings of belonging within educational spaces?

5. How do parents and children exhibit agency and/or create counter-spaces for themselves inside or outside of educational spaces?

Theoretical Frameworks

This study is grounded in Critical Race Theory (CRT) and intersectionality theories. CRT was developed in the 1970s as a result of the decline in the advancement of the civil rights movement in the 1960s and the need for theories to address the covert racism faced by minorities (Delgado, Stefancic & Harris, 2017). Although there exists no consensus on the basic tenets of CRT, scholars (Caldwell & Crenshaw, 1996; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Gillborn 2015) identify some of the basic ideas upon which CRT was founded. These include: (1) that racism has been entrenched into society and assumes some form of normalcy so that overt forms of racism are what is seen by people and acknowledged, while the realities of the lives of minoritized populations are significantly affected by other forms of microaggressions; and (2) that race is a socially constructed idea “that society invents, manipulates, or retires when convenient” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p.7) and serves the interest of those who wield power. Critical race theorists aim to unsettle dominant conceptions of race and view dominant discourses of race as entrenched in power and fluid.

CRT is useful in this type of inquiry as it seeks to interrogate stereotypes and provides an opportunity for counter-storytelling about the experiences of marginalized peoples (Delgado, 1999). Although many in Canada may think that racism is the exclusive proclivity of the southern neighbours, racism is alive and well in Canada. Exploring people's experiences through CRT enables the microaggressions that Black African immigrants encounter in their lives to be more visible and thus promotes a better understanding of those experiences and their

causes. It also opens up opportunities for meaningful engagement with minoritized populations. Using CRT to interrogate the experiences of young Black children and their families in educational spaces makes visible the ways in which overt anti-Black racism, unconscious bias, and institutional racism may affect the immediate experiences of children and the implications that it might have for their lives outside of educational spaces. According to Delgado, et al. (2017) “stories can name a type of discrimination...once named, it can be combated” (p. 51), or at least, recognized. Participants in this study told stories about their experiences that helped me to understand the essence of their experiences and that are useful in informing the understanding of educational leaders, policy makers, and teachers.

Immigrant families are usually considered the problem in schools (Dahlsted, 2018), and Black students are often labeled as loud, disruptive, and with low intellectual capability (Allen, 2010; James, 2019). CRT allows for interrogation of these assumptions and privileges the voices of marginalized people. Different families may experience integration differently, and even similar experiences may be perceived, understood, and interpreted differently. CRT recognizes that, “there is no single true or all-encompassing description” (Delgado, 1999, p. 61) of reality. While educational institutions may attempt or claim to empower individuals to achieve their potential, they are also simultaneously a source of oppression, and marginalization of minoritized populations (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). Hearing, reading, and learning about the stories of others helps minoritized populations recognize that they are not alone in their experiences (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002) and may offer pathways for mobilizing against repressive and oppressive practices.

In addition, Nigerian families' experiences in schools are mediated by a range of factors including their social, cultural, and economic capital, and their pre- and post-migration

experiences (Suarez-Orozco, nd). Therefore, their experiences cannot be explained by a single factor. The different aspects of people's identities (for example, skin colour, ethnicity, language, religion, socioeconomic status, migration status, etcetera) work with and against each other to reinforce or reject stereotypes. These differing aspects of identity are reflected in the theory of intersectionality, coined by CRT theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989. Intersectionality is:

a concept that enables us to recognize the fact that perceived group membership can make people vulnerable to various forms of bias, yet because we are simultaneously members of many groups, our complex identities can shape the specific way we each experience that bias. (African American Policy Forum, nd, p. 3)

Nigerians, despite sharing many similarities, are not a homogeneous group. They have different cultures, languages, religions, ideas and priorities, levels of capital (social or economic), and consequently, different experiences, or interpret their experiences differently. Intersectionality is, therefore, a useful theory for challenging inequities and "...promotes an understanding of human beings as shaped by the interaction of different social locations..." (Hankivsky, 2014, p. 19) and identities that are not mutually exclusive. My participants' different cultures, along with their differing hopes, ambitions, and aspirations for themselves and their children; their cultural, social, and economic capital; and their pre- and post-migration experiences influenced their experiences and the meanings they made of them.

Thus, CRT and intersectionality theory served as lenses through which I framed this research and analysed the information participants shared with me. I approached and analysed their stories bearing in mind that racism is a social construct, is ordinary, and that participants' experiences are mediated by different aspects of their identities. Howard-Hamilton (1997) argued that CRT creates opportunities for disadvantaged groups to consider "microaggressions,

creation of counter stories, and development of counterspaces” (p. 23). The participants’ stories serve as a counter-narrative to the dominant deficit-view of “the immigrant parent,” “the child, or the “Black African child.”

Significance of the Research

This research will contribute to the growing body of knowledge of Black African immigrants’ experiences as they integrate into Canada and address the lack of research on the experiences of Nigerian immigrants. It will also fill the gap in the research on the experiences of young Black African children as they integrate into Canadian school systems. The results of the research will prove helpful in recognizing elements of the experiences of Nigerian immigrant families that may inform schools’ policies and teachers’ practices and approaches to working with families and enhancing their schooling experiences. As research sometimes informs the services and resources provided for the integration of immigrant families, understanding the nuances of the experiences of different groups of Africans will inform the services and resources provided by immigrant organizations, community, and religious elders and leaders.

Research Methodology

The study was designed as a phenomenological study that sought to explore the educational integration experiences of Nigerian parents and their perspectives of their children’s experiences in an urban Canadian city. Journaling and semi-structured interview techniques were used to explore the experiences of six Nigerian parents who are: first-generation immigrants, had at least one child in the early years (kindergarten to Grade 6, or 5-11 years of age), and whose children had been attending public schools in Canada for at least one term but no longer than three years by the time of the research. Participants participated in journaling

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over a period of one month and in two interviews; the first, roughly two weeks after consent was granted, and the second one, roughly two weeks after the first one. While I explored young children's experiences from the perspective of their parents and while data may have been different- perhaps richer if I had explored children's perspectives directly, the insights parents provided are useful in understanding some of the particular and peculiar experiences of young Black Nigerian children in public schools in Canada.

Summary

Due to the paucity of research on the experiences of Nigerians and young Black African children in the literature on Black African immigrants, this study set out to explore the educational integration experiences of Nigerian parents and their children in an urban city in Western Canada. The study was grounded in Critical Race Theory and intersectionality theories and employed journaling and semi-structured interview techniques as methods of data collection. In the subsequent chapters, I present the review of literature, the research methodology, the findings, and the conclusion of the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

To establish the gap in the literature, I present a review of literature that explores the educational integration experiences of Black African immigrants in Western countries, particularly in Canada. The first section explores the educational integration experiences of Black African immigrants and the mental health implications of immigration and integration. Next, I explore the deficit image of the (Black) child as intellectually deficient and the discourses of misbehaviour of Black children found in the literature. I also explore the literature on the sense of belonging of immigrant children and families and factors that influence the sense of belonging particularly language skills, play, and connection. Finally, I explore research on parental involvement of immigrants, particularly Black African immigrants.

The Educational Integration of Black African Immigrants

There have been numerous research studies that have explored the educational integration experiences of Black African immigrants in Canada (for example, Codjoe, 2007; Dlamini and Anucha, 2009; Garang, nd; James & Taylor, 2008; Magro, 2009; Oba, 2018; Roxas and Roy, 2012; Shakya, et al., 2010; Shroeter, and James, 2015; Stachel, 2012), the Black African refugee population specifically (Dooley & Thanga-Perumal, 2011; Shakya, et al., 2010; Shroeter & James, 2015), and specific African nations, including those from Ethiopia, Somalia, and Sudan (Bitew & Ferguson, 2010; Danso, 2002; Magro, 2009; Stachel, 2012). Experiences such as physical bullying, feelings of unbelonging due to lack of representation in the educator population and the curriculum, low expectations of educators, funneling into lower-level

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courses/trade programs, negative stereotyping, culture shock, inadequate English language skills, overregulation, and unfriendly school environments are recurring themes in the research.

While the experiences of Black immigrants are usually essentialized in the research literature (Kiramba & Oloo 2019; O'Connor, et al., 2007; Sefa Dei, 2008), the Black immigrant population is not a homogeneous group. The different ethnic groups, cultures, languages, and pre- and post-migration experiences—among other factors—influence how African immigrants integrate into society.

Although some studies (for example, Ennab, 2017; Garang, nd) have included Nigerian participants, the experiences of other Africans, mainly those who are refugees, do not speak English, have had disrupted schooling, and are victims of trauma due to wars have been the focus of reports. Therefore, the experiences of Nigerians, who are mainly economic migrants, speak English, and are mostly educated (defined as having at least a post-secondary education) have been excluded from research up until this point.

While the refugee-economic migrant distinction is problematic for many reasons, one of which is the hierarchy of status that it presumes, the experiences of both groups differ significantly (Government of Manitoba, 2015). And although refugees face more barriers to integration than other immigrants (Cerna, 2019; Li, et al., 2016; Social Planning council of Ottawa, 2010; Suarez Orozco, nd), unemployment/underemployment, racism, culture shock/cultural differences, are issues that are common to both groups.

Kanu's (2008) research into the barriers facing African refugee students in Manitoba found that barriers to the integration of refugee students in schools included academic, economic, and psychosocial challenges. She also found that language barriers make it difficult for some refugee African students to integrate into the school system. Kiramba and Oloo (2019)

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utilized a narrative inquiry framework to explore the educational integration experiences of two refugee and immigrant students from West Africa. They found that participants had a strength-based perspective of their difference, a view that was not always shared by their teachers. They reported using their multilingual competencies to navigate school spaces in ways that helped with identity, connection with others, and to dispel deficit conceptions of them. Despite their resilience, participants noted the stress that accompanied having to “work twice as hard” (p. 20) academically as well as socially, to reject negative stereotypes of Africans, and to succeed in life. It is noteworthy the mental load that the youths believed they must carry to be valued. Besides working for their own personal successes, they also felt they had the responsibility to dispel negative stereotypes of Africans as their actions may be generalized to other Black people.

Also, in her ethnographic study of the educational experiences of Somali youth, Stachel (2012) decries the portrayal of Somali youth and children in popular discourse as “at-risk” and “the risk”. She argues that this deficit portrayal renders invisible the many strengths Somali children and families bring with them into educational spaces and simultaneously obliterates the role advanced countries of the world play in the conflict that has displaced Somalis in the first place. While some immigrant children experience life in fundamentally different ways than their non-immigrant counterparts, they are very much like other children (Suarez-Orozco, nd). Stachel further argues that despite the perception that Somali children are in a constant state of identity crises, participants in her study showed agency and reflected on their past, imagined their future, and actively negotiated their present. Like researchers (Kiramba & Oloo, 2019; Stachel, 2012) Yosso (2005) argues that in contrast to the majoritarian deficit narrative of Communities of Colour, students from marginalized communities possess several forms of

capital (including: aspirational, social, linguistic, familial, navigational and resistant capital) and utilize this to navigate school spaces.

Mental Health

The presence of different races, languages, and nationalities in Canada is not tenable evidence of the absence of racism. Racism is deeply entrenched in society and is directed toward black-skinned people in profound ways (James et al. 2010). It has serious implications for not only the academic achievement of children, but their mental, emotional, and psychosocial well-being (Berry et al., 2021; Brough, et al., 2003). Schools are sites of cultural reproduction (Allen, 2017; Kanu, 2006) and are used to further the interest of the state, especially through the curriculum that serves as an ideological tool (Kanu, 2006). While racism may be overt, it also manifests in the “uncritical acceptance of negative social definitions of a colonized or subordinate group” (James, 2003 as cited in James et al., 2010, p. 24) who are automatically perceived as “lacking.”

Immigrant children and youth face a myriad of mental health challenges related to migration and the process of integration (Danso, 2002; James 1997; MacLean et al, 2019; Orellana, 2001; & Ornelas, 2011). Personal, familial, cultural, and systemic factors contribute to the pressure on immigrant children. Perreiera and Ornelas (2011) maintain that a cyclical relationship exists between childhood health and socioeconomic status in adulthood. The pattern they say is more damaging for immigrant children, many of whose pre- and post-migration experiences have exposed them to physical and mental health challenges.

James (1997) outlines several psychosocial challenges that immigrant children and youth face while integrating into a new society including culture shock, identity conflicts, educational adjustments, and familial conflicts, all of which affect their mental health, engagement with

school, and their academic performance. These personal, social, and systemic challenges to integration he says may be mitigated if educators identify the signs early and devise strategies for helping children deal with various stressors. However, researchers have found that rather than supporting Black immigrant children, educators contribute, either knowingly or unknowingly to the victimization and exclusion of Black children (Bryan, 2017; James, 2019; Oba, 2018). Oba (2018) in her research on the schooling experiences of Black African youth in the Waterloo region in Ontario, noted that Black families were being referred to social services at a disproportionate rate.

Danso (2002), explored the settlement experiences of Ethiopian and Somali refugees in Toronto, and found that most of his participants faced significant social and economic challenges including unemployment or underemployment, precarious housing situations, language incompetence, and racism. These experiences created mental stress that led to suicidal behaviours, especially among male youth.

Furthermore, the trauma related to the experience of wars and displacement may affect the psychological health of immigrant children (Garang, nd), and when combined with anti-Black racism, may have a significant impact not only on their school experiences but on their overall integration into society. Negative experiences may also lead Black children to develop adaptation strategies which may then be perceived as misbehaviour, and further complicate their experiences on a systemic level. For example, Allen (2017) found that Black male students responded to oppressive schooling systems by performing acts that may be considered disruptive and reinforce negative stereotypes. These negative stereotypes, on the other hand, also stimulate Black students to do better to shatter negative perceptions about them (James, 2012). For some students, however, the pressures of existing in a system that was not designed

to make them flourish may force them to leave the school system altogether. Oba (2018) argued that despite the narrative of Black youth dropout, youth enacted agency, and exited oppressive schooling systems to preserve their mental health and safety. Also, Black children and youth sometimes attempt to navigate their new realities by distancing themselves from certain aspects of their identities that they perceive may put them at risk (Dlamini & Anucha, 2009).

Stewart and Martin (2018) in their study of the similarities and differences in career development programs in Winnipeg, Calgary and St. John Newfoundland found that although children experienced psychological, environmental, economic, and educational challenges, students were resilient and developed coping strategies. They recommend that educators take a strength-based approach and identify the factors that aids resiliency in individual students and explore those for the benefit of students.

The Deficit Image of the (Black) Child

Most of the studies that have been carried out on the educational integration of Black children have focused on youths and adults. The experiences of young Black children (0-10 years of age) are mostly absent from the research about the experiences of Black African immigrants. This exclusion may be due to the dominant conception of the child as innocent and unaware (Nascimento, 2016).

Our conceptions of the child, who and what we think they are or are capable of, are influenced by a myriad of things, including our experiences, philosophies, and dominant societal discourses. The field of developmental psychology has had a profound effect on the dominant image of the child as weak, incompetent, innocent, intellectually deficient, or immature (Bloch et al., 2018; Cannella, 2000; Dahlberg, et al. 2007; Nascimento, 2016; Pence, 2015).

Consequently, early childhood institutions through their design and interactions with children

uphold these assumptions (Bloch, et al., 2018; Cannella, 2000; Dahlberg et al., 2007). Our image of the child has a direct bearing on the kind and nature of services and pedagogy we construct for them.

The idea that children progress along a continuum and that certain behaviours and abilities are expected of children at certain stages plays a huge role in determining the curriculum, curriculum expectations, evaluation models, and the design of schools (Dahlberg et al., 2007). Childhood, however, is not simply a progression or pathway to adulthood but is a valid stage in and of itself (Dahlberg et al. 2007). Children are experiencing life in the present, possessing insights and perspectives that are different, but not inferior to those of adults (MacNaughton, Smith & Lawrence, 2003).

While the image of the child is dynamic, varying by culture and time (Dahlberg, et al., 2007; Janzen, 2008), researchers (for example, Clark, 2005; Coyne, 2005; Murray, 2012; Nascimento, 2016; Sorin, 2005), and educational approaches (such as Montessori, and Reggio Emilia), have advanced the image of the child as competent, as a co-constructor of understanding, as an asset rather than a liability, as possessing unique and valuable ideas, and as making contributions to the democratic society. These researchers and educational approaches challenge the conception of childhood as simply a pathway to adulthood and rather advance childhood as a stage—valid and meaningful, in and of itself.

Despite children's awareness of their environments, research and popular discourse continue to position them as immature, incapable, or incompetent miniature adults (Dahlberg et al., 2007; Joerdens, 2014; Sorin, 2005) who need regulation to conform to predetermined adult standards (Cannella, 1999). When children do not fit into developmental notions of the child based on Western identities/realities, they are considered abnormal and prescribed services and

“interventions” to forcibly “normalize” them (Dahlberg et al., 2007; Janzen, 2008). Deficit conceptions of children are particularly apparent for Black children whose phenotype already places them on the margins. Black immigrant children (in this case, Nigerians) therefore experience life at multiple sites of intersectional marginalization.

Intellectually Deficient, Unaware, Colour-blind

The academic achievement of Black students is negatively affected by racism and other forms of discrimination (Allen, 2017; Codjoe, 2001; James, 2019). Researchers have also found that immigrant children are tracked into courses below their skill level (Alba & Holdaway, 2013; James, 2019; Social Planning Council of Ottawa, 2010). This problem is more acute for Black African children, for whom Blackness is equated with low intellectual capability and disruptive behaviour, which puts them at a higher risk of dropping out of the school system and being referred to special education classes (Allen, 2010; Ford et al., 2001; Glennon, 1995; Harry & Klingner, 2014; James, 2019; Kalogrides & Loeb, 2013).

As Allen (2017) claims, “schools are powerful but contested sites of cultural reproduction...that, in addition to contributing to inequitable economic stratification, also reproduce dominant ideologies” (p. 269) and marginalize “others”. James (2019) asserts that Black children are “being treated differently than their non-Black peers in the classroom” and these experiences may have a lasting effect on children, including their “memory of school” (p. 12), and the possibilities that educational spaces hold for them.

Kalogrides and Loeb’s (2013) research into sorting patterns within schools in urban school districts in the United States found that low achieving minority children and children from low socioeconomic backgrounds were more likely to be grouped together and in classrooms with novice teachers. Schools are staffed with a majority of white teachers who have

little or no identification with or understanding of the experiences of Black and other minority children. Grouping these children in a classroom with a novice teacher may expose young children to greater misunderstandings, stereotyping, and unfair disciplining, as novice teachers may not have sufficient skills to deal with the difference present in their classrooms. Although even more established teachers often do not possess the skills and agency to engage with the difference in their classroom (Bryan, 2017; Castagno, 2019)

Using a strength-based perspective, Cudjoe (2007) investigated the educational experiences of academically successful Black students in Alberta secondary schools. Despite their academic successes, he found that Black youth reported contending with racism, stereotyping, low expectations by educators, and a generally unfriendly school climate among others. Some participants in his study although youths at the time of the study, recalled that racism “started very early” in their schooling experiences, with name-calling, getting spit on, and general bullying. One participant explained that “...from day one, I kind of knew that I wasn't going to be accepted” (p. 350). Participants detail the emotional trauma they experienced as a direct result of racism, but beyond that, most of them were able to channel these experiences and frustrations and use them as a springboard to achieve academic success, mostly to refute their negative stereotyping.

In addition to intellectual inferiority, young children are sometimes negatively viewed as colour-blind or unaware of racial differences. However, in Derman-Sparks et al.'s (nd) study, they found that preschoolers were aware of racial differences and racism. Children also reproduced societal misconceptions, prejudices, and biases indicating that they were aware of societal biases against “the other”. For example, some of the children in their study asked: “Why are there Black people?” or “Do Indians always run around wearing feathers?” Some children

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also wondered why they were called “White” or “Black”, even though their skin tone was more tan or brown, respectively. The authors argued that between the ages of 5 and 8 years old, racialized children begin to have a deeper sense of awareness of racism against members of their race.

Suoto-Manning et al. (2018) apply early childhood lenses to Suoto-Manning and Winn's (2017) framework for fostering social justice through educational research. Included in this framework is dispelling the notion of the social and intellectual inferiority of socially minoritized and marginalized groups. They argue for the problematization of discourses of the inferiority of minoritized populations, advanced by language and in research. Suoto-Manning et al. urge teachers and researchers to consider an anti-deficit image of Black children and to actively consider ways Black bodies are being dehumanized and the societal structures that reinforce white supremacy. While popular discourse positions children as passive observers, the researchers advocate for active conversation with children about the forces of inequality as early childhood institutions are situated within racist, dominant discursive societies.

Finally, Allen (2015) found that personal agency, high expectations of parents, and teachers who had a positive view of Black children and challenged them to achieve, were factors that contributed to the academic achievement of Black males in his study. He explains that “...using notions of racial justice as a motivator...[children] demonstrated their agency by being resilient in the face of barriers, barriers that sometimes included teachers as gatekeepers.” (p. 19). In addition to children's drive to succeed, parental support was instrumental in helping children cope with racist experiences in school. Black parents had high expectations of their children regarding academic work and supported them with racial capital to deal with institutionalized racism. Codjoe (2007) also found that having Black educators in the school

served as role models and a familiar face for Black children, thereby easing the isolation that they may feel in school spaces.

Discourse of (Mis)behaviour

Researchers have suggested that Black students are perceived more negatively than their peers in the classroom due to racial biases more than actual problem behaviour (Bryan, 2017; Zimmermann, 2018). These perceptions have implications for the student-teacher relationship and consequently children's academic performance (Zimmermann, 2018). Children's behaviours that are sometimes construed as unruly, can indeed be their responses to oppressive schooling structures (Janzen & Schwartz, 2018). Janzen and Schwartz contend that "...discourses of deficiency and deviancy in children are common, and often unexamined, yet inform policies, practices, and parlance, and ultimately shape the ways in which we identify, interact with, and respond to children" (p. 110). These "discourses of deviancy" is more pronounced for Black children whom research has established are overly regulated and unfairly disciplined more than other children. Popular discourse positions Black children as deviant, and a problem that needs fixing (Allen, 2017; Bryan, 2017; James, 2019; Lei, 2003).

Allen (2017) posits that Black male youth often internalize dominant, negative discourses about them as problematic and simultaneously perform acts that reinforce and rejects their stereotype. They are often met with harsh discipline, which is more in response to their stereotype than to their perceived misbehaviour (Bryan, 2017; Lei, 2003). Educators' biases and prejudices against Black male students also have implications for their experiences of racial microaggressions in school (Allen, 2013; Bryan, 2017). Since schools are staffed primarily with white educators who have been raised and socialized within dominant racist colonial structures, Black children, particularly boys, are at a higher risk of being dehumanized and unfairly and

disproportionately disciplined (Bryan, 2017). Bryan (2017) further maintains that "...if preservice education programs do not interrupt such misreading of Black and Latino boys, then White and other preservice teachers have the potential to enter and leave teacher education programs with deficit beliefs and assumptions about them intact" (p. 336).

Although Black boys report experiencing overregulation or disciplining more often than Black girls, Black girls also deal with unfair stereotyping. Using Judith Butler's (1990, 1993) work on identity as the theoretical backdrop for his study on high school students in the United States, Lei (2003) argues that internal and external factors (such as personal agency and power-laden institutions, for example, schools) influence African American girls' performance of their stereotype as "large and loud." Lei (2003) further argues that "...every time we label ourselves, it is a response to someone or some institution that insists that we do." (p. 159) The racial microaggressions children face and their attempts to reject their stereotypes may further serve as evidence or reinforce their positioning as unruly. In conversations with Black girls, teachers, and other students in the school, Lei found that African girls performed stereotypical acts of loudness and toughness to own their identities as Black African girls, as a means of survival, defence, and resistance to structures/authorities that they consider oppressive. One participant in his study explains:

I think a lot of it has to do with their social backgrounds...if you're coming from [a place] where, some basic sort of survival things are the ability to not let anybody give you any grief. And a lot of times that tends to get in the way of more substantial, standardized forms of success on the other hand, I think a lot of times African American girls have a better self-image than a lot of people give them credit for. Which I think sometimes people get the wrong idea, about what that's all about. They think they're

cockier or obnoxious or whatever, when really that's not what's being played. It's almost a defense mechanism.

Black boys are reported to experience racial violence and academic inequities at a higher rate than Black girls, but Black girls also experience racial violence. Zimmermann (2018) problematizes the notion of "female advantage" that positions girls as more academically successful than boys. He examines the intersections of race and gender and teachers' perceptions of children's negative behaviours which have implications for academic performance. In his inquiry into teachers' perceptions of problem behaviours among kindergarteners in the United States, Zimmermann found that Black girls were perceived less favourably than white boys when past problem behaviours were taken into consideration. Similar to Zimmermann's findings, the United States Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (2014) suggested that Black girls had higher out-of-school suspension rates than non-white girls and a slightly higher rate than non-Black boys. The department also noted that while Black children account for 18% of preschool enrolment, they make up about half of all multiple out-of-school suspensions.

Finally, Arndt et al. (2015) challenged the normalization and ordering of children, especially in early childhood settings, where educators are charged with the responsibility of managing children's behaviour to conform to predetermined standards. Although her argument is situated within the context of New Zealand's early childhood curriculum framework; Te Whāriki, Arndt argues that The Incredible Years (TIY) behaviour management programme positions children as unruly, and the problem that need to be regulated. Arndt insists that rather than government and educational institutions developing generalizing frameworks that seeks to

regulate and mould the desirable child, educators and institutions should be open to the unpredictability and messiness of the work of teaching.

Sense of Belonging of Immigrant Children and Families

This section explores factors that facilitate and or hinder the sense of belonging of immigrant children and families including language and connection with others and the importance of play.

Language and Connection with Others

For immigrant families and their young children, the process of integration is a continuous process, and a sense of belonging is important to facilitate the process of integration. Children's conception of their belonging is not static but changes according to the dynamics of the environment (Kyronlampi Uitto & Puroila, 2021). Mbabaali's (2012) research with 15 refugee youth in Manitoba investigated youths' sense of belonging pre- and post-migration and found that participants felt loneliness, isolation, inadequacy in their language skills, and that their skin colour and cultural difference were some of the factors that affected their sense of belonging. Also, Kiramba and Oloo's (2019) found that the inability of children to speak "American English" (p. 9) made some children silent for some time, leading educators and peers to believe that they could not speak English. This phenomenon is similar to what Toppleberg et al. (2005) described as selective mutism (SM), a form of anxiety disorder where newcomer, immigrant children, or English language learners speak normally in certain spaces and refuse to speak in others.

Also, the routine activities that individuals are involved in (Herslund, 2021) and the personal connections they are able to form with others (Joerden 2014) influence their sense of

belonging or unbelonging and their feelings of connection to particular places. Herslund's research with refugees in Denmark found that factors such as affordable housing, busy schedules, and feelings of disconnect from the local community impeded refugees' sense of belonging. Similarly, Joerden's (2014) ethnographic study investigating kindergarten children's experiences of schooling found that five Rs (relationships, rules, routines, rituals, and remarkable moments) were the most important to children in their study. Children's experiences of building emotional connections, their interactions with others, and the rules guiding these interactions, the day-to-day routines and rituals in school, and important life events like losing teeth, or birthdays, positively and negatively impacted children's experiences in school. These experiences also had implications for children's sense of belonging. While these events (such as losing a tooth and birthdays) may not hold meaning for adults, they were important to children and shaped their interaction with their school community. It is important to make space for children to share their own lived experience, as understanding the meaning that these experiences hold for young children may inform the ways that educators work with, and for them

The Importance of Play

Kyronlampi et al. (2021), showed that play and the activities that children do in certain spaces helps them build connection, and develop familiarity with these places, and contributes to their sense of belonging. The researchers used photo-telling to explore 13 children's perspectives of belonging in a Finnish pre-primary school setting. Children took photographs of their everyday activities in their preschool throughout the school year. Thereafter researchers discussed the pictures with them in different settings. They found three intertwined themes of play, peers, and place. Various aspects of the setting, including rules and routine, the activities

that go on there, and the individuals and groups with whom children interact, shape their conception of themselves and their relationships with others.

Similarly, Yahya and Wood (2017) explored the use of play as a link between the home and school, what they call a conceptual third space. They found that children combined their knowledge of the school and home acquired through play to form new understandings of themselves and others. They contend that children have more power and agency in this third space, as they have more control of the elements of both cultures (home and school) that they choose to explore in the third space, as opposed to the rules and conventions already decided by adults in the first and second spaces. Some children in their study indicated that it was easier to adapt to their religious and cultural schools that they attended on the weekends, than it was to adapt to a regular school. Some children also formed friendships more easily with individuals from similar cultural and religious backgrounds. This was due mainly to the similarities in language and cultures, and the connections they had beyond the spaces of schools. Yahya and Wood insisted that despite the cultural variations in play, play can be harnessed to aid the transition between the home and school.

Arndt (2020) goes further and argues that children's play is connected to their identity and feelings of belonging. She positions children's play and its relationship with identity and belonging as an ongoing process and considers educators key actors in this process. In facilitating children's ongoing sense of belonging in early childhood settings, Arndt asks educators to consider notions of the semiotic, abjection, love, and revolt in understanding children's play. She explains that "the semiotic represents what children may feel but perhaps be unable to articulate, that is nevertheless meaningful about their experiences of difference and similarities, belonging and alienation, in their play and relationships with people, places and

things” (p.234). In school settings, minority children’s play involves conscious and unconscious interaction with a new culture which they begin to adopt, while retaining aspects of their home cultures. Arndt suggests that educators consider abjection and explains that when educators prefer sameness to difference, children who represent differences may then choose to “abject” or lose some aspects of their identity that makes their difference more visible. It is pertinent therefore that educators consider the difference that children bring into classrooms, and the ways these differences are reflected in play. She also considers love that compels educators to look at their practices critically and ethically, even in instances where goodwill is intended (such as the discourse of “equal treatment of children”) which may lead to the rejection of difference. Finally, Arndt argues that educators consider revolt: critically questioning their understandings of children, difference, play, and sense of belonging in early childhood classrooms.

While play is important for forming friendships and social connections, it is also a means for exclusion. Paley (1993) notes that "certain children will have the right to limit the social experiences of their classmates. Henceforth a ruling class will notify others of their acceptability, and the outsiders learn to anticipate the sting of rejection” (p.3). Children who have a higher level of capital (for example, social and economic capital) are usually positioned to decide the rules of play and determine the inclusion or exclusion of their peers. This power that certain children have may reinforce the supremacy of children from certain groups/classes

(for example, racial, economic, social) and negatively impact the sense of self and belonging of other children.

In conclusion, children's comfort with the language of instruction in schools, their feelings of connection with other members of the school community, friendships and play have implications for the sense of belonging of immigrant children and families in school spaces.

Parental Involvement

Parental involvement has been argued to be a significant contributor to successful integration for immigrant children (Alba & Holdaway, 2013; Codjoe, 2007; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Suarez Orozco, et al., 2009). Parents' presence and involvement inside and outside of school spaces have been found to positively impact children's success in school. It is also an avenue for immigrant parents to become familiar with the school structure and expectations, to support their children, and share their funds of knowledge with the school. Ozek and Figlio (2016) suggest that first generation immigrant children do better academically than the second generation, who in turn outperform the third generation of immigrant children. Suarez Orozco, et al. (2009) found that other factors including effective engagement and support of immigrant families and children may mediate these outcomes.

Lee and Bowen (2006) found a correlation between parental education and students' academic achievement. However, other factors may mediate this achievement, factors which the researchers did not account for. While many Nigerian immigrant parents are highly educated, this may not necessarily translate into better academic performance or schooling experiences for their children. Allen (2010) in his research into the experiences of Black African middle-class males found that despite their middle-class status and social and cultural capital, Black male students still experienced racism in school. Lee and Bowen's suggestion that lower-income

families have “lower levels of human, cultural, and social capital” (p. 212) and that raising the academic achievement of African American and Hispanic children is their parents' responsibility, ignores the structural and systemic factors that contribute to lower academic achievement among children of minorities.

Several factors may encourage or discourage parental involvement in school spaces. Limited education, time, socioeconomic status, and limited knowledge of the English language are common factors that affect immigrant parents' active involvement in the education of their children (Alba & Holdaway, 2013; Codjoe, 2007; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Li et al., 2016). The researchers found that lack of knowledge of the structures of schools, and lack of connection with others in the school community were some of the concerns of newcomer parents. These barriers were more pronounced for refugee parents. In his research with school personnel in Sweden, Dahlsted (2018) found that immigrant parents were perceived as the problem within schools and were “regarded as authoritarian, disinterested, uninformed and ‘semi-lingual’” (p. 76). He also found that collaboration was made difficult by differences in language, culture, and the socio-economic status of some immigrant parents.

Ennab (2017) asserts that refugee parents may not conceive of direct communication with educators as an integral part of their involvement in their children's education. Participants in his study reported that they had significant barriers to involvement, including lack of social support, racism, language barriers, and parental education, among others. Despite these barriers, participants in his study (mostly Africans) considered their participation in their children's education “good” (p. 9), although only a few were actively involved in school spaces. They

reported supporting their children by “following up with [them],” providing an environment to learn and thrive and being attentive to their needs.

Furthermore, power dynamics also come into play when addressing the issue of immigrant parent involvement, as immigrant parents have limited power to define the extent or form of engagement and must adjust to predetermined, predefined models of engagement or involvement. Preservice educators are also trained within the dominant understandings of White middle-class families (Massing et al., 2016). This understanding is then generalized to other very different populations (Dahlberg et al., 2007), leading to minority students and families being marginalized within the school system. Immigrant parents may also be less aware of the “invisible codes of power” (Carreón, Drake & Barton, 2005 p. 470) that are at play in school spaces. They may be limited in their abilities to critically examine their children’s schooling experiences due to their limited knowledge of the school curriculum and organization, their rights as parents (Perez Carreón et al., 2005), and the rights of their children.

Kim (2009) also found factors that discouraged parental involvement in schools included: teachers’ negative perception of the ability of minority parents to be effectively involved in their children’s education, negative attitude of school leaders, and school unfriendliness among others. Other researchers (James, 2019; Perez Carreón et al., 2005;), however, have pointed out that immigrant parents find ways to be involved in their children’s education, outside of the unfamiliar, sometimes unfriendly spaces of schools. This does not mean that they are absent, uninterested, or uninvolved in their children’s education. Western conceptions of parenting may differ in significant ways from the African ways, but that does not

translate to a defect in African methods of child upbringing (Adjei et al., 2018; Dahlsted 2018; Marfo et al., 2011).

The different cultures and the realities of people's lives mean that individuals have different expectations, priorities, and images of children, all of which inform parental relationships with children. Western ideas of parenting and engagement are usually assumed to be the default, norm, or universal way (Marfo, et al. 2011). While these ideas may serve some families well, it leaves others out and ignores the richness that may emerge from making room for different identities and ways of being.

Conclusion

The educational integration experiences of Black African immigrants have been explored, including immigrants from specific African countries. This research has revealed several factors that hinder their integration, including racism, unemployment, language barriers, unfamiliarity with the structures of schools, and unfriendly school environments. Research on the experiences of Black children (although mainly older children) have shown that Black children and families are viewed from a deficit perspective and that the process of integration has significant psychosocial implications. Parental involvement, language barriers, connection to others, and play have also been found to be significant in the integration of immigrant children and affect their sense of belonging. Exploring the experiences of Nigerian immigrant families does not diminish the experiences of other Black African immigrants but expands and extends the literature and our knowledge of the nuances of their experience within the school system.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

The study used a qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological methodology to explore and describe the lived experiences of Nigerian parents as they integrated and observed their children's integration into the school system in Canada. According to Creswell (2007), a phenomenological study "describes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon" (p. 57), in this case, what it means to be a Black Nigerian immigrant parent and child within the school system in an urban Canadian city.

Hermeneutic phenomenology is concerned with the "subjective experiences of individuals and groups" (Kafle, 2011, p. 186). The aim of a phenomenological study is to generate phenomenological insights and understandings into the essence of individuals' experiences (van Manen, 2017b). The essence of an individual's experience may be understood by asking of the data "what is this experience like" (van Manen, 2017a, p.812), or how does the individual experience this phenomenon (van Manen, 2017b). Phenomenological studies do not simply recount stories and emotional reactions to lived experience but includes "experiential concreteness, vividness, and descriptive detail." (van Manen, 2017a, p. 810) of experiences as they are lived.

Individuals' understanding of their lived experiences is subjective, thus it was not my intention to generate one theory or generalize the experiences of Nigerian immigrant families to all Nigerian families. Rather, the study aimed to provide an insight into the lived experiences of these individuals. Any phenomenological interpretation is subjective (van Manen, 1984); therefore, my participants' descriptions of their experiences of integration into schools are but some of the many alternative descriptions there may be of the phenomenon of what it means to be a Nigerian child or parent in the school system in Canada.

Although children would have provided richer insights into their experiences, data in this research was limited to parents' perspectives of they and their children's experiences. However, uncovering children's experiences from details their parents shared was possible due to the nature of phenomenology and its focus on "lived experience". Parents were able to provide rich and valuable data that included stories of their children's experiences, and their conversations with their children. According to van Manen, (2017a), "only what is given or what gives itself in lived experience (or conscious awareness) are proper phenomenological 'data'" (p. 810) and these data can be derived from various sources including "one's personal experiences, the etymology of relevant terms, idiomatic phrases and expressions, other people's experiences, biographies or reconstructed life stories, experiential descriptions contained in artistic and literary sources, and so forth." (van Manen, 1984, p. 50).

Also, because parents participated in journaling and two separate interviews, some of them were able to have conversations with their children about the interview questions between the two interviews. Indeed, some children sat in on their parents' interview, (quiet or whispering) but out of view. Therefore, their perspectives were reflected in their parents' responses. Although parents shared valuable and rich data, their reflections do not adequately capture the richness of the lived lives of young children. I followed van Manen's (1984) procedure (iteratively) for phenomenological research and writing which included:

1. turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world;
2. investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it;
3. reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon; and
4. describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and re-writing. (p.2)

Recruitment

In this study, I recruited six Nigerian immigrant parents who had at least one child in the early years (understood in this study to be children in kindergarten to Grade 6; typically, between the ages of 5 to 11 years old), whose children had been attending public schools for at least one term, and no more than three years. As a result of my reflection on a previous pilot study on the educational integration experiences of Nigerian parents in Canada, I found that parents whose children had been attending school for longer than three years did not seem to recall the details of their integration experiences as well. Therefore, I limited attendance in school to three years for this study. All participants were first-generation immigrants (from Nigeria to Canada). All of the participants' children (except the children of one family) were also first-generation immigrants. The requirement to participate in the study was that the parents be first-generation immigrants, so it did not matter if their children were born in Canada or abroad. All participants' children attended public school in Canada for three years or less, and all except one participant's children had prior schooling experience in Nigeria, as they were born in Canada.

Purposeful snowball sampling was used to recruit the participants in the study. Purposeful sampling was chosen as it is the best approach to recruit participants who have experienced the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). During the pilot study, (approved for inclusion in this study by the Education and Nursing Research Ethics Board [see Appendix A]), I discovered that sending out recruitment letters to immigrant

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organizations alone was not sufficient in recruiting participants and that participants were more willing to participate in the research if they heard about it from someone they knew.

After gaining Research Ethics Board (REB) approval (Appendix K), I sent recruitment materials on December 14, 2020; an advertisement poster (Appendix D) and an information letter (Appendix F) in an email (Appendix G) to seven Nigerian social, religious, and cultural organizations (names of these organizations are being withheld to uphold the anonymity of participants). Nigerians in Canada represent different cultural groups and so I made sure to send to different cultural groups to reach a diverse audience. The main religions in Nigeria are Islam and Christianity, and so I sent to different Muslim and Christian religious groups as well.

Six days later, on the 20th of December 2020, one organization responded to my email requesting that I shorten the information on the advertisement poster and that they would send the poster through their weekly newsletter. I requested an amendment with the university's ethics board and resent the revised poster to all the organizations. One of the organizations sent the study poster in their newsletter to members on the 10th of January 2021. Another contacted me requesting that I present the study information to their members during their weekly Zoom meeting. I met them (virtually on Zoom) and presented the study information to their members (Appendix I). I reached out to acquaintances of mine whom I thought may have contact with the heads of the other groups, but I could not find any. During this research, I found that in conducting research with immigrant communities, it is important to have a contact person within the organizations a researcher hopes to recruit from, preferably a key person within that organization, or at least someone that can pass the message along to the leaders of the organizations. Community leaders may play an important role in helping researchers reach out

to their target population, although a researcher will have to carefully consider the ethical implications and potential conflicts of interest.

I had proposed that interested participants contact me through my university email, but when the study information went out, I got calls from friends and acquaintances who had heard about the research, did not fit the inclusion criteria, but knew people who did. They contacted those people, and when potential participants indicated interest, we were put in contact, and I was able to tell them more about the research. By the end of February, I had a list of 19 potentially interested individuals. I sent potential participants the study information and consent forms via email. Through email, I recruited the first six people that met the inclusion criteria and sent back their consent forms. Once I got six signed consent forms, I sent email messages to those to whom I had sent the information, but had not gotten back to me, saying I had reached my recruitment limit (Appendix J). Participants were then sent the journal prompts, and we set an interview date roughly two weeks from the day that they provided their consent.

Participants

In referring to my participants, I have chosen to use Mr. and Mrs. as part of their pseudonyms as it is considered respectful in Nigerian culture to use a respectful title before an adult's name. The six participants included four mothers, and two fathers: Mrs. Hauwa, Mrs. Kemi, Mrs. Nkem, Mrs. Titi, Mr. Lanre and Mr. Seyi. Even though this study is grounded in CRT and intersectionality which considers how individuals' identities influence their experiences, I did not dig too deeply into participants' lives, for example, their ages, or the work that they did previously in Nigeria or Canada. I did not want them to feel uncomfortable with having to answer personal questions and preferred rather that their identities came through in

their responses to questions designed specifically to answer the research questions. A brief description of each participant is presented in table 1.

Table 1

Description of participants

| SN | NAME | DESCRIPTION |
|----|------------|---|
| 1 | Mrs. Hauwa | Has two children: a 5-year-old girl in kindergarten and a 2-year-old boy. She was a pharmacist in Nigeria and is currently writing examinations to enable her practice in Canada. Her family had been in Canada for two years (since 2019) at the time of this interview, and her daughter had attended school for about a year. She and her family are Muslim and from the Yoruba tribe. |
| 2 | Mrs. Kemi | Has four boys aged 11, 9, 7, and 5-years-old in Grades 6, 4, 2, and kindergarten respectively. They arrived in Canada in 2019. The oldest three children have been attending school for two years and the 5-year-old, for less than a year at the time of the interview. Her family is Muslim and from the Yoruba tribe. |
| 3 | Mrs. Nkem | Has three children, one of whom was above the ages required for this research (13 years). The experiences of the boy and girl aged 9 and 10-years-old who are in a multi-age classroom |

(Grade 4/5) were included in the research. They had been attending school in Canada for two years at the time of the research. Mrs. Nkem was a banker in Nigeria and is now a human resource professional in Canada. She is a Christian and from the Igbo tribe in Nigeria.

4 Mrs. Titi Has two boys, an 11 and a 9-year-old. Her children are in Grades 6 and 4 respectively. Her family arrived in Canada in 2019. Her children had been in school for two years at the time of this research. She was a senior human resource personnel in a school in Nigeria, with a master's degree in human resource management. She is currently going to school in Canada but did not say what she was studying. She is a Christian and from the Yoruba tribe.

5 Mr. Seyi Has two children: a 7-year-old boy and a 2-year-old girl. He is currently a Ph.D. student and a university lecturer in Canada. In Nigeria, he was a journalist and a university lecturer. He decided to move to Canada in 2017 to "internationalize [his] degree" and to also expose his children to a different education system. He applies a critical lens in his research with refugee children from Africa. His 7- year-old child who was in Grade 1 had been

attending school in Canada for one year at the time of this research. Mr. Seyi is not religious; however, his wife is Christian.

6 Mr. Lanre Has three children: a 7-year-old girl, a 6-year-old boy and a 3-year-old girl. Even though he sometimes refers to the experiences of his youngest, to make a point about the experiences of his older kids, the experiences of the youngest are not included in the analysis. His children were born in Canada and have been attending school for three years at the time of this research. He is a Muslim from the Yoruba tribe in Nigeria.

7* **Mr. Wale (Pilot study participant)** At the time of the pilot study (2019/2020)- had 3 children: a 9-year-old girl in grade 3, and a 6-year-old boy and girl (twins) in grade 1. The 9-year-old had been attending school in Canada for 4 years at the time of the study.

Note. I used specific experiences from one of my pilot study participants (Mr. Wale) to support the current study's participants' experiences.

It is important to acknowledge that participants consulted with their families during this research, for example, during an interview with one of the male participants, I heard whispers from whom I believe was the mother of the children, giving her input, or reminding the father of

something. Also, one of the participant's children sat in on the second interview but away from the camera and the mother would occasionally turn to them to confirm something she had said. Most participants indicated talking to their children after the first interview to hear their opinions on certain issues, especially their sense of belonging in school. Indeed, one of the participants (Mrs. Nkem) at the follow-up interview, thanked me for asking questions related to a sense of belonging, as she had not thought to ask them previously. She said she was able to have a good conversation with her children after the first interview.

Consent

The consent forms were sent to participants ahead of the interviews and I reviewed the consent form with them again before the first interview. I reminded them throughout the study that they could stop participation or withdraw from the interview at any point without consequences but before the analysis began. During the interviews, I sought their consent to audio record them and reminded them that they could turn their cameras on or off. Five participants kept their cameras on. The interviews were conducted via Zoom due to COVID-19 restrictions and social distancing requirements.

Ethical Considerations

Although I knew two of my participants personally, they were not recruited directly by me. I made sure not to approach people whom I knew to prevent them from feeling any pressure to participate. I, however, do not have any form of power or influence over these individuals and I reminded them that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw without negative consequences. The time commitment for participants was enormous given the many competing priorities they had. Aside from the time commitment required by each participant, this study did

not have any negative impacts on participants, indeed a few of them indicated that they were happy to be talking about their experiences as it opened up the opportunity for them to have conversations they would not otherwise have had. Many participants said their names, or the names of their children intentionally, or sometimes inadvertently, I removed all identifiers including names of people or schools during the transcription process.

Reflexivity

It is important to establish my positionality in relation to this research to ensure that readers are aware of the lens that I bring to this research. My positionality is shaped by the multiple facets of my identity, including religious, cultural, racial, and social identities among others. I am a Black, Nigerian Muslim immigrant and came to be interested in this research through the interactions I have had with members of the Nigerian community. Friends', family members', and acquaintances' concerns about their experiences in school spaces, coupled with the absence of the perspectives of Nigerians from the literature on the educational integration experiences of Black Africans made me curious about the experiences of Nigerian immigrants within the school system in Canada.

As I have no child of school age (my daughter is a pre-schooler and my youngest is at home), my participants had more experiences and better knowledge of how the school system works for their children. My participants, therefore, are more experienced in this research topic than I am. However, as a graduate student researcher, a Nigerian immigrant, and an educator in Nigeria, I consider myself an insider and an outsider in relation to this study. I may be viewed by my participants as having an audience (such as the academic community or teachers) who may interpret their experiences differently, therefore, they may perceive me as both an insider (Nigerian) and outsider (researcher) at the same time. As a Nigerian, however, I was uniquely

positioned to understand their perspectives and provide the necessary prompts to fully explore their experiences and the meanings they hold for them, thus playing an active role in the research process (van Manen, 2017). As a researcher with exposure to critical theories and research about the experiences of Black people, I am uniquely positioned and privileged to look "...both from the outside and in, from the inside out..." (bell hooks as cited in Collins, 1986, p. S19). I bring a critical lens to this research and while I tried to interpret my participants' thoughts and ideas with as much integrity as possible, it is necessary to acknowledge that there is subjectivity in every interpretation of the experiences of others. Critical qualitative research reflects the socially constructed nature of the world, is an interpretive endeavour, and thus, is always subjective (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Therefore, my interpretation of their stories and ideas is only one of the possible ways that they can be interpreted. I also bring to the research a positive view of children as strong, capable, and aware and my image of children influences the way I interpret the data that participants share with me. In doing phenomenological research, "it is better to make explicit our understandings, beliefs, biases, assumptions, presuppositions, and theories..." (van Manen, 1984b, p. 46) to account for them in our understandings of participants experiences. In carrying out this phenomenological research, rather than try to isolate myself from previously held ideas or preconceptions, I recognize them and account for them so that the way my positioning influences my interpretation is made explicit. While the research is of interest to me academically as well as personally, I employed rigorous measures such as member checking and triangulation of data to ensure that I remained as true, and as close as possible, to interpreting the essence of the experiences of my participants.

Research Methods: Journaling and Semi-structured Interview

Participants were asked to engage in journaling for four weeks and to participate in two separate interviews: one after two weeks of journaling and another roughly two weeks after the first interview. Janesick (1999) proposes that journaling is a useful qualitative research technique, as it allows participants to reflect, better understand, and refine their responses, and serves as a means of triangulation. Journaling also ensures that the research is participatory and anti-oppressive (Redmond, 2021) because participants have the opportunity to reflect on their experiences and determine what is important to share. Journaling is an important reflective tool that enables people to confront their realities or their perception of them (Davis, 2016). The two separate interviews allowed for both the participants and me to reflect on the interview and ask clarifying questions at the next meeting or add details that participants may have forgotten in the first meeting. A phenomenological interview is enriched by multiple interactions with the participants that allows participants to recall and relate specific events related to the phenomenon under investigation. The interview prompts served as a guide so that participants remained focused on the substance of their experience (van Manen, 1984b). Most participants indicated that they had conversations about the research with their children after the first interview, and one participant gave me feedback on something she was confused about and clarified with the school in the weeks between both interviews. The interview questions were formulated to provide insights from participants to respond to the five research questions posed in the study, which were:

1. What are the perceptions of Nigerian immigrant parents of their children's experiences of integration into the school system?
2. What are the experiences of Nigerian immigrant parents as they themselves become

- familiar with and observe the integration of their child(ren) into the education system?
3. What factors aid or hinder parents' and children's integration into the education system?
 4. What factors encourage or discourage parents and children's feelings of belonging within educational spaces?
 5. How do parents and children exhibit agency and/or create counter-spaces for themselves inside or outside of educational spaces?

After receiving signed consent forms from participants, I sent them the journaling prompt (Appendix A) and we set a date for our first interview (Appendix B) via Zoom, approximately two weeks from the date consent forms were received. Participants were asked to journal about their observations of their children's previous and current experiences in the school over two weeks. Journaling enabled the recording of relevant details that participants may forget and enabled the participants to reflect on their experiences. The journaling prompts encouraged participants to consider their children's integration experiences particularly as they related to their feelings of belonging, inclusion, or exclusion. Participants did not share their journals with me, and they were not required to. The decision to not require participants share their journal with me was an ethical decision that aimed to disrupt the power imbalance between researcher and participant and gives participants some level of control over what they shared and how they chose to share it (Meth, 2003). However, the journal entries served as prompts for the participants and were useful in helping them record relevant topics they wanted to discuss. Most participants consulted their journals during both interviews as I noticed them flipping through pages or checking to see that they had not missed anything they wanted to share.

A semi-structured interview technique was used and the interview protocols (Appendix B and C), served as guides while allowing me to move between questions and expand on details

in their journals. The interview questions prompted participants to recall incidents that related to their and their children's experiences of integration, belonging, participation, and how they created counter spaces for themselves within and outside of school spaces. Consistent with phenomenology, CRT and Intersectionality frameworks, the purpose is not to seek a universal truth or to generalize their experiences, but to acknowledge that there are multiple truths and that even similar experiences may be interpreted differently by participants due to the influence of other mediating factors and the considerations of time, place, and individuals' capital among others. I took notes during the interviews to record participants' reactions or my reactions to our conversations.

Roughly two weeks after the first interview and sometimes more (up to three weeks after) due to availability and scheduling, I had a follow-up interview (Appendix C) with participants where I asked clarifying questions. It also provided an opportunity for participants to take a more critical look at their experiences and consider their involvement with their children's education more deeply. While some participants felt that they had nothing new to add, some had some new information that came out of their conversations with their children or with the school. The first interviews were longer than the second. The first interviews lasted between 34 minutes to two hours and 25 minutes, with an average time of one hour per participant. The second interviews lasted between two and 25 minutes, with an average of nine minutes per participant. Five of the six participants had more than one child in the early years, but they referred to the experiences of one or two of them more than the others. After the follow-up interviews, I sent \$25 gift cards to participants in appreciation of their time. For member-checking, I sent the interview transcripts to participants to ensure that I had represented

their words and ideas accurately. They provided their approvals for me to proceed to use them for my research.

Method of Data Analysis/Procedure

After downloading the interview recording to an encrypted file on my password-protected laptop, I transcribed the interviews using Express Scribe software. The result was 120 pages of transcribed data. After transcription, I removed the *umms*, *ahhs*, and *errms*, and all such expressions, as I did not think they added meaning to the data. The process of analysis was iterative as I had begun to consider and make sense of the data as I was collecting them. I made notes during the interviews of: things that stood out to me, similarities and differences in participants' experiences, and patterns that had begun to emerge. I had intended to use Nvivo to code the data but decided to do it manually as I felt I could interact with more depth with the data.

I adopted Creswell and Poth's (2018) approach to phenomenological analysis which is a modified form of Moustakas' (1994) method. This process involved: taking note of my own experiences during the research; looking through the transcripts for distinctive statements that describe participants' experiences; then, grouping similar ideas to form themes. The inductive approach was used to generate themes, meaning I started with participants' data and let it lead me to the themes (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). After transcribing the data, I read the transcripts repeatedly, enabling me to become very familiar with them, and all along taking notes of ideas that stood out to me. My field notes helped me reconstruct my experiences and remain aware of the need to stay true to the description of my participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018) as my experiences cannot be fully divorced from the interpretation of data I gather (van Manen, 1984). After transcribing all interviews, I approached each participant's transcript and

analyzed line by line for statements that stood out, or that described each participant's experiences, paying attention to the settings and contexts in which the events that participants describe occurred. Similar experiences were then grouped to form themes. An example of coding is shown below (Table 2), additional examples are in the appendices (Appendix M).

Table 2:

Coding Example

| THEME | DATA INSTANCE | NOTES |
|--|---|--|
| Tori omo la se wa- We came because of the children | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “So that’s what brought me to Canada since there is a relatively viable educational system, you know...in this place and one in which one’s children can also of course go through and be good for it.” (Mr. Seyi) • “We came to Canada in 2012 with the hope of having better life and having quality education for our children.” (Mr. Lanre) • “And basically, our plans, or the reason why we immigrated here is always because of our children. And we wanted to give our children a better form of life, and security, and education and what not.” (Mrs. Nkem) | All of the participants indicated that they immigrated because of their children. Even though some gave other reasons, for example, to “internationalize” their education, for security reasons etc. |

CRT and intersectionality were employed to sift through each set of data, watching out for things like references to racism and the ways the structure of schools enabled or confronted racism, and the interplay of power in participants' described experiences. I noted how participants' identities (for example, as Muslim, Christian, or nonreligious) came through their transcripts and influenced their experiences. Even though I did not ask direct questions about their social identities, through their responses they made some of it known. CRT and intersectionality were used as lenses to determine what to look for and consider.

I had many themes initially which I then merged because they were similar or expressed the same idea. I also removed some themes because they were redundant or did not seem too important to the participants (for example, something mentioned in passing that did not seem important to the participant or was not reflected in other participants' data). After collecting the themes, I examined my field notes to determine if the themes were reflective of what I had noticed during the research process and to gain any additional insights. This served as a method of triangulation.

Participants' descriptions and in some cases their own words, were then used to construct the "what" and "how" (Creswell & Poth, 2018) of their experiences. The substance and context of their experiences were described thereby presenting a description of the "essence" of the experiences of my participants. In the analysis, I describe how my participants experience a certain theme and point at tensions or differences in the understandings between participants. There exists some intersection and overlap within the categories and themes as is typical of people's experiences, for people do not experience things in a bubble.

Sometimes participants spoke about things that were out of the scope of the research. In cases where they seemed important to them or impacted their experiences (for example, the

education review that was being conducted in Manitoba at the time and the COVID-19 pandemic), I included them in the discussion section to respect participants' voices as a way of validating their experiences. I also provided participants with information about my university's public information series about education review that was occurring in the province and the accompanying proposed legislative changes that were garnering a lot of public attention and concern.

Consistent with the phenomenological approach, I did not seek a universal meaning or consensus. My participants' understanding of their experiences, however similar or different, were taken together and formed the basis of my analysis. I acknowledge that people's experiences including racism are fluid and are mediated by a range of factors including, but not limited to, their social and economic positioning.

Limitations of the Study

Although the sample size is relatively small and is limited to the experiences of Nigerian immigrants in one urban city in Western Canada, this research is not intended to generalize the experiences of Nigerian immigrant families. Rather, the purpose is to make visible aspects of the experiences of Nigerian families in educational spaces that have not been reflected in research up until this point. Therefore, the sample size is small by design.

While the initial intention was to carry out the research with young children to honour their voices and perspectives, the COVID-19 pandemic, and social-distancing measures made it only practical to explore parents' perspectives of their children's experience in schools. However, the perspectives of their children's experiences that participants shared have been understood through their adult lenses. Parents also do not have complete knowledge of their children's experiences and can only share what they observe, remember, and are willing to

share—all mediated through their own subjectivities. Had the data been gathered from the children themselves, the data may have included different elements and issues, which are important to children. This may become the focus of a future study.

The research set out to inquire into the experiences of immigrant families in educational spaces. However, in the past year and a half and due to the pandemic, those spaces often became virtual spaces as school moved to online classes and students often returned to schools under very different circumstances. One participant only had experiences of schooling in Canada during the pandemic, which undoubtedly affected the integration process for her. Some participants have changed schools and have not been able to be physically present in the spaces of schools during the time the interviews were conducted. Therefore, their experiences of integration would have been different than if the study was conducted pre-covid and if the children had had only in-school (rather than online) experiences. That said, these experiences lend different—yet important—insights to experiences of schooling during a pandemic.

In the chapters that follow, I present an analysis of the themes that I identified in the data and then a discussion of the findings, the key findings, implications for research and practice, and suggestions for future directions.

Chapter 4: Nigerian Families' Experiences of School

In this chapter, I present a phenomenological analysis of the data derived from the interviews with the six research participants. As a phenomenological analysis does not seek to find universal meanings or understandings but instead seeks to highlight individual participant's experiences as unique and valid (van Manen, 2017), there is no consensus in this analysis of what it means to be a Nigerian family in the school system in Canada—nor was that the intent of the study. However, there were times when participants relayed similar experiences, and there were indeed instances where they understood their realities differently. The intersectionality framework which I used to analyze the data helps to account for these differences because people's experiences are mediated by a multiplicity of factors not limited to economic/social status, exposure to critical theories, and importantly, their schooling/educational experiences pre-migration. Critical Race Theory (CRT) allowed me to consider and articulate the ways in which participants' and their children's Blackness, their positioning as a minority, and their "Otherness" influenced their interactions with schools and their experiences with schooling. Race impacts most aspects of the experiences of Black people, therefore references to racism and or microaggressions recur in most themes.

As I was trying to understand children's experiences from their parents' perspectives, those experiences were limited to what the parents could observe, what their children chose to share with their parents, the parents' understandings and interpretations of these events, and what the parents chose to share with me. However, where I could, I privileged children's voices, that is, things that parents reported that their children said. I have also tried to privilege the

children's experiences, but I acknowledge that this may have been relayed and or understood differently as well.

The findings are grouped into two broad categories which I have organized into the following subsections: *Nigerian Parents' Perception of Their Children's Experiences of Schooling* and *Parents' Experiences of their Children's Schooling*. The first section focuses on children's experiences whereas the next section focuses on parents' experiences. The themes in both sections explicate the research questions I posed at the beginning of the study: (1) What are the perceptions of Nigerian immigrant parents of their children's experiences of integration into the school system?; (2) What are the experiences of Nigerian immigrant parents as they themselves become familiar with and observe the integration of their child(ren) into the education system?; (3) What factors aid or hinder parents' and children's integration into the education system?; (4) What factors encourage or discourage parents and children's feelings of belonging within educational spaces?; and (5) How do parents and children exhibit agency and/or create counter-spaces for themselves inside or outside of educational spaces?

Nigerian Parents' Perception of Their Children's Schooling Experiences

This section, *Parents' Perception of Their Children's Schooling Experiences* has three themes and some subthemes as follows:

- *Emotional Reactions: Nervousness, Scepticism, Excitement, and Disruption*
- *The Image and Regulation of Black Immigrant Children*

As Colour Blind,

As Intellectually Inferior,

As Un-Canadian "Other" and In Need of Regulation); and

- *Belonging*

Facilitating Belonging through Play,

Facilitating Belonging through Friendship, and

Educators and Belonging.

These themes and their subthemes explore parents' perception of their children's experiences, including their initial emotional reactions to starting school, the dominant negative images of children, the potential for play in fostering belonging, and children's connections with others in the school, and how these affected their sense of belonging. The themes explicate these specific research questions: (1) What are the perceptions of Nigerian immigrant parents of their children's experiences of integration into the school system; (3) What factors aid or hinder parents' and children's integration into the education system; and (4) What factors encourage or discourage parents and children's feelings of belonging within educational spaces? (5) How do parents and children exhibit agency and/or create counter-spaces for themselves inside or outside of educational spaces? The second research question (what are the experiences of Nigerian immigrant parents as they themselves become familiar with and observe the integration of their child(ren) into the education system?) will be addressed in the next section.

Emotional Reactions: Nervousness, Skepticism, Excitement, and Disruption

All participants spoke of their children's emotional reactions when they started school. They described various factors that influenced these emotional reactions, including, age, attendance or non-attendance of daycare in Canada, and experience of a different education system in Nigeria. Participants reported that their children experienced a range of emotions

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when they started school in Canada including excitement, nervousness, and skepticism among others.

Mr. Lanre, for example, reported that his 7-year-old daughter and 6-year-old son were: ...very excited and that's because of the nature of their educational system here in Canada... most of the kids stay in [at home] too long, they get bored, especially if they didn't go to day care before going to school.

He further explained, "...my wife was at home, so my daughter didn't go to daycare, so she was really, really excited to go to school and meet other kids." Mr. Lanre's children were born in Canada and did not have any prior schooling experience in Nigeria. They also did not attend daycare, so were excited about starting school and meeting new people. Mr. Seyi also said that his 7-year-old son has "...been very, very excited about school. I mean, I don't know of a day when our son shows any sign of not wanting to go. He wants to be there. He likes it there...." His son had some schooling experience in Nigeria and was excited about school in Canada. Mr. Seyi explained that the classroom structure and ambiance contributed to his son's excitement and feelings of belonging. According to him, "...the Canadian classroom is designed to make you feel important....," contrasting it with his experience back in Nigeria where he described the relationship between children and teachers in the classroom, as rigidly hierarchical.

While Mrs. Kemi's two older sons (11 and 9- years old) were excited about starting school, her 7- year-old son was not as excited and had some trouble making friends. According to Mrs. Kemi:

...when they started, three of them, the two out of the three were so excited, they felt really happy, they felt so happy about the freedom. To them, they have so much freedom

here than in Nigeria where their movement was restricted. Teachers were always looking out, and there was a lot of discipline...

She believed her older children enjoy school in Canada because they have more “freedom” and less “discipline” compared to their schooling experience in Nigeria. Her 7-year-old, however, was reluctant to loosen up, he “...was always complaining about having no friends, nobody wants to speak with him...” Mrs. Kemi explains that her 7-year-old son’s reluctance to open up and make friends initially may have been because: “...he is younger, it’s so sudden for him. It wasn’t something he was expecting, seeing people with different colours, different accents and all of that, it was a bit [too] much for him.” While it may be assumed that non-refugee immigrant children may adjust easily because they do not have a history of trauma due to wars or displacement, these children may find the process of immigration and settlement quite unsettling and disruptive, because even planned migration takes a toll on young children as well. Leaving all that they knew behind to start afresh, the unfamiliar environment, the diverse cultures, accents, and ways of doing things may be disruptive and overwhelming for them. Mrs. Nkem also described her daughter’s experience:

For her...before we came here, I have always seen her as someone who is... strong, who is not shy, who is assertive...but since coming here, we’ve seen a different side of her... she’s kind of withdrawn to herself. We kind of nudge her, push her, to do more. I don’t know if it’s the new environment or everything because sometimes... even here [at home], sometimes... because her voice has changed...”

Her normally playful, expressive, and confident child upon immigration became withdrawn. This worried Mrs. Nkem, who continually spoke words of affirmation to her child to build up her confidence. Her child’s refusal to speak as loudly as she did pre-migration may have been

due to her inability to enunciate her words with a “Canadian accent²,” or perhaps she was observing the “Canadian” way of being and did not feel confident enough to express herself in the dominant way. Participants in Kiramba and Oloo’s (2019) research also indicated that they did not speak for some time when they started school due to their inability to enunciate their words with an American accent.

Kirova (2001) details the loneliness immigrant children feel upon starting school in Canada. According to Kirova, (2001) due mostly to their English language skills and lack of friendships, the initial experiences may be alienating and emotionally draining for newcomer children and may negatively impact their experiences in and outside of school. Immigrants experience a variety of emotional reactions related to moving out of their countries of origin, leaving family, social connections, and lives built behind to embark on a journey of the unknown (Perreire & Ornelas, 2011; Rios Casas, et al., 2020;). For the participants in this study, this strain manifested in children’s temporary withdrawal, and lack of friendships hindered the integration process and children’s sense of belonging.

The excitement of finally starting school in Canada made school particularly exciting for some children, some of whom had started school in Nigeria but had to hold off starting school in Canada due to age restrictions. Some also did not attend daycare before starting school in Canada, therefore the idea of going to school brought about excitement for them. For many of the older children, however, they were coming into spaces where cliques had already been formed, and the conventions of engagement decided, leading to feelings of uncertainty about the school and their place in it.

² I use Canadian accent to problematize the notion of Canadian accent because participants’ responses reflected the understanding that white English accents are “Canadian” and “non-white” accents are not Canadian.

The Image and Regulation of Black Immigrant Children

Our ideas and conceptions of children inform our expectations of, and our interactions with them. This section, *The Image and Regulation of Black Immigrant Children*, and its subthemes, *Children as Colour Blind*, *Children as Intellectually Inferior*, and *Children as Un-Canadian "Other" and in Need of Regulation*, will explore the deficit conceptions of children which is rooted in adults' limited understanding of children's lived experiences. While some participants expressed these deficit conceptions, it seems that their children's experiences challenged these deficit conceptions. Participants also shared their concerns about their children's experiences and steps that they took and are taking to help them navigate their new reality of being Black immigrant children in Canada.

Children As Colour-Blind

Responses from participants in this study simultaneously uphold and challenge the deficit-based conception of children as colour-blind, that is, the idea that children are unaware of the differences in people's skin colour and how differing skin colour positions people in relation to others. While some participants felt that their children were unaware of racial differences, others indicated that their children were not oblivious to them.

For example, Mrs. Titi suggested that "...children are colour blind...they don't really see that at an early age. If this is my seat partner, he's my friend, and we get along, hey, why not!" While it appears that this participant believed that her children do not notice racial differences, her responses to other interview questions indicated that they do indeed notice racial differences. For example, when addressing the question of where her children felt that they belonged the most, she responded that it was in their Sunday school where their teachers

looked and spoke like them. Despite this, she believed that her children do not notice the racial difference in their classrooms. Another participant, Mr. Lanre also suggested that:

...maybe when they grow a little bit more, they will tend to understand...maybe there are some racial differences or racial bias. But for now, they really don't notice that... they don't know that, because everyone is treated the same way.

In addition to asserting that his children did not notice racial differences, Mr. Lanre did not feel that his children were treated any differently either by peers or by their teachers. Reflected in Mr. Lanre's response was the discourse of the innocence of children and childhood as a progression towards a more aware state (adulthood) (Dahlberg et al., 2007). His observation that everyone was treated the same way may be his perception of the "niceness" of educators (Castagno, 2019). It might also be reflective of the faulty premise that inequities in education can be addressed by treating all children "equally," even though this "equal" treatment leads to ignoring or rejecting difference (Arndt, 2020).

Mrs. Hauwa's daughter's experience disrupts the thinking that children do not see colour or that children are "colour blind." She narrated her child's experience with her best friend in pre-school:

...one day I was bathing her [and] she told me [her best friend] doesn't want to play with her again. I said, "Why?" She said because she said her skin is brown. So, I said, "Okay, why would [her friend] say that?"...They are 4-year-olds. Why should anybody be thinking about colour at this age? They should be colour-blind right?

The context in which Mrs. Hauwa's child related her experience is noteworthy—that is, during a bath. Friendships mean a lot to children and her best friend shaming her for being "brown" and

therefore not worthy of friendship may have made this child more conscious of her Blackness when her skin was all bare. It is impossible to know for sure what this child's thoughts were when she told her mother about this event, but it is safe to assume she was likely very hurt by it. Friendships are an important aspect of children's schooling experience (Arndt, 2020). In addition to helping children make sense of their identities (Devine & Kelly, 2006), friendships also help children develop a sense of belonging in school (Dusi, et al., 2014). Children's interactions however are rooted in power and privilege (Devine & Kelly, 2006). The white friend, apparently aware of her racial supremacy and the power that it confers on her, reacted to the difference (black skin) that she observed in her friend (Mrs. Hauwa's daughter) and excluded her from friendship and play. Experiences such as this reinforce white supremacy in schools and position Black children as unvalued "other."

Mr. Seyi also reported that his son asked him, "Why are we so Black?" Mr. Seyi went further to explain that, "he had tried to school me by telling *me* that maybe *I'm* getting things confused, that he is brown, he's not Black, you know." When asked if any events prompted this observation by his child, he responded in the negative and explained, "When they [children] exist in a place that is largely defined in one area, a person who doesn't see themselves in that definition wants to be inserted into it somehow and starts questioning why they're different." Mr. Seyi's son's refusal to be coloured Black may have been influenced by the white-dominated school space in which his Blackness would be more apparent. His preference for brownness may be an attempt to strip himself of Blackness and align more closely with the dominant skin colour. Mrs. Hauwa's daughter and Mr. Seyi's son had different experiences that made them feel aware of, and self-conscious about their skin colour—specifically about being not white.

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While Mrs. Hauwa's daughter's experience was explicitly racist and personal, for Mr. Seyi's son, the majority white school population made his Blackness conspicuous for him.

When children began to experience these negative feelings of difference parents tried to build their self-confidence and encouraged their children to be comfortable in their skin and proud of the difference that they bring with them to spaces, rather than feel shameful about it. Mr. Seyi reported getting age-appropriate books for his child and having conversations to help him understand race. He reported explaining to his son that:

Yeah, there's been a problem with some people's colour which shouldn't be, but what is your own take around it? What are you going to do? And for me, the biggest intervention is to continually emphasize how you are important, in spite of how different you look from others...

When asked about times when his child felt a sense of belonging within the school, he explained that although his child loved being in school:

...if there's anything which gives them a sense of not belonging, it is that "why am I different?" And this is what that kind of space [schools] must do to ensure that they get this person to feel like it doesn't matter, that you...yeah...this is who you are, this is who this person is, it changes nothing.

While parents in this study all indicated taking it upon themselves to educate their children about racial differences, Mr. Seyi felt that the school should share in the responsibility of decentering whiteness and celebrating racial difference. Mrs. Hauwa also explained that "I try to let her know that her skin is beautiful. Up till now, we still say those things like... just to reaffirm her [worth]." Even though Mrs. Huwa's child's experiences happened in preschool, she

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still carries the scars from that unpleasant interaction and her parents continuously find ways to reassure her of her worthiness as a Black child.

The responsibility resided with parents to build their children's confidence and acceptance of their black/brown skin as beautiful and to affirm worthiness despite contrary messaging. Many educators (the majority of whom are white middle-class women) do not have the knowledge or skills to interrogate racism and microaggressions in school spaces (Bryan, 2017). Also, some educators' commitment to "niceness" and their need to maintain stability (Castagno, 2019) may make them refrain from discussing or addressing issues of racism and racial justice with other educators and their students as well.

Unlike African Americans or Black Caribbeans in Canada, for many Nigerians in Canada, racism and micro-aggressions are uncharted territory. In Nigeria, people either identified as Igbo, Hausa, Yoruba, or any of the other numerous tribes, but they may have never really considered themselves "Black" before arrival in Canada. This new experience of negotiating "Blackness" impacted children's experiences and led to feelings of exclusion and unbelonging.

Finally, the conception of children as immature, unaware, and naive has been proven false by research that has shown that children can understand the direct, and sometimes indirect messages conveyed by the structures of school spaces and society (Bloch et al., 2018; Cannella, 2000; Dahlberg, et al., 2007; Hashim & Thorsen, 2011; Nascimento, 2016; Pence & Benner, 2015). As the participants' experiences have illustrated, children are not oblivious to racial

differences (Derman-Sparks et al., nd) and the ways in which their skin colour may influence people's perception of them.

(Black) Children as Intellectually Inferior

Mainstream/ society's view of the Black person, especially one that has immigrated from the African continent, is steeped in deficit perceptions and (mis)understandings (Kiramba & Oloo, 2019; Roy & Roxas, 2011). While the history and legacy of slavery and its afterparty institutional and systemic racism, have promoted (mis)understandings and deficit conceptions of Black people for decades, mainstream media's pauperization of Africa continues to uphold them. Educators are sometimes surprised by the levels of knowledge with which some Black children bring into educational spaces. Mr. Seyi's comment illustrates this: "When he came, and they learnt that he could read, it was a lot of surprise... 'Ohh, he could read! Where did he learn that?' As if to say he was coming from one, you know...backyard of civilization or somewhere." Many young Nigerian children begin to read before kindergarten, especially if they had some schooling experience in Nigeria. Most children begin school in Nigeria at a relatively early age, and because the curriculum is very academic-focused, they have quite a lot of academic skills early on.

The image of Africa that has been held in the minds of many Euro-Westerners is one of "stampeding herds, of big game and densely-forested jungle through which rivers flow-Nile, Congo, Zambezi" (Haynes, 1958, p. 94). While Haynes' article was published two years before the independence of Nigeria from British colonial rule—more than 60 years ago—this image of Africa is still prevalent in the minds of many (Kiramba & Oloo, 2019). This deficit image of Africa coupled with the perception of the supposed biological inferiority of Black-skinned people may contribute to educators' deficit perception of the intellectual capability of Black

children. Nigerian immigrant children exist at multiple intersections of marginalization: Black, African, immigrant, and young. Therefore, their experiences are mediated by their positionings along these multiple sites of marginalization.

The essentialization of Black peoples' experiences influences the deficit understanding that Black children come into schools lacking certain skills or abilities, especially if they have immigrated from Africa. Educators, most of whom are white middle-class women, and most of whom have been brought up and trained within racist colonial structures, have had little opportunity to unlearn what they have subconsciously internalized about the "Other," in this case, young Black children (Bryan, 2017). Some participants in James' (2019) research indicated that their teachers had lower expectations of them or were surprised when they performed "beyond their expectations." The deficit conceptions of the intellectual capabilities of Black children affect educators' expectations of them, and subsequently, the opportunities that they provide to them compared to others in the classroom.

Children as Un-Canadian "Other" and in Need of Regulation

While many Nigerian children may come into school spaces with high levels of academic knowledge, the difference in the cultures they have previously been exposed to, and the "Canadian culture" may make integration challenging. Canadian culture in this research refers to participants' understanding of certain aspects of the ways of being of Euro-Canadians, for example, accent, bodily gestures, and modes of interaction between adults and children. Parents reported that their children's mannerisms including their speech and body language were misunderstood and or unnecessarily regulated by teachers. While the regulation sometimes came from teachers, it was also internal, meaning that children regulated themselves in an attempt to perform what it means to be Canadian.

Children and families' identities also influenced the extent to which this transition may be disruptive, or what they consider to be challenging, or significant changes in the first instance. For example, certain actions such as playing music, singing, and dancing may not be a departure from the norm for many Nigerian Christian children. However, for some Muslims, dancing, singing, and playing musical instruments may be at odds with their personal/religious values. Confronting and addressing these differences in a school system may pose challenges for parents, the children, and educators. The way these differences are addressed has implications for children and families' feelings of belonging within the school community. One child's experience illustrates the foregoing. According to (Mrs. Kemi), her child:

...loves his teachers... and when the teachers are even describing that particular child, they are always almost in tears when they describe him. He loves the teachers, he is so... I don't know, he is so protective of them. The way he speaks about them, he speaks highly of them. You as a parent would not have a choice than to love those teachers as well.

This same child, however, was described as rude, and disrespectful, and received grades of ones ("1") on his report card (the lowest grade on the four-point grading system) because he would not participate in music class. This child's lack of participation was not brought forward to the parents by the music teacher or his homeroom teacher until the end of the term when his report card was sent home with negative comments. Mrs. Kemi explained that her child would not participate in music class because of the conflict with their personal/religious values. She explained:

...not like he is doing it purposely, but he is a bit shy. He is a shy kid, so he won't respond in class because he felt it just doesn't feel okay to tell the teacher that, "I am not going to participate." He feels it's not polite, so he would rather keep to himself.

He was showing respect for the teacher, while simultaneously respecting his religious values. His efforts at respect were however misunderstood as rude, disrespectful, and therefore, deserving of a low grade. This experience underscores how important it is for teachers to understand children and families, their values and various identities, and the importance of having productive conversations, rather than making assumptions about children's behaviour. Educators need to seek to understand children, rather than simply assume that a child's behaviour is to be intentionally disruptive. Educators' perception of the disruptiveness of Black children is a reaction to their stereotype rather than to actual problem behaviour (Bryan, 2017; Lei, 2003). Educators in their interactions with Black children reinforce the notion of the white Christian as the standard for the "normal Canadian child." Deviating from the expectations imposed upon them by rigid school structures may expose children to unfair and prejudiced treatments by educators.

Furthermore, children may also internalize the message that their behaviours, speech, and even body language are "unCanadian,"—and "other", signalling that they must adjust, change, or modify themselves, that there is something inherently wrong with who they are. Mr. Seyi expressed surprise that he was summoned by the teacher to explain that his son needed to adjust the way he responded in class because he was not looking at the teacher:

...if the teacher is talking there's a way you nod your head, there's a way you use your eye, there's a way you...the question is when you [the teacher] ask him about what you

have said, is it that he is unable to respond because he had not shown it by [all of these actions]...I guess when you're in Rome, the idea is to behave like Romans.

Mr. Seyi wondered why the teacher was bothered by his child not responding in a specific way if the child understood what the teacher was saying in class. The teacher, on the other hand, may be used to a certain way of being/responding which was more comfortable and predictable. Mr. Seyi's child was also cautioned for saying "Jesus" during recess, and for being too animated, and his father wonders:

...when you tell me that he's excited in class, I don't know what to make of that, and I don't see how that constitutes serious complaints that I want to be looking into and helping you to achieve the desired goal. The recent one they have told me is that somebody pushed him, and he pushed back, and all that. Now, what's your duty as a teacher? I don't know, I wasn't in the school, if somebody pushed him and he pushed them back, that is a teachable moment. That's your time! It's not for me!

This experience positioned Mr. Seyi's son as a problem that needs to be dealt with and not as a child having trouble with another child and an opportunity for the teacher to help children to navigate relationships. The teacher's actions pathologized the child's behaviour even though it is normal for children to have conflicts with other children. Black children, particularly boys, are often described as hyperactive, and this perceived negative behaviour is sometimes ascribed to unstructured home environments by educators (Essien, 2019). This idea is reflected in Mr. Seyi's response:

I'm a Black person and I don't want to pretend about that. When I am being told constantly about this thing that is not a genuine complaint that looks like [a] complaint, I am thinking, is it an indirect way of calling my parenting to question? ... Because I want

to understand whether this is how it is done to all parents generally, that if your child sneezes and sneezes too much, you tell their parent. I mean, I don't know.

Mr. Seyi was unsure of the reason he was constantly called by the teacher to report his child's behaviours and considered it an overreach. He rationalized that perhaps the teacher considered him an unfit parent simply because he is Black. We cannot know for sure the teacher's rationale for calling Mr. Sevi to report such incidents, but it is consistent with the research (James, 2019) that shows that Black boys' behaviours are pathologized and unnecessarily and unfairly regulated by teachers. Black boys are unfairly targeted and punished more than others for the same infractions, or in the case of Mr. Seyi's son, unnecessarily regulated. Bryan (2017) argues that the overregulation and unfair disciplining of Black boys contributes to the intergenerational deficit view of Black boys and sustains the school-to-prison pipeline trajectory for many Black children, especially boys.

While the examples above illuminate the regulation, pathologizing and "othering" of children by educators, there were instances where participants reported their children's self-regulation in response to the school environment. Self-regulation involved trying to modify aspects of their identity that set them apart from others, for example, accent and mannerisms, so that they more closely aligned with the dominant/ "Canadian" ways of being. Participants shared the ways in which accent was very important to children and was a major factor that hindered their sense of belonging. Mr. Seyi narrated an incident where his son was skeptical about sharing an aspect of his Nigerian culture with his class during show and tell at school, because of his inability to speak with a "Canadian accent." For many Nigerian children, early integration may be challenging, not necessarily because of their inability to speak the English language, but their inability to enunciate it in a certain way; with a "Canadian accent". English

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is Nigeria's official language and the language of instruction in schools, therefore Nigerian children have a good command of the English language. However, upon crossing the border into Canada, their language capital suddenly becomes diminished and positions them as "other." Mr. Seyi's child was reluctant to do "show and tell" in an accent that he felt that the children would not understand or that would lead to their perception of him as "other."

Language plays a significant role in helping children find their place, form friendships, and explore their environments (Kirova, 2001). Language is, however, embedded within notions of power and privilege (Bourdieu, 1977). The notion of a "Canadian accent" is problematic as it elevates the English of the ones who hold power (usually white Canadians, even if they are immigrants from other English-speaking countries) over the several other forms and accents of English spoken by other non-white populations (Creese, 2010). This "standard" English, a signature of the white population, is thus differentiated from "accented" English, reinforcing white supremacy and the boundaries between "us" and "them" (Creese, 2010).

The children in this study perceived that they were judged by their lack of a "Canadian accent" and therefore constructed as "other". This self-consciousness may lead to some children being silent, which may then be misunderstood, and then children could be named, tagged, pathologized, and their bodies and voices regulated to make them conform to an imagined notion of Canadianness.

While Mrs. Titi believed that her children had feelings of belonging in the school because they liked school, and they had great teachers, she also said that they felt they belonged

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more in the church because their Sunday school teachers looked and spoke like them, and they did not have to role-play to fit in. In her words:

...they are surrounded with people who all look like them. So, you're not conscious. I mean I'm not trying to say they are conscious of their skin colour in school, but I mean you can say your...or behave like your Nigerian self, when you are in the midst of people who speak, look, and have the same cultural belief with you. And it's easier for you to have a greater sense of belonging when you have that. In school, it's not so. Not that they don't have a sense of belonging, but you have to adjust yourself, that okay, I am not just with my Nigerian people, I'm with people of other cultures, maybe from Asia, maybe from South America, you know, you [they] have to put all that into consideration.

Mrs. Titi's children were their "Nigerian selves" because they could talk and behave like they normally would at home, or in other more familiar spaces without the need to edit themselves or perform acts that they consider "Canadian." Acts which include speaking with a "Canadian accent." What it means to be a Nigerian is as varied as there are Nigerians. However, the similarities (such as skin colour, culture, nationality, immigration status, language, accent, mannerisms, etc.) that they shared with their Sunday school teachers and friends gave them a greater sense of belonging or safety to be their real selves. In school, however, children were excessively conscious of their personal characteristics that positioned them as "other;" skin colour, accent, and mannerisms. They, therefore, had to "adjust" and show up in ways that were consistent with the dominant school culture, while minimizing or hiding their "Nigerian selves."

Belonging

According to Mcmillan and Chavis (1986), a sense of belonging "...involves the belief, and expectation that one fits in the group and has a place there, a feeling of acceptance by the group..." (p. 10). Belonging to parents was understood as occurring in a situation where children felt most like themselves, where they could let their guard down, so to speak, and truly be themselves. According to the participants, occurrences of belonging and unbelonging for children included: play, friendships, and educators' knowledge and attitudes.

Facilitating Belonging Through Play

Although participants in my study felt that the academic work that their children did at school was not rigorous enough and that they engaged in a lot of *play*, they also agreed that it was in situations where children were able to play that they felt most like themselves. The physical structures of schools, the ambiance, extracurricular activities, the playground, and toys, were ideas and things that parents talked about in relation to belonging. It is important to note also that parents' understanding of play was whatever was not directly related to academic work. Therefore, extracurricular activities (such as breakfast club, patrol or crossing guards, and games) were regarded as play. This understanding is informed by the very academic-focused nature of the Nigerian school system.

According to Mr. Seyi: "the playground will be one place like that where there are no barriers to anything and everybody is just...you know, free-flowing." The barriers to connection that children of participants in this study typically faced include different accents and mannerisms. However, Mr. Seyi noticed that the playground was a space where his child played without consciousness of these perceived barriers. Although their focus was music, Marsh and

Dieckmann (2017) found that play on the playground facilitated a sense of belonging for newly arrived immigrant and refugee children. In addition to helping children in their research build connections, the play on the playground helped children who were withdrawn become more involved with their peers.

Mrs. Kemi also reported that her third child had a challenging time making friends when he started school and always felt excluded, she spoke to the teacher about it and, "...she [the teacher] said she has observed too, that she would try and make sure that he does more activity in class that would bring him together with other kids." When asked what sort of activities, she responded that it was usually games between groups. Mrs. Kemi emphasized that: "they enjoy school a lot, they learn and play, so there is no boring moment for them at school. They are always engaged, even when they are learning, it is something that is usually done in an exciting manner." Also, when asked about how she encourages a sense of belonging for her children, Mrs. Kemi responded that she encourages them to make good friends and engage in extracurricular activities such as breakfast club, and patrol or crossing guards. For Mrs. Titi as well, when her first son had a challenging time settling down, she and the teachers encouraged him to get involved in extracurricular activities, programs like breakfast club, and other activities outside of the classroom.

While Mrs. Hauwa opined that her child had a sense of belonging in school, she noticed that when her daughter was with her friends in the neighbourhood (mostly Nigerians), "...there is a way she just loosens up, and there is a way they play, and the way they talk. You will know she is in her form, whenever she's with those kids..." This is also similar to Mrs. Titi's observation that her children are their "Nigerian selves" in their Sunday school. "Loosening up" or being their "Nigerian selves" is closely tied to the opposite idea of regulation by others and

self-regulation by children to keep themselves safe from unpleasant situations. So being able to be their Nigerian selves—to be themselves—when they were outside of school implies that the children were required to be *not* themselves in school spaces.

Kyronlampi et al., (2021) in their research with young Finnish children found that the physical settings of schools, the activities that go on there, peers, and play influenced children's sense of belonging in educational spaces. In their research, they found that play influenced the children's ability to form connections and attachments to the school space. Also, Arndt (2020) argues for play as an essential element in fostering a sense of belonging, intercultural understanding and positive peer relationships among young children. Participants in this study reported that their children's teachers used play as a means of drawing isolated children in and making them feel like integral parts of the classroom community.

When children can show up in spaces or situations, without the fear of rejection of their difference by others, they are more likely to share more of themselves (as individuals) with others. This idea can be gleaned from Mrs. Hauwa's comment that her child "is in her form" and Mr. Seyi's comment that everyone is "free-flowing" and "there is no barrier to anything." Most of the participants' children had previous schooling experiences in Nigeria where "play" is usually separated from rigorous academic work. Play, particularly in school spaces, eased the integration process for children and helped develop their sense of connection and belonging to the school community.

Facilitating Belonging through Friendship

Friendships mean a lot to children and are crucial for developing a sense of belonging in school settings (Dusi, et al., 2014). Lack of knowledge of the culture of "others" has been found to hinder intercultural friendships (Dlamini & Anucha, 2009). Play however fosters intercultural

understanding (Arndt, 2020), and intercultural/interracial friendships provide the opportunity for children to “observe, experience, and learn about other cultures” (Li & Que, 2020, p. 13) from one another.

Participants in this study indicated that their children's friends were mostly Nigerian or immigrant children. Mrs. Hauwa commented on her child's closest friends in school stating, “I know that she has like a clique, and then those are immigrant kids, but there are also some whites [kids] there I guess.” Even though Mrs. Hauwa's daughter did have other friends at school, the friends that she always talked about at home (and perhaps were her closest friends, and with whom she felt accepted) were Nigerians. When talking about her daughter's friends, Mrs. Hauwa said she worried about racism. She said that, even though “they [the children at school, including hers] might be a little small,” racist interactions did happen between them and then she went on to narrate her child's experience with her white best friend in preschool. Although this experience was in preschool, and Mrs. Hauwa's child was in kindergarten by the time of the interview, she worried that her child perhaps still carried with her the negative effects of this experience and maintained friendships with similarly coloured people. Although this may have been worrisome for the parent, it was perhaps the child's way of preserving and protecting herself from further racism.

Black African immigrant children have reported having difficulty making friends at school due to the racism directed at them because of their skin colour and African descent (Kumi Yeboah, 2016). Sometimes negative comments are directed toward Black African children by local-born Black students who feel more closely aligned with the dominant culture

(Kiramba & Oloo, 2019). Being Black, African, immigrant, and with a different accent may contribute to the “othering” of children and affect their abilities to form intercultural friendships.

The grouping practices of teachers may also affect how meaningful intercultural/interracial friendships are formed in the classrooms, and by extension belonging and integration. When I asked Mr. Seyi if there was any time his child felt excluded in the classroom, he replied that he was unaware of any such time but expressed disappointment that his son was usually paired mostly with other Black children. Mr. Seyi “...wanted that they [the kids] could be mixed just with any other [child]...because it is a wrong assumption, to think that at that age, the only person he can really make sense with, is somebody who looks like him...” Mr. Seyi wanted his son to form intercultural and interracial friendships, however, we do not know the teacher’s reason for routinely pairing his son with Black children. Continuously pairing Black children with other Black children may be a form of group exclusion. It may also increase the possibility of them being stereotyped, rather than fostering understanding and connections with others in the classroom. If children of the same race are routinely grouped together, then same-race children have more exposure to one another, have the opportunity to negotiate their relationships and understand one another better, and thereby build stronger bonds. While Mr. Seyi’s child’s teacher may have been aiming at group cohesion, same race grouping in the classroom is a missed opportunity for students to develop deeper understandings of other people.

Mr. Seyi also recalled a time when his son came home with a communication from the teacher requesting that parents suggest who they wanted their children to be in class with in the next grade. He resisted this approach by choosing to have that conversation with his child instead and encouraged his son to be open to being with different people. Mr. Seyi believed that

parents and children suggesting whom they would love to be in class with was counterproductive to integration efforts. Schools are white-dominated spaces and relationships and interactions are rooted in power and privilege (Devine & Kelly, 2006). Black children making friends with mostly Black children, and white children making friends with mostly white children, may uphold white supremacy and the othering of Black children. It may also inhibit integration and the chances of children considering themselves valuable and valued members of the school community.

Educators and Belonging

The participants spoke often about the importance of children's relationships with their teachers and also of the importance of school leadership. Educators' lack of skills to deal with racism-related issues and their attitudes towards children had implications for children's feelings of belonging and of being valued members of the school community.

Mr. Wale reported that his children often complained about not being called upon when they raised their hands to answer questions in the classroom and that teachers did not address his children's complaints of bullying by their peers:

... when they come home and they tell us that so so so thing happen[ed] to them, so so so student did something to them, the first thing we ask them is that, have they reported them to the teacher? Sometimes they say no, sometimes they say yes. When they say no, [they tell them] you have to tell your teacher first, if they don't react to it then...most of the time, they say they [the teachers] don't react to it, they don't react to it! most of the time. So,

because of that, and what has been happening, so I believe... they are separating [excluding] them from other people in school.

Separate events and occurrences inform Mr. Wale's interpretations of his children's experiences in the school. Mr. believed his children were being treated differently than others in the school by the teachers. The teachers not calling on them in class, or not addressing their reports of bullying, and the principal refusing to allow his children to stay in school for an extra 15 minutes when there were other children present during that time, reinforced his belief that the teachers were being racist against his family.

Like Mr. Wale's complaint, Mrs. Hauwa recalled reporting a racism-related incident to her child's preschool teacher, and not being satisfied with the teacher's response:

...I didn't know what to expect from her anyway. I just needed somebody to hear me apart from my husband. He didn't want me to report, he said they are kids, but I felt that it's something the teacher should know and maybe they should just watch out. What she said was that she is going to separate them, like they wouldn't play together again. I said well, I don't know if that would solve the case, I wasn't still satisfied. I don't even know what I was expecting.

Teachers' abilities to deal with issues of racism between children is important. Teachers, especially early childhood educators, are often not properly equipped to deal with racism in the classroom (Massing et al. 2016). For Mr. Wale, he was convinced that the teachers were racist and that was why they were unwilling to address his children's complaints of bullying. For Mrs. Hauwa however, she felt that the teacher just did not take the right approach to address the racism incident with her child.

Schools are composed mainly of white teachers, many of whom have had little opportunity, through their personal experiences and teacher training, to check their conscious and unconscious biases towards the other, and to work with children to deconstruct and combat racism (Bryan, 2017). The colour-blind narrative, that children do not see colour, or are unaware of racial differences, may also diminish the agency to address racism and its effects in early childhood classrooms. Educators' inability/unwillingness to deal with racism-related issues may normalize and uphold racist behaviours, embolden the aggressors, subdue the victims of racism, and minimize their experiences.

James' (2019) research exploring Black youths' educational experiences in the Peel district of Ontario, reported that Black students are treated differently than their non-Black peers, especially by non-Black teachers. Participants in his study report that some of their teachers "use sarcasm, will not listen, provide negative responses on assignments or tests, do not choose Black students when a question is asked in class" (p.7) and generally have negative expectations of them. If Black children do not feel safe and confident that their teachers (in powerful positions) can or will address their concerns fairly, then they may perceive themselves as unvalued "other," and this has implications for their sense of belonging within the school.

Like teachers' role in fostering belonging, the leadership of school principals also influences how families feel welcome, and their sense of belonging within school spaces. Mrs. Kemi's incident with the music teacher and her son (mentioned earlier) ended well in her opinion because the principal demonstrated good leadership in her handling of the situation. Mrs. Kemi explained that the principal:

...spoke to the child in a very kind, and loving manner. She made that child understand that he is a very good child, and every parent would be proud to have him. That she respects the fact that he's sticking with his values, even when no one is watching him...she really went all out to make him feel comfortable...She only wants him to be a bit more expressive about his concerns. If he ever had any concerns about something, he should be able to walk up to her, or anybody, and tell someone about it. That she promises him that she would always do something about it, that she is not going to take his concerns lightly, she will always work on something. He was actually in tears when she was saying it, and he really felt good. But after that, I found out that he became a lot more confident...knowing that his voice is being heard, he is not just going to talk in vain, so I saw those changes.

The incident with the music teacher and the negative comments passed on her son's report card, including how bad it made them feel was resolved when the principal (as someone with power) intervened, listened, and took time to explain the curriculum expectations for her child's grade regarding music, while also acknowledging his right to hold on to his religious values. The principal's handling of the incident made both mother and child feel valued and heard. This experience made Mrs. Kemi's child feel like he had a voice in the school, that he had been seen, heard, and valued.

On the other hand, Mr. Seyi's experience with his son was different, he reported an incident when his son was a few minutes late:

...I encouraged him to follow after the person who was going to open the door...the traffic warden. Quite well, the man saw him coming, and just as he was approaching the door, he slammed the door in his face, and just went in. I had to park and went to his

other colleague who was still standing by the street, and said I'll like to know that man's name because I am going to have to make a report... When I came in the afternoon to pick him up, I called at the principal's office...she said the fellow concerned came, and it was a different story he had narrated...it was not the story the man told that was of any concern to me, but how the principal just accepted it as...that's all [truth]. And you [the principal] got to know the boy who was involved, and you [she] didn't make any effort to say "I'm gonna talk to the parent and know what happened", 'cus for me, that would be a good move towards crisis management, so that this doesn't recur with any other person. But she just accepted that narrative until I came and said this...and I told her there was even a witness, and she said okay, that she was sorry, that she was going to talk to the man again and all that...so for me, if you're looking for being part of a community, that occurrence wasn't any encouragement in that direction.

For Mr. Seyi, the principal's acceptance of the traffic warden's narrative without contacting him or his child did not indicate any serious commitment to making them feel welcome. The principal occupies a powerful position and can utilize her position to facilitate welcoming spaces for families. However, her reaction to the incident positions her as uninterested in Mr. Wale's son's experience and made the family feel unvalued and unwelcome in the school space.

Apart from educators, other school support staff also have a role to play in the welcoming of newcomer families, especially if they are the first point of contact. Hostility at the door may be translated by families to mean hostility within the school space. Educators' actions and inactions and the actions of other school staff have the potential to bring families in or shut them out of school spaces, and this has implications for children and families' feelings of belonging in the school.

Nigerian Parents' Experiences of their Children's Schooling

This section has four themes: *Tori Omo La Se Wa: We Came Because of The Children*; *Orientation: Surface Information*; *Belonging (Belonging through Connection with Other Parents, Belonging through Symbolic Representations, Educators and Belonging)*; and *Parental Involvement*. Parents explained that they immigrated to give their children a better education. I explore their initial reactions to the integration process, their perceptions of the orientation they received when their children started school, and their experiences of connecting with others in the school, including their involvement in their children's education and their interaction with educators.

Tori Omo La Se Wa—We Came Because of The Children

Tori Omo La Se Wa is an excerpt from a popular Yoruba song that literally means, "We came because of the children." Most of the participants in this study were Yoruba while one person was Igbo. I am Yoruba as well. The participants repeatedly stated that they came to Canada because of their children, making this title befitting. In addressing the research questions, this theme explains the context from which parents and children migrated, their expectations and concerns for their children's education/schooling in Canada, and how they mitigated the challenges that they faced in the process of integration.

Although parents had dreams for themselves, their children's futures were the major motivating factors for immigration. According to Mrs. Hauwa, the "...education of the children is one of the major reasons that we immigrated, and for a better future for the kids, more than we had." While all the participants echoed this sentiment that centred on providing a good education for their children, there were other reasons as well. For example, "...we just wanted them [the children] to see another aspect of life, have another perspective... I mean Canada is a

developed country... we know that it's going to give them better exposure so to say" (Mrs. Titi). For Mr. Seyi, giving his children a good education and "...to internationalize my training..." was the reason for his migration. These responses were similar to participants' responses in existing research. For example, Durand (2010) and Orellana et al. (2001) found that participants indicated that they migrated to the United States for the upward mobility of their children. Members of marginalized communities possess aspirational capital that makes them seek upward mobility and opportunities for themselves and their children despite systemic inequalities (Yosso, 2005).

Parents in this study also reported feeling concerned about their children's experiences before arrival in Canada. Some participants were bothered about reports of immigrant/Black children being mistreated or feeling excluded in school. For example, according to Mr. Seyi:

...when I check the news and hear about this boy somewhere there...in this province was bullied, this one in this other place had this rough experience and all that, it began to give me some trepidation as to ...how does a young person like our son survive in this place? It becomes even more troubling when you began to understand that where he is coming from, he's got no problem with somebody's skin colour.... Your child isn't bothered that his friend is a Muslim, or whether they are Christians, or they are not even practicing any of those. So, it was not the issue you were dealing with.

Mr. Seyi had arrived in Canada before his son and worried about the new racialized identity his child would be acquiring upon landing in Canada. He explained that back home in Nigeria, his child was not bothered about the skin colour, religious or cultural differences of his friends. Therefore, those sorts of differences were not an issue that his family had to deal with. In Canada however, he knew his son's racial difference would be pronounced, and he was worried

about the potentially negative experiences that would result from that difference. He then added that:

...one would then need to have to devise a strategy, because the truth of the matter is that it is not a question of *if*, it is a question of *when* they are going to have this experience, let's not kid ourselves...and one had to prepare for it.

Like other participants in this study, Mr. Seyi indicated that he immigrated to Canada because of its “viable education system,” yet he was also conscious of the challenges that would accompany the process of integration and was actively seeking ways to help his son navigate his new positioning as a Black immigrant “other.”

Upon migration, Nigerians may become aware of the social and racial label imposed upon them—Black—a category that they had not previously experienced. The effects that may accompany social/racial labelling (i.e., racism, microaggressions, bullying, etc.) present challenges for children and families in navigating their new realities—of being Black, immigrant, “other.” These challenges are what participants indicated that they had to prepare themselves and their children for while hoping to get the best of the education system in Canada.

Orientation: Surface Information

The inadequate orientation that participants received upon starting school in Canada and their lack of knowledge of the structure of the school system impeded the process of integration for parents and their children in this study. Parents felt that they did not have adequate information about the way the school system works. While they all agreed that there was an orientation, this orientation was more about the physical structure of the school. That is, they received information about the number of rooms in the school, their child(ren)'s classrooms,

gym, administrative office, and others. According to Mr. Seyi, "...the way they do it is such that, they just give you those pieces of information and expect that if you do have real questions, you would come to them and be specific about those...." This approach to orientation, especially for Nigerian newcomer parents, who experienced a different system of education themselves, was inadequate in properly orientating newcomer families into a completely new system of education.

Mrs. Nkem was worried that she did not understand the education system and was not sure what her expectations were of the school and noted that she found it challenging. She explained that:

...we are all coming from different places, different structures, different you know, systems, just something to guide us, and to let us know that these are the expectations, ...because sometimes I don't know what my expectation is, what is my right, what am I supposed to look out for? What shouldn't I look out for? How does this work? What's the role of the principal, the vice-principal in the school? As a teacher, what are the...you know...

While Mrs. Nkem's children have been attending school in Canada for two years, she still felt confused and unsure about how the system works, and how to harness the opportunities that the system may provide. She may also be unable to objectively assess her children's experiences or advocate for them when necessary since she did not know what the expectations were of the school staff. Mrs. Kemi also expressed concern that she was not able to follow her children's progress at school as she would have loved to. She explained that:

I wasn't comfortable that the kids do not come home with homework. They don't have exams. They only... I think it's just the accumulation of their classwork, and maybe

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tests, they use in grading them. There is no proper examination, no assignment, so kids just basically go to school, and then they are being taught, and there is nothing to show for it. There is nothing to show parents that this is what I did in school today, except by word of mouth, I can't see anything I can hold, and feel, look through...

Her saying "I think" and "maybe" shows her confusion about the way her children are assessed. She wanted to be able to see physically what her children have been up to daily, to "hold, and feel, look through" the children's work. This communication gap appeared to make it difficult for parents to know how to provide the necessary supports that their children might need and enable better collaboration with the teachers.

Parents were often worried about their children's academic performance and wanted the teachers to communicate more with them frequently about the specific things that their children were doing in the classroom. Mr. Lanre appreciated an instance when his daughter's teacher collaborated with him and his wife on improving his child's performance in mathematics. He reported that after bringing his concern forward to the teacher about his daughter's mathematical skills, "...she printed everyday... she will print...like a sheet of paper with some questions, then she will give it to us to ask her, you know, nine times five, nine times whatever, and then I can see [some] improvement." In this case, he felt that his voice was heard, and that the teacher worked with him to address his concern.

Turney and Kao (2009) found that racialized parents faced significantly more barriers to integration than non-racialized parents and that a lack of understanding of how the school system works was one of the barriers to engagement that they faced. Participants in this study were relatively new to the education system (i.e., 1-3 years of schooling experiences) and were still trying to figure out certain things, like the structure of the system and the roles and

responsibilities of various players. However, the inadequate information provided to parents upon starting school, made them feel unsure about how the school system works, their place in it, their own expectations, and their children's academic performance within the system.

Nigeria's education system, a reflection of the inherited British system, has a rigid focus on academic performance. Nigerian parents' focus on the academic performance of their children may be influenced by this colonial legacy, in addition to the need to provide better economic opportunities for their children. The irony, however, is that although education should result in upward social mobility (Allen, 2017; Kanu, 2006), being Black poses challenges — that are sometimes amplified by oppressive schooling practices— to advancing the social and economic ladder (Akee et al, 2017). Understanding how the school system works was therefore important to parents in enabling them to monitor their children's progress, advocate for them when necessary, and harness the opportunities present within the system for the benefit of their children.

Belonging

Participants' connections to other parents in the school, their perception of symbolic representations in the school, and their interactions with educators contributed to their sense of belonging and unbelonging within the school.

Belonging through Connection with Other Parents

Participants in this study linked their own feelings of belonging or lack thereof to their connections with other non-Nigerian parents. While they were able to form connections easily with other Nigerian parents, participants felt that there was a barrier between them and other

non-Nigerian parents at the school, and the ability to form meaningful connections with them was impeded by this perceived barrier. Mr. Seyi opined that:

Where I'm coming from, when you come to that kind of space where parents and teachers congregate, there is this serious feeling of togetherness in the way you guys will be talking, and the things you'll be saying...there's something genuine about the connection, about the human feeling that you have. But here, you feel like there is a barrier, even when you want to make an overture, you want to cross it, you're mindful, excessively in a way that is not appropriate...? Yeah...there's a place for ...especially in public, about things to say, but where you have to edit yourself multiple times in your head before you say things, it must be a function of what that space is like...

The cultural differences, the fear of making mistakes or offending certain sensibilities may make connecting with others difficult, as can be gleaned from Mr. Seyi's comment about editing himself in his head multiple times before speaking. The reluctance to cross this invisible "barrier" between Nigerian and non-Nigerian parents, may make the integration process more challenging for newcomers. Perhaps his positioning as immigrant "other," therefore an outsider, also contributed to his perception of this barrier. Mr. Seyi explained that as a family, they would love to have better relationships with other non-Nigerian families in the school, however, they had only connected with another Nigerian family. He suggested that one of the reasons that they had not connected well with other "Canadians" is that the non-Nigerian parents seem to "prioritize time above human connection," reflecting, perhaps, differing values and priorities. The extent of meaningful connections between newcomer children and families and other Canadians (including settlers, more established immigrants, and Indigenous peoples) inside and outside of school spaces, has a direct impact on successful newcomer integration (Kaufmann,

2021). Xuemei Li et al. (2016) found that immigrant parents experienced isolation from other parents due to language barriers, lack of common interests to start a friendship, and unfamiliarity with other parents. The need to form connections with others is innately human (Baumeister & Leary), and for immigrant families in school settings, is important to facilitate integration and the exchange of capital with others.

Belonging through Symbolic Representations

While some parents reported feeling a sense of unbelonging due to the inability to have meaningful relationships with other more established Canadians, some participants reported feeling a sense of belonging in the school due to symbolic representations present within the schools. Mr. Lanre recalled seeing books in native Nigerian languages (specifically, Igbo and Yoruba) in his children's school library. Mrs. Kemi also noted the flags of different countries—including the Nigerian flag—pasted on the school bulletin board, the school playing Nigerian music, and the celebration of cultural day. All these representations gave participants a sense of belonging and of being valued in the spaces of schools. Mr. Seyi, however, found these attempts at integration tokenistic. He did not think there were any serious efforts made toward integration. According to Mr. Seyi, "what I have seen is a unilateral movement in terms of a particular culture" which he felt was rooted in a rigid attitude and a preference for maintaining the status quo. He implied that the curriculum and the books that were read reflected the lived experiences and priorities of white Canadians. Symbolic representations serve contradictory purposes; while they acknowledge the diversity present in school spaces, they also disguise the bigger inequities (Ngo, 2012) and exclusionary practices of schools. Beyond symbolic gestures, however, a systemic approach is needed to enhance equity and for a true representation of the diversity present in schools (Ngo, 2012)

Educators and Belonging

Teachers' attitudes towards immigrant families, their abilities or willingness to actively listen to children and parents and validate their concerns, influenced participants' sense of belonging within school spaces. Participants talked about their interactions with educators, particularly teachers and principals, and the implications these interactions had for their feelings of belonging in school spaces. There was a common understanding among participants that teachers did not have the time to have meaningful conversations with parents outside of the tri-conferences or via email communication.

Mrs. Kemi explained, "...teachers are always busy, they have limited time to attend to parents, except when we have the tri-conferences and...other activities that bring us together...." Tri-conferences are short, and as remote learning over the past year and a half has proven, having certain discussions online or over email can be frustrating. Limited time with parents may mean that teachers were not able to have meaningful dialogue with parents and follow up when necessary. Parents' perceptions that the "teachers are always busy" made it difficult to bring up certain concerns with the teacher. It is difficult to build relationships and trust; understand families, their ideas and priorities; and fashion ways to work together if teachers do not provide time, spaces, and opportunities for meaningful interactions with families. Mrs. Kemi, however, reported that some teachers went out of their way to make her feel valued, heard, and respected despite their tight schedules. She gave examples of two teachers:

...one of the tri-conferences I attended...after giving my opinion about the way things are going, things I wasn't comfortable about there [in the school], one of the teachers took it upon herself to send me emails every weekend about my child's progress

at school.... if there's anything I want, I'm able to reach her via email.... I feel she was ready to listen, and then even her approach, she is so polite. And then there is one of the other teachers, during the tri-conference, she is always in a haste, and then she is hardly allowing you look through certain things; she is just rushing...sometimes, she acts so overwhelmed, like the whole teaching thing is too much for her...sometimes she does it well, but overall, it's not like she has anything against the child or the parent, it's just the attitude.

Mrs. Kemi felt valued and taken seriously by the first teacher's approachable attitude and ability to carry her along in her child's journey, in essence, including her in the process of her child's learning. However, in the case of the second teacher, she did not believe that this teacher had any animosity towards her and her child, but that it was simply her attitude and perhaps that "the teaching thing is too much for her."

A common view also expressed by participants was that Canadians are good listeners. However, there was a divergence of opinion on whether this was *active* listening or just *polite* listening. For example, Mrs. Kemi suggested, "I think it's a Canadian thing, they are always ready to listen, they always listen. They're good listeners, they always listen and then they take action." She explained that even though they were usually busy and had little time to attend to parents, they made time to listen to and address her concerns. Mr. Seyi, on the other hand, opposed this idea, indicating that:

...there is a difference between being listened to, and really being understood. Somebody can listen to you; you think that, but whether they thought of what you're saying seriously, to the degree that they act on it is another ball game.

He felt that they only listened out of politeness and not out of a real desire to understand or make changes. Despite their positioning as immigrant “other,” parents engaged with educators and shared concerns that they hoped would be taken seriously or acted upon. Reinforcing the idea of “politeness” or “niceness,” when asked about his relationship with his children’s teachers, Mr. Wale responded:

...here in Canada, they pretend to be good, that’s just it! They pretend to be good, so you can’t say. And when you go to them, they just tell you... they give you one excuse or the other, that this is the reason why we did this thing.

While his statement may be an overgeneralization, it is an indication of the intensity of his feelings. Mr. Wale felt that teachers always had excuses for whatever concerns they had, and for him, this did not translate into taking their concerns seriously. In saying that, “they [the teachers] pretend to be good, so you can’t say,” he points to the lack of trust in the relationship with educators.

While some parents felt that the teacher’s politeness translated into taking their concerns seriously, for others, they felt that the teachers’ politeness was just a façade and one of the ways educators dismiss them or avoid having difficult conversations. Participants’ different interpretations of educators’ niceness, politeness, and attitudes are noteworthy and may have been influenced by the length of their stay in Canada and exposure to the critical theories. For example, Mr. Wale’s children had been attending school in Canada— at the time of the pilot study— for about four years and so, he may have had more experience interacting with educators to be able to tell when “niceness” or “politeness” was genuine or fake. Mr. Seyi is also a Ph.D. student with exposure to critical theories and therefore his own experiences may have been filtered through a more critical lens than some of the other participants.

The participants' experiences of feeling not listened to or avoided by teachers is reflected in the research. For example, McKenna and Millen (2013) found that many immigrant parents sometimes did not feel heard or chose to limit their conversations with educators to avoid misunderstandings. Although some parents in this study indicated that their children's teachers were nice and that they had productive conversations and relationships with them, niceness can also be viewed problematically. For example, Castagno (2019) argues that the discourse of "niceness" and "politeness" in schools reinforces racialized inequities and serves as a shield for educators from doing the uncomfortable work of teaching. While the feelings of being listened to and being taken seriously by educators, contributed to Nigerian parents' feelings of belonging, educators' lack of time and inability, or their unwillingness to actively listen to, and address parents' concerns contributed to their feelings of unbelonging.

Parental Involvement

Participants indicated that they were involved in their children's education inside and outside of the spaces of schools. Within the school, parents volunteered, attended parent conferences, and communicated with teachers regarding their children's activities and progress in school. Outside the school and at home, they provided additional academic, moral, and emotional support for their children to help them navigate their new realities as Black immigrant other. Although some participants indicated that they had not been able to be at their children's schools as much as they would like to, all participants in this study considered themselves active participants in their children's education inside and or outside of school spaces. Volunteering was the major activity that parents reported with regards to their involvement in their children's education within the school. Mrs. Kemi reported that:

...I'm always eager to lend a hand at school. Whenever there are any activities going on that parents are expected to take part in, I will go all out of my way to do this, because in the long run it all comes back to me and my kids... and when they are happy, I am happy. And kids are usually very excited to see that their parents are all out there in school. When they look round, they see other parents, and they don't see their own parents...they don't feel good about it.

Mrs. Kemi recognized the importance of showing up in school for her kids as it made them happy to see their parents attend school events. She prioritized showing up for her kids even though she may need to go out of her way to do it.

Meanwhile, other participants, Mrs. Lawal, Mr. Lanre and Mrs. Titi indicated that they had not volunteered in their children's schools even though they would have loved to. For Mrs. Lawal, it was because of the Covid-19 pandemic, and for Mr. Lanre and Mrs. Titi, it was due to time constraints. However, they all attended parent conferences and reached out to their children's teachers to follow up on their children's progress in school. Mrs. Nkem indicated that although she was unable to volunteer in her children's school frequently, she kept up with their education through: "...sending emails, fixing appointments...either virtual or phone to ask questions...[and] observation.... it's just the constant communication with the teachers." Mrs. Nkem's methods of engagement with her children's schooling established her presence in her children's lives and interest in their schooling, even though she did not show up in the school

space often. The parents' engagement in their children's schooling experience is in contrast to the often-held discourse of the uninvolved immigrant parent (Dahlsted, 2018).

Apart from volunteering within the school, parents were also concerned about what went on in the classroom. Mr. Seyi expressed his frustration that:

...I remember I was the one who went to the school to say, especially to the teacher, could you be more specific about ways in which as parents we can \ what you are doing in school? I mean, I want to learn what is going on, so that when he comes home, we are not working at cross-purposes. We want to be able to support what you are doing.

Beyond participating in activities within the school, parents wanted better communication about what went on in the classroom. They felt that this information would be important to enable them to support their children's learning at home and in a way that complements what was done at school. Mrs. Hauwa's child started school during the pandemic, at a time when most things were done virtually and parents were not invited into the school, but she still tried to keep in touch with her child's teacher to follow her child's progress in the school. She explained that, "...it doesn't matter how much the teacher teaches in school, you still need to brush up whatever the teacher is doing" explaining that she engaged her child with more homework to complement the teacher's effort at school.

All participants in this research considered their participation inside and outside of the school important to their child's education. Even when they could not show up in school spaces, they participated in other ways outside of the school. Mr. Lanre explained that he and his wife supported his children outside the school indirectly by, "...letting them know that their identity shouldn't be a barrier to them learning or having social relationships with others...." The sense of difference Black immigrant children feel could negatively affect their interactions with others

and their emotional well-being (Kirova, 2001). It is therefore important that parents were having conversations about difference with their children.

Participants indicated they came to Canada to give their children a “better” education. Pre- and post-arrival in Canada, they worried about negative experiences like bullying and racism that their children might face due to their new social positioning as Black immigrant “other.” Even though they are first-generation immigrant Nigerians, parents had no prior experience with racism or navigating racist structures as these constructs did not exist in their homeland. However, the participants enacted agency and used resistant capital (Yosso, 2005), by teaching their children to see themselves as valuable and beautiful, and to not perceive of their racialized identity as a hinderance to forming connections with peers. Positive attitudes of educators and the symbolic cultural representations in the school facilitated belonging for some parents. However, the lack of adequate knowledge about how the school system works, of connection to other non-Nigerian parents in the school, and the inability or unwillingness of educators to actively listen to parents were reported as barriers to integration and belonging.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Discussion of Key Findings

The findings of this research serve as a counternarrative to the deficit conceptions of children as immature or incapable. Parent's observations of children although sometimes reflected these deficit images, they also challenged them and positioned children as capable, aware, and agentic. The findings also counter the deficit understandings of immigrant parents as uninvolved and explored the different valid ways that parents were involved inside and outside of school spaces. In answering the research questions, the findings illustrate the factors that facilitated or hindered families' integration generally, their sense of belonging specifically, and how parents created counter spaces outside of the school in response to their children's needs. Accent, educators' knowledge and attitudes towards immigrant families, play, and connection with others in the school were reported in connection to the feelings of belonging and unbelonging of families.

Deficit Conceptions of Children

Society's conceptions of the child, who and what we think they are or are capable of, are influenced by a myriad of things, including our experiences, philosophies, and dominant discourses (Bloch et al., 2018; Cannella, 2000; Dahlberg et al., 2007). The deficit images of children as unaware, colour blind, intellectually deficient, or unCanadian were both upheld and challenged by participants in this study. For example, Mrs. Hauwa's question, "they should be colour blind right?" in response to her child's experience with her best friend, shows the tension in her understanding of children. She thought since they were just 4-year-olds, they should not "...be thinking about colour at this age." However, both children were aware of the difference in

their skin colour, and this shaped their interaction. Participants' experiences, for example, Mrs. Hauwa's child experience with her best friend and Mr. Seyi's son's refusal to be referred to as Black, repudiates the hypothesis of colour-blindness. Derman-Sparks et al. (nd) found that children of pre-school age were aware of racial differences and sometimes reproduced society's prejudices against marginalized people. DiAngelo and Dyson (2018) argue that young children internalize society's biases and prejudices against BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Colour) individuals and society's preference for whiteness. Although young children may naturally describe themselves and others by their general skin colour, rather than by their social colour, young Black children may internalize society's bias toward Blackness (Winkler, 2009), hence the preference for brownness.

Furthermore, the notion of children being colour-blind is a majoritarian narrative that seeks to ignore the problem and assumes that by evading the conversation about race with young children, race will go unnoticed (Derman-Sparks et al., nd). Ignoring race/racism not only constitutes a disservice to young children who are trying to make sense of their identities, but also upholds institutional and systemic racism, rationalized by saying that we are all equal, even though we are not treated as such. The myth of colour-blindness also serves to erase the experiences of people of colour and renders injustices invisible, whilst absolving those in positions of power from the responsibility of introspection (Neville et al., 2016).

Developmentalism also influences the deficient image of the child. The idea that children are miniature adults-in-the-making positions children as blissfully unaware. Childhood is not simply a progression, or pathway to adulthood, but is a valid stage in and of itself (Dahlberg et al. 2007). When asked if there was a time when his children felt excluded, Mr. Lanre answered that:

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...maybe when they grow a little bit more, they will tend to understand...maybe there are some racial differences or racial bias. But for now, they really don't notice that... they don't know that, because everyone is treated the same way.

The idea that children are young and therefore do not understand may influence parents' interaction with their children regarding their experiences in school. The understanding that children progress along a continuum and that certain behaviours and abilities are expected of children at certain stages (for example, their abilities to understand other's reactions to them) influences our interactions with them and the space that we make for them to talk about and make sense of their experiences. Also, the idea of treating everyone the same is not a productive approach to dealing with diversity (Arndt 2020) as children require different approaches that best suit each child's needs.

In addition to the conception of children as colour blind and unaware, participants also reported the regulation of children both by teachers and by their children themselves (i.e., self-regulation). Teachers for example insisted that children modify the way that they responded in class, their mannerisms, and sometimes speech. Children also modified the way that they talked, behaved, and generally showed up in school spaces, leading participants to describe situations in which their children belonged as ones in which they were "free" and their "Nigerian selves." The structures of schools favour and rewards sameness (Blau, 2003) and difference is usually labelled as abnormal (Sefa Dei, 1997) and a problem that needs to be fixed. Researchers (Bryan, 2017; James, 2008) assert that Black children are overregulated by teachers in schools. This is due to many reasons including cultural misunderstandings, racism, and implicit biases against Black children. The overregulation of children may send the message to children that they are inadequate in their original form, in this case, when they are their "Nigerian selves." While there

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is no definition of what it means to be Nigerian, the accent, physical characteristics, skin colour and mannerisms may distinguish a Nigerian person. Insisting that children modify the way that they talk, the way they respond in class, or that they alter their mannerisms is counterproductive to integration efforts and does not promote true multiculturalism. Moreover, these types of expectations, diminish the identities of Black children in school and recentre whiteness as dominant. Even though it is detrimental to their developing sense of self, children demonstrated power and agency by trying to modify aspects of their identities (for example, accent and mannerisms) that may put them at risk in white-dominant spaces. This illustrates the children's astute understandings of how race is being operationalized and how they might comply with/resist these racist expectations.

Finally, even though participants' interpretation of their children's experiences varied, their reported observations of their children's experiences, uphold the image of children as conscious and aware, experiencing life in the present, and possessing insights and perspectives that are different, but not inferior to those of adults (MacNaughton et al., 2003).

“A Matter of Accent”

One aspect of children's identity that parents reported affected their children's sense of belonging was accent, or the ways children enunciated their English words. The majority of the participants referred to accent when talking about the challenges that their children faced. Some of their children became withdrawn temporarily, and up until the time of the interviews (two years after starting school), some were reluctant to speak in class for fear of being made fun of by classmates. Participants in Kiramba and Oloo's (2019) research said that children often

remained silent for some time upon starting school due to their inability to speak with an American accent.

The notion of “Canadian accent” is problematic as it elevates the way of speaking of a segment of the Canadian (predominantly white) population, rendering it the norm, while all others who speak differently are considered outsiders. In addition to skin colour, mannerisms and dressing, accent serves as an identifier of the “other” and may serve as a basis for differential treatment (intentionally or unintentionally) even by teachers (Munro, 2003).

Nigeria is a multicultural nation with over 500 languages. However, the English language is Nigeria's official language. Although multilingualism is an asset, many Nigerian children do not speak their parents' first language or speak very minimally³. Newly arrived Nigerian children, however, speak English with a distinct accent and are usually shy to speak before they have achieved some level of proficiency with the Canadian accent. While researchers (Kiramba & Oloo, 2019; Mbabaali, 2012;) have reported that children of African origin are often bullied due to their distinct accents, participants in this study did not report bullying due to their accent, but the children were themselves conscious of their accent and the outsider status that accompanied it. This excessive consciousness and feeling of being different negatively affected their integration and sense of belonging. This was evident in some of the children's initial and ongoing reluctance to speak or to make friends.

Involved Parents Inside and Out

The immigrant parent has been positioned in educational discourse as uninvolved (Alba & Holdaway, 2013; Lopez, 2001; Perez Carreon et al., 2005; Turney & Kao, 2009). Researchers

³ There is a multitude of reasons for this including: lack of cultural consciousness of the parents, affinity for Western cultures and languages, and the legacy of colonialism among others.

have also suggested that immigrant parents may not know the expectations for their involvement in school (Turney & Kao, 2009), do not have the required capital for engagement in pre-sanctioned ways (Bitew & Ferguson, 2010; Kanu, 2008; Li et al., 2016), or may view schools as sacred spaces that only the initiated may enter (Perez Carreon, Drake & Barton, 2005; Lopez, 2001). However, Nigerian parents in this study expressed that they felt it was important to be involved with their children's education/schooling inside and outside of the school. They provided emotional, social, and academic support for their children within the limits of the resources available to them.

Beyond the deficit discourse of parental involvement and traditional understandings of involvement, it is necessary to acknowledge the numerous other ways immigrant families engage with their children's education in and out of school spaces. While certain methods of parental involvement are privileged in Euro-Western contexts (Kanu, 2008; Li et al., 2016), the multitude of ways that parents show up for their children in and outside of school is equally important. Participants in this study showed up to volunteer, for parent conferences, were in ongoing communication with their children's teachers, and helped their children with academic work. They were also involved in their children's education outside the school and provided emotional support for their children when they struggled to settle, or experienced bullying. Participants legitimized these methods of engagement, as they opined that they have benefits for their children's emotional, social and academic life. The agency that participants exhibited in helping their children navigate school spaces is similar to what Yosso (2005) termed community cultural wealth which is "an array

of knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed and utilized by Communities of Color to survive and resist macro and micro-forms of oppression” (p. 77).

It is equally necessary, however, to acknowledge the difficulties that immigrant parents may face in adjusting to sometimes unfamiliar education systems. Some of the barriers to parental involvement in school expressed by participants and reflected in the literature include limited English language skills, confusion about the school structure and curriculum, lack of knowledge of available educational resources, and time constraints among others (Antony-Newman, 2019; Kanu, 2008; Li et al, 2016; Turney & Kao, 2009). Participants in my study indicated being confused about the structure of the school and were unable to show up as much as they liked due to time constraints. They also noted the negative attitude of school staff and the Covid-19 pandemic as challenges to participation. Participants, however, were actively involved in their children's education inside and outside of school spaces.

While the expectations of parents and schools may not always align, constant communication through a variety of means, for example, newsletters, phone calls, social media and importantly, one-on-one discussions, are vital to building connections and trust between families and schools. It is important that educators actively listen, make room for meaningful engagement with immigrant families, and negotiate mutually beneficial ways of working collaboratively for the benefit of children.

Educators' Role in Fostering Belonging

Educators' attitudes towards immigrant families and children contributed to their feelings of belonging and unbelonging in school spaces. While some participants felt that educators listened to them and took their concerns seriously, some opined that it was simply an

act of politeness and not active listening. They felt educators always had ready-made answers for any of their concerns. When parents felt that educators did not take them seriously, they felt discouraged from coming forward with concerns. They believed that the status quo could not be changed or worse still, that they would appear as “troublemakers” and expose their children to unpleasant experiences within the school (Perez Carreon, 2005).

The grouping practices of teachers were also found to be a factor that affected the integration process. One participant (Mr. Seyi) expressed concerns over his son's teacher always grouping the Black kids together in the classroom and also receiving a communication from the school asking that families suggest which kids they wanted their children to be in class with in the next grade. This kind of grouping, rather than fostering integration or intercultural understanding, has the potential to further marginalize already marginalized students. Educators through their actions or inactions contribute intentionally and unintentionally to the victimization and exclusion of Black children (Bryan, 2017; James, 2019; Oba, 2018).

Furthermore, educators often do not have the skills to address racism within the classroom partly because they have been trained within the dominant understandings of white middle-class families (Massing, et al. 2016). The teacher's response to Mrs. Hauwa, that her child's friend probably picked up racist dispositions somewhere, and her decision to stop the two children from playing together is an indicator of this. Early childhood classrooms and indeed most K-12 classrooms have white teachers who do not have first-hand experience of racism, have been brought up within racist colonial structures, and many of whom have not had the opportunity to unpack and unlearn the deficit conception of the other that they have subconsciously internalized (Bryan, 2017). Active listening, genuine interest, and support may help immigrant families feel more welcome within school spaces and lead to better

understandings between immigrant families and educators. Also, in addition to diversifying the teacher population and continuous workshops and training on anti-racism and antiracist practices, educators need to actively consider their duty of care towards Black children and individually and collectively seek ways to make the school space safe for them. This will require that educators take an active interest in understanding race, systemic racism, and their own complicity in upholding racist school structures and practices.

The Role of Play in Fostering Belonging

Most of the research on the experiences of Black children in Canadian schools showed that racism, microaggressions, language barriers, trauma, and socio-economic challenges negatively impacted their experiences (Bitew & Ferguson, 2010; Danso, 2002; Dooley & Thanga-Perumal, 2011; Magro, 2009; Shakya, et al., 2010; Shroeter & James, 2015; Stachel, 2012). Participants in this study, however, reported that their children generally enjoyed their schooling experience. They felt their children belonged because they had ample opportunity for play, hands-on learning, and participation in extracurricular activities. The structure of the classroom environment was also reported as a factor that contributed to their children's feelings of belonging. Play has been found to hold enormous potential for connection and belonging for children (Arndt, 2020; Kyronlampi et al., 2021). Even though participants were unanimous in their views that the academic work within the classroom was not rigorous enough, they also unanimously considered play the most important element that encouraged a sense of belonging for their children in schools. It is important that educators consider play and its potential to create a sense of belonging and to ease the transition and integration of newcomer children. Creating an environment that fosters and encourages safe and respectful play between different children is important to foster a sense of belonging for newly arrived children. A safe and

respectful play environment encourages “children and little humans to play, take risks, and mess things up. This creates the environment needed for children to learn to look at the world in new ways” (Fullan et al., 2021 p.13) and make sense of their place in it. Play can also be harnessed to foster intercultural and interracial friendships which will in turn aid the sense of belonging of children within school spaces (Ardnt 2020; Yahya & Wood, 2017).

Belonging Through Friendship

Participants in this study indicated that their children had close friendships mostly with Nigerian children. Parents reported that their children were “in [their] form,” when they were with other Nigerians, mostly outside of the spaces of schools. Even though they felt that their children belonged in school because they liked school, their teachers, and engaged in play, children’s friendships were a source of tension and impacted children’s experiences negatively. Racist remarks directed toward children and the grouping practices of educators negatively impacted the forming of intercultural/interracial friendships for the children of participants in this study. Mr. Seyi’s comment about his child not having a problem with his friends’ different identities back home in Nigeria speaks to the essence of children’s friendships here in Canada. Mrs. Hauwa’s daughter, for example, was rejected by her friend and perhaps made the conscious decision to make friends with children with whom she felt safe, valued, and accepted. Other participants noted that their children made friends with other Nigerians, and although I did not explore the reasons fully, cultural differences (Dlamini & Anucha, 2009) and racism (Kiramba & Oloo, 2019) were some of the reasons researchers have found may hinder Black children from forming friendships with non-Black children. Although participants’ children felt valued and had a sense of belonging with their Nigerian friends, friendships between children of different cultures and races are important for the exchange of capital and to foster a sense of

belonging within the school. In-group friendships also have the potential to exacerbate racial inequities (Blau, 2003) and uphold white privilege. The diversity present in shared spaces does not necessarily translate into appreciation of difference. While children of different cultures may be present in Canadian classrooms, multiculturalism without conscious efforts at integration may reinforce the “othering” of children from minority cultures while normalizing the dominant culture (Pashby et al., 2014). Educators, therefore, have the responsibility to seek ways to encourage friendships between and among all students in the classroom. It is important that Black immigrant children are able to form meaningful friendships with others. This may help foster intercultural understanding and challenge the “othering” of Black children.

Implications for Educators

The majority of educators in Canada have been socialized into society's dominant (white, Euro-Western) epistemologies or ways of being and doing. Therefore, it is imperative that educators deliberately seek ways to understand the diversity that is present within their classrooms. In addition to adopting anti-racist and anti-colonial practices, educators must seek ways to work collaboratively with parents, using open and honest dialogue, and foster a climate of mutual trust, understanding and respect. Educators should step out of their comfort zones and do the hard work of unlearning and relearning; confronting racism, biases and prejudices; and constantly reflecting on the ways in which their relationships and interactions with children and families may contribute to reinforcing or dismantling racism and stereotypes. Lastly it is important that schools and educators consider integration beyond the superficial (and comfortable) displays of diverse national/cultural artifacts. Integration should not be restricted when it encroaches on white privilege and disturbs the balance of white spaces.

Implications for Teacher Training

Teacher training institutions also should begin to consider anti-racist, anti-colonial education as a compulsory aspect of the teacher training curriculum. Racism has both short- and long-term effects on children because when negativity is internalized, the exact act may be forgotten, but the feelings remain. Teacher training institutions in Canada have a responsibility to equip both pre-service and in-service teachers with the tools necessary for dismantling racism in schools and confronting personal prejudices and biases. It is also necessary to find ways to encourage minority populations to enrol in teacher training, to increase the pool of available educators in K-12 schools and begin to shift the imbalance in the cultural diversity of the educator population. Equally important is the hiring of diverse faculty in teacher-training institutions who may bring unique and valuable knowledge, perspectives, and insights to the process of teacher-training.

Implications for Immigrant Organizations and School Leaders

Knowledge is unevenly distributed among social and economic classes, occupations, age groups and groups of different immigration statuses. The educational support services currently provided by the school districts, schools, and immigrant centres assume that all families except families of children who are English as an Additional Language Learners (EALs) or refugees, can navigate the school system on their own. The assumption is that if a parent or family can speak one of the official languages, then they can ask for help if they need it. However, immigrant families who are English language speakers may also need help “translating” schooling in the Canadian context. Therefore, support personnel should be provided by schools or school districts, to provide guidance and serve as resource persons for immigrant families.

While there are web resources to acquaint parents with the education system in Canada, there is no single website or web resource that can provide all the information that parents need.

Also, the orientation that newcomer families receive should not be limited to the physical structure of the school space but should include information on how the school *system* works, as the structures and workings of the school may be unfamiliar to many immigrant families. In addition, there must be room for continuous dialogue, for open communication, and for parents to be able to ask questions, get clarification, make mistakes, and learn. Also, many immigrants (especially those who do not use settlement services) have more contact with religious and cultural organizations than with immigrant organizations. Therefore, these organizations may be important partners in disseminating education-related information.

Contributions of the Study

This research contributes to filling the void in the research literature of the educational integration experiences of Nigerians. While the experiences of other Black Africans (mostly refugees) have been explored in research (for example, Bitew & Ferguson, 2010; Stachel, 2012; Magro, 2009) the experiences of members of the most populous Black nation, and a significant Black immigrant population in Canada have been largely absent. Nigerians are a distinct but not homogeneous group, and their experiences and insights are important contributions to the literature on the educational integration experiences of Black immigrants.

This research also presents counter stories of immigrants and children. While immigrant parents have been positioned as uninvolved (Alba & Holdaway, 2013; Lopez, 2001; Perez Carreon et al., 2005; Turney & Kao, 2009) this research shows that Nigerian immigrant parents, like many other immigrants, are actively involved in their children's education inside and outside of the spaces of schools. It also presents a counter-narrative to the dominant image of

children as unaware and intellectually deficient. Participants' observations and perceptions of their children's experiences position children as conscious, relational beings who are aware of racial differences and people's reactions to their presence in shared spaces.

Also, few studies (for example, Arndt, 2020; Kyronlampi et al., 2021) have explored the potential for play in fostering belonging for culturally diverse children. Interestingly, all participants in this study were unanimous in their view that children had a greater sense of belonging when they had the opportunity to play. The schooling experiences of Black children reported in the literature are rife with challenges. Therefore, this research presents an alternative to the discourse of the struggle of Black children, not to minimize their experiences or challenges, but to advance the idea of play as a practical way to foster a sense of belonging for young Black children.

While the emotional toll that forced migration takes on children is documented (Kirova, 2001; MacLean et al., 2019; Orellana, 2001; Rios Casas et al., 2020) albeit not thoroughly explored, even more conspicuously absent, is the exploration of the emotional toll that immigration takes on children whose immigration journey is planned, as it is for the economic migrants, like in this study. The disruption that children may experience upon leaving the familiar for the unfamiliar and the challenges it may pose for young children are often taken for granted and overlooked in research. While this research did not seek to explore the emotional toll of migration on young children, some of the reported experiences brought them to the fore.

Concluding Thoughts and Future Directions

Children's experiences with their positioning as immigrants are dependent on a lot of factors including but not limited to, their family's resources: financial, educational, social, and psychological; and their pre and post-migration experiences. Nigerian children arrived in

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Canada and in schools, bringing with them various aspects of their identities. However, they quickly learned to code-switch as a survival technique, to blend in, to be like everyone else, because the spaces of schools prefer and reward sameness, rather than difference (Blau, 2003). While children may feel a sense of belonging in school, the kind of belonging they feel in other spaces (for example, the church, or within their cultural communities) is different and perhaps even more welcoming. It was in these situations where children felt more like their “Nigerian selves” that they belonged the most. Children negotiate their identities and place with others differently in different circumstances, therefore the child that shows up in school is somewhat different from the one that shows up in other more familiar and safer spaces. Children evaluate and make deliberate careful choices about the aspects of their identities that may put them at greater risk and go into school spaces without those.

When children see space for their voices, they willingly enter those spaces. However, children are astute and reading cues from their environment, parents, the community, and the school. They learn that a certain way of being, doing and existing is supposedly better than others. Therefore, until they feel confident enough to express themselves in that dominant way, they may remain silent or silenced. The notion of “Canadian culture” into which immigrant children must be assimilated, and for which the school serves as an ideological tool is problematic, as it privileges the ways of being of some over others, despite multiculturalism. Some parents may resist this assimilation, and some may not resist at all, even believing that it is necessary for their children to achieve success. Integration, however, can be re-imagined as more of a democratic process and less as an assimilationist agenda.

A limitation of this study was that it was carried out with parents instead of children as it was originally intended. Children’s experiences have been understood and filtered through adult

lenses. The data would no doubt have been different—perhaps, richer—if children had reported their experiences themselves. In researching children's experiences from the children's point of view, I would have been able to document and glean insight into their understandings and perspectives more directly, without these experiences being filtered by their parents. Despite this, however, important insight was gained from the data, informing the research literature, teachers, teacher training institutions, and community organizations.

Further research should be conducted to explore young Nigerian children's educational integration experiences from their perspectives. I think it would be important in future research studies to inquire into not just the barriers to, and strategies towards integration, but rather to consider the complexities of these experiences. In this research, for example, I was able to see how participants commented on the barriers to, and facilitators of integration, belonging and unbelonging, and oppression and agency, but these were often more complex than the dichotomous framing suggests. Lastly, researchers have documented the psychological effects of migration, particularly for refugee and migrant children who have had traumatic migration experiences (Khan et al., 2020). It is taken for granted that children whose migration journeys are well planned will settle and integrate easily. Although the children of participants in this study did not have extreme psychological reactions, parents reported that their children experienced racism, temporary social withdrawal, anxiety, and identity conflicts. It is therefore important that research explores the effect of migration and educational integration on the mental health of young Black economic migrant children.

This research explored Nigerian families' integration into schools in Canada and the findings illustrated the potential of play, friendships, parental involvement, and positive attitudes of educators in fostering integration and belonging. It also illustrated how race,

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microaggressions, and lack of connection with others impeded integration. This research makes an important contribution to the literature on the integration experiences of Black African immigrant families in Canada.

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Appendix A

Journaling Prompts

The purpose of this research is to explore the experiences of Nigerian parents and their young children as they engage in the process of integration into the education system in Canada. *Integration* in this research refers to how immigrant families are welcome into educational spaces, made aware of the structures and workings of the school, and how they are made to feel a sense of belonging within the school community. While there is no generally agreed-upon definition of educational integration, for this research, integration is understood as “full and robust membership” (Alba & Holdaway, 2013, p. 2) of families and children, including immigrants, within the school community.

The research questions that will guide this study are:

- (1) What are the perceptions of Nigerian immigrant parents of their children's experiences of integration into the school system?
- (2) What are the experiences of Nigerian immigrant parents as they themselves become familiar with and observe the integration of their child(ren) into the education system?
- (3) What factors aid or hinder parents' and children's integration into the education system?
- (4) What factors encourage or discourage parents and children's feelings of belonging within educational spaces?
- (5) How do parents and children exhibit agency and/or create counter-spaces for themselves inside or outside of educational spaces?

The purpose of journaling is to enable you to record and reflect on your perceptions and experiences of your child's school experience. It may also help you to remember important

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things that you may otherwise forget and would like to discuss during the interview. You can be as brief, or as detailed as you want, in recording your observations. You may want to record your observations as soon as you notice something to prevent you from forgetting. You may want to make the notes just for yourself as a reference for when we meet and what you choose to share entirely your decision. However, you are encouraged to bring the journal with you to the interview. You may record digitally (phone, word document) or in a notebook.

Please use these prompts to record memories and events that illustrate your perceptions and experiences of your child(ren)'s school experiences.

1. Think back to when your child(ren) just started school in Canada. What were your concerns, observations, and feelings? What do you think it was like for your child?
2. How would you describe your child's schooling experience overall? Were there any significant or memorable moments with your child's teacher, peers, or daily experiences?
3. Describe your experiences as a parent in regard to your role in the school and your relationships with others at the school. What is communication like with the teacher, principal, and others?
4. Were there factors that have helped your child to integrate into the school? Were there key moments in feeling like she/he belonged?
5. Were there factors that have hindered your child's integration into the school? Were there key moments when you felt they were excluded or that they didn't feel like they belonged?
6. Do you have (other) concerns about your child's school, teacher, or child's experience? What are these?
7. In what ways do you help your child feel like he/she belongs within the school community?

Appendix B

Interview Guide for Parents (1)

The purpose of this research is to explore the experiences of Nigerian parents and their young children as they engage in the process of integration into the education system in Canada. *Integration* in this research refers to how immigrant families are welcome into educational spaces, made aware of the structures and workings of the school, and how they are made to feel a sense of belonging within the school community. While there is no generally agreed-upon definition of educational integration, for this research, integration is understood as “full and robust membership” (Alba & Holdaway, 2013, p. 2) of families and children, including immigrants, within the school community.

The purpose of this interview is to learn about your experiences, and perspectives of your child(ren)'s integration into the education system. Most of the research on the experiences of Black African immigrants within the school system in Canada has been from the perspective of refugees or English language learners. The findings of these research which sometimes inform resources and services provided for immigrant families mostly do not reflect the experiences of Nigerian immigrants, most of whom are economic migrants. Therefore, your perspectives are important as they may provide insights into the nuances of the experiences of Nigerian immigrant families that may inform schools/educators' approaches to addressing the needs of immigrants and the provision of resources for better integration of immigrant families within the school system.

Please elaborate on your responses as much as you like. Feel free to use stories or examples to explain your response. You may also want to refer to your journal when you are answering the questions. You are free to not answer any question that you don't want to. You can also withdraw from the interview at any time during or after the interview without any negative consequences. You can choose to leave your

camera on or off. Do I have permission to record our conversation? Do you have any questions before we begin?

1. Thank you for taking out time to speak with me. Can you please give me a brief background of yourself (you do not have to say your name)? When did you come to Canada and what were your hopes in coming to Canada, especially as it relates to the education of your children?
 - Also, tell me about your children; their ages, grades in school and when they entered the school system here in Canada.
2. Think back to when your child(ren) just started school in Canada. What were your concerns, observations, and feelings?
 - Were there times that were surprising, challenging, confusing or difficult?
 - What was the experience like for your child, do you think? Were they excited, nervous, etc.?
 - Do you feel that you and your child were well-received? Why? Why not?
3. How would you describe your child's schooling experience overall?
 - What about your child's relationships with teachers? With peers?
 - What about your child's daily experience of going to school and engaging in classroom activities? Did they like school? Why? Why not?
4. Describe your experiences as a parent regarding your role in the school?
 - Do you feel welcome and as if you belong? Are there deterrents to your participation in the school?
 - What about your relationships with others at the school; the teacher, principal, and others?
 - What is communication like with the teacher, principal, and others?

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5. How familiar are you with the structure of the school? The teachers, and their expectations of your children? Their expectations for your involvement?
6. Were there key factors or things that the school or teacher did that have helped your child feel like an important part of the school community?
7. Tell me about a time when you believe that your child had a sense of belonging in school?
 - What about in the greater community?
 - Where/when do you think your child feels as though they belong the most?
8. Were there key factors or things that happened that have hindered your child's integration/sense of belonging in the school?
 - Were there moments when you felt they were excluded?
9. Do you have (other) concerns about your child's school, teacher, or child's experience? Tell me about these?
10. When you or your child(ren)'s needs within the school system are not being met, how do you address these outside of the school system?
11. Where do you mostly find experiences of belonging? In schools, places of worship, with neighbours, cultural community?
 - Tell me about how you create a sense of belonging here in Winnipeg?
 - How or where in the school community do you have that sense of belonging?
 - How do you ensure your child(ren) feel(s) like they belong in school?
12. How could schools create a better sense of belonging for your family? For other newcomer families?

13. Is there anything else you might like to add or tell me about your child(ren)'s or your experience within the school system?

Thank you for your time. If there is anything you remember after our interview or any questions that you feel you have not adequately addressed, you can please note them in the journal and we can talk about them during our next interview. You can also continue to add details of your experiences to the journal over the next two weeks. Our next interview will be informed by your journal entries and any other things that come up during the two weeks, including additional questions that I might have after going through the transcript of our first interview (this script will also be sent to the parents after the interview).

Appendix C

Second Interview for Parents

Thank you for agreeing to this second interview. I have reviewed our last interview and I have some follow-up questions to ask. Please remember that your participation in this interview is voluntary and you may decline to answer any questions or stop/withdraw from the interview at any point without any negative consequences.

In addition to clarifications I might have about the last interview:

1. Is there anything you forgot to add during our last interview that you would like to add today?

Since our last interview, have there been any experiences pertaining to you or your child(ren) in school that you would like to share.?

Appendix D

Research Poster



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CALL FOR NIGERIAN PARENTS TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY:

Nigerian Immigrant Families' Experiences of Integrating into Canadian Schools

The purpose of this study is to learn about your experiences, and perspectives of your child(ren)'s experiences of integration into the education system. Most of the research on the experiences of Black African immigrants within the school system in Canada, has been from the perspective of Africans of other nationalities, refugees, English language learners, or those with limited education. The findings of this previous research do not always reflect the experiences of Nigerian immigrants in particular.

Therefore, your perspectives are important as they may provide insights into the nuances of the experiences of Nigerian immigrant families that may inform schools/educators approaches to addressing the needs of immigrants and the provision of resources for better integration of immigrant families within the school system.

Participation will involve journaling and two virtual interviews on Zoom that will last 60-90 minutes each.

You are eligible to participate in this study if: (1) you are a first-generation immigrant; (2) you have at least one child in the early years (K-6, or 5-11 years old), (3) at least one of your children (early years) have attended school in Canada for at least a term and no longer than 3 years.

This research is being conducted by Sanni-Anibire Hafizat O. If you are interested in participating or receiving more detailed information, please contact me on 204 230 1868 or by email- sannianh@myumanitoba.ca .

Research Supervisor: Dr. Melanie Janzen, Melanie.Janzen@umanitoba.ca, Phone: [REDACTED]

This research has been approved by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator (HEC) at 474-7122 or e-mail: humanethics@umanitoba.ca

Appendix E

Research Participant Information and Consent Form

Principal Investigator: Sanni-Anibire Hafizat O.

sannianh@myumanitoba.ca



Research Supervisor: Dr. Melanie Janzen, Associate Professor

Melanie.Janzen@umanitoba.ca

Phone:



Dear Participants,

I am Hafizat Sanni-Anibire, a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba. I am looking to carry out research on the integration experiences of Nigerian immigrant families and children into Canadian schools.

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you a basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

Purpose of this Study

Most of the research on the experiences of Black African immigrants within the school system in Canada has been from the perspective of Africans of other nationalities, refugees, English language learners, or those with limited education. The findings of these research which sometimes inform resources and

Nigerian Families' Integration into Schools in Canada

services provided for immigrant families mostly do not reflect the experiences of Nigerian immigrants, most of whom are economic migrants and are educated. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to learn about your experiences, and perspectives of your child (ren)'s experiences of integration into the education system.

Participants Selection You are being asked to participate in this study because you are:

- A Nigerian parent and a first-generation immigrant.
- you have at least one child in the early years (K-6, or 5-11 years old)
- at least one of your children (early years) have attended school in Canada for at least a term, and no longer than 3 years by the time of signing this form.

Study procedures

If you agree to participate in this study, you will participate in Journaling and two 60 to 90- minute interviews via Zoom, you can keep your video on or off if you wish. If/when you agree to participate in this study, you will be required to sign and scan or photograph this consent form and send it back to me at (sannianh@myumanitoba.ca). I will then send you the journaling prompts and we can schedule the first interview for two weeks after (from the day you send back the consent form). The purpose of journaling is to enable you to record and reflect on your perceptions and experiences of your child's school experience. It may also help you to remember important things that you may otherwise forget and would like to discuss during the interview.

You can be as brief, or as detailed as you want, in recording your observations. You may want to record your observations as soon as you notice something to prevent you from forgetting. You may want to make the notes just for yourself as a reference for when we meet and what you choose to share is entirely your decision. You may journal digitally (e.g. phone or word document) or in a notebook, whichever is

Nigerian Families' Integration into Schools in Canada

convenient for you. You are encouraged to come to the interviews with your journal to inform your responses. We would schedule another interview two weeks (roughly) after the first one. During this second interview, you can add any new details or things that you notice or have experienced or make clarifications, and I may also have follow-up questions from the previous interview. However, please be informed that participation is voluntary, you can withdraw at any time, and there are no negative consequences to withdrawing. The audio/video recordings will be destroyed by the 1st of April 2021, and the transcripts of our interview will be destroyed by December 2026, as I cannot anticipate further uses that may arise from the data.

I will be conducting the interview and will be asking questions relating to your experiences and your perception of your child(ren)'s experiences of integrating into the education system in Canada. An audio/video recording of the interview will be done via Zoom, you can keep your video on or off if you wish. The transcription will be pseudonymized (that is, your name will be changed to protect your identity). The transcript of your interview will be provided to you after the second interview to check for accurate representation of your words and ideas and this should take you approximately 1 hour to read, if I do not hear back from you **ONE WEEK** from the day I send the transcripts to you, I will assume that it is approved as is. There are no negative consequences to not participating in this study. If you wish to withdraw from the study at any point, you may send me an email or a phone call to that effect. Your data will be destroyed and there are no consequences for withdrawal. If you choose to withdraw, your data can be removed from the study until data analysis begins which I estimate to be about 1st April 2021. A \$25 e-gift card will be sent to you after the second interview as compensation for your participation

Risks and Benefits

Nigerian Families' Integration into Schools in Canada

There are minimal risks that I anticipate may arise from this research. But in case you feel any emotional discomfort from the recount of certain experiences, I have included some community resources that you might find helpful

- Aurora family therapy centre

515 Portage Avenue Winnipeg, MB R3B 2E9

204 786 9251

- Mind Matters Clinic

3-1250 Waverley Street Winnipeg, MB

[\(204\) 500-1474](tel:2045001474)

- Momenta: experience, discover, grow

992 Portage Avenue

Winnipeg, Manitoba

[\(431\) 831-1349](tel:4318311349)

While there are no direct benefits to participants, the results of the research may prove helpful in recognizing elements of the experience of Nigerian immigrant children and families that may inform schools/teachers' practices and approaches to enhance their educational experiences. This research may also prove helpful in understanding the unique challenges Nigerian immigrant children and families face in Canadian schools. The results of this study may be disseminated by means of a final master's thesis, public and conference presentations, and publications.

If you do share information that includes certain offences against children or persons in care, it is my lawful duty to report this information to the proper authority.

Confidentiality

I will take precautions to make sure your data is stored safely. The interview file will be transcribed by me and this transcription will be on a Microsoft word file on my computer. The file will be encrypted on my password-protected laptop. Directly identifying information like the audio recordings will be kept in an encrypted file on my laptop in my home. The recordings will also be downloaded to my laptop which is password protected. Recordings will be destroyed after transcription by 1st April 2021. Transcriptions will be kept for five years and will be destroyed by December 2026. I might include some direct quotations from you in the presentation of my report where they seem helpful in understanding the research.

Your name will be pseudonymized and all identifying information that you provide will be fictionalized. Apart from me, the only other person who might have access to the raw data is my Thesis Supervisor, Dr. Melanie Janzen. Findings from this research will be used in my thesis project, as well as in reports, conference presentations and journal publications. If you would like to have the summary of my findings, I can send that to you by Dec, 31st, 2021 by email.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation. The University of Manitoba may look at your research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way.

This research has been approved by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB). If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the

Nigerian Families' Integration into Schools in Canada

Human Ethics Coordinator at 204-474-7122 or humanethics@umanitoba.ca. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference

Participant's Name _____ Participant's Signature _____ Date _____ Researcher's Signature _____ Date _____

_____ Please tick the appropriate box below:

I would like to receive the summary of the findings Yes No

_____ If you would like a copy of the research report, please indicate where you would like it sent:

(email address)

Appendix F

Information Letter (to be sent to immigrant, religious, and cultural organizations)

Title of Study: Nigerian Immigrant Families' Experiences of Integrating into Canadian Schools

Principal Investigator: Sanni-Anibire Hafizat O.

██████████

████████████████████

Research Supervisor: Dr. Melanie Janzen, Associate Professor

Melanie.Janzen@umanitoba.ca

Phone: ██████████

Dear (Organization name),

I am Hafizat Sanni-Anibire, a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba. I am looking to carry out research on the integration experiences of Nigerian immigrant families and children in Winnipeg schools.

Purpose of this Study

Most of the research on the experiences of Black African immigrants within the school system in Canada has been from the perspective of Africans of other nationalities, refugees, English language learners, or those with limited education. The findings of these research which sometimes inform resources and services provided for immigrant families mostly do not reflect the experiences of Nigerian immigrants, most of whom are economic migrants and are educated. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to learn about Nigerian parents' experiences, and perspectives of their child (ren)'s experiences of integration into the education system.

Participants Selection My ideal participant:

- Is a Nigerian parent and a first-generation immigrant (that is, immigrated from Nigeria to Canada)
- Has at least one child in the early years (K-6, or 5-11 years old)
- At least one of their children (early years) must have attended school in Canada for at least a term and no longer than 3 years by the time of signing this form.

Study procedures

Participants in this study will participate in Journaling and two 60 to 90-minute interviews via Zoom.

If/when they agree to participate, they will be required to sign and scan or photograph a consent form and send it back to me at (sannianh@myumanitoba.ca). I will then send them the journaling prompt and we can schedule the first interview after two weeks (from the day they send me back the consent form). The purpose of journaling is to enable participants to record and reflect on their perceptions and experiences of their child(ren)'s school experience.

We would schedule another interview two weeks (roughly) after the first one. During this second interview, participants can add any new details or things that they notice or have experienced or make clarifications, and I may also have follow-up questions from the previous interview.

However, participation is voluntary, participants can withdraw at any time, and there are no negative consequences to withdrawing. Any data they have provided will be destroyed. I will be conducting the interview via Zoom and will be asking questions relating to their experiences and perception of their child(ren)'s experiences of integrating into the education system in Canada. An audio/video recording of the interview will be done via Zoom, participants can choose to leave their camera on or off. The transcription will be pseudonymized (that is, their names will be changed to protect their identity). There are no negative consequences to not participating in this study. If participants wish to withdraw from the study at any point, they may send me an email or a phone call to that effect. Their data will be destroyed

and there are no consequences for withdrawal. If participants choose to withdraw, their data can be removed from the study until data analysis begins which I estimate to be about the 1st of April 2021. A gift of \$25 e-gift card will be sent to participants after the second interview as compensation for their participation

Risks and Benefits

There are minimal risks that I anticipate may arise from this research. But in case participants feel any emotional discomfort from the recount of certain experiences, I have included some community resources that they might find helpful

- Aurora family therapy centre 515

Portage Avenue Winnipeg, MB R3B 2E9

204 786 9251

- Mind Matters Clinic

3-1250 Waverley Street Winnipeg, Manitoba

[\(204\) 500-1474](tel:2045001474)

- Momenta: experience, discover, grow

992 Portage Avenue Winnipeg, Manitoba

[\(431\) 831-1349](tel:4318311349)

While there are no direct benefits to the participants, the results of the research may prove helpful in recognizing elements of the experience of Nigerian immigrant children and families that may inform schools/teachers' practices and approaches to enhance their educational experiences. This research may also prove helpful in understanding the unique challenges Nigerian immigrant children and families face in

Nigerian Families' Integration into Schools in Canada

Canadian schools. The results of this study will be disseminated by means of a final master's thesis, public and conference presentations, and publications.

Confidentiality

I will take precautions to make sure participants' data is stored safely. The interview will be transcribed by me and this transcription will be on a Microsoft word file on my computer. The file will be encrypted on my passworded laptop. Directly identifying information like the audiorecordings will be kept in an encrypted file on my laptop in my home. The recordings will also be downloaded to my laptop which is password protected. Recordings will be destroyed after transcription by April 2021. Transcriptions will be kept for five years and will be destroyed by December 2026. I might include some direct quotations from participants in the presentation of my report where they seem helpful in understanding the research.

However, names will be pseudonymized and all identifying information that participants provide will be fictionalized. Apart from me, the only other person who might have access to the raw data is my Thesis Supervisor, Melanie Janzen. The summary of the data may also be published and used in presentations. If you would like to have the summary of my findings, please let me know and I can send that to you by Dec. 31st, 2021 by email.

If you would like a copy of the research report, please indicate to where you would like it sent:

(email address)

Nigerian Families' Integration into Schools in Canada

This research has been approved by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB). If you have any concerns or complaints about this project, you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator at 204-474-7122 or humanethics@umanitoba.ca.

Appendix G

Email (to be sent to immigrant, religious, and cultural organizations)

Below is the text of the email that was sent together with an advertisement poster (Appendix D) and information letter (Appendix F) to immigrant, religious, and cultural organizations.

Hello,

I am Hafizat Sanni-Anibire, a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba. I am looking to carry out research on the experiences of Nigerian immigrant families and children in Canadian schools and respectfully request the assistance of your organization in recruiting your members as participants for my research study. I am seeking participants who:

- are Nigerian parents and first-generation immigrants.
- have at least one child in the early years (K-6, or 5-11 years old)
- have at least one child (early years) that has attended school in Canada for at least a term and no longer than 3 years by the time of signing the consent form.

I have attached an information letter and recruitment advertisement for further details about the research project. If you are willing, please share the attached recruitment advertisement with your members or any others you may know who meet the above criteria. Interested participants can contact me directly for more information and for a consent form (sannianh@myumanitoba.ca).

This research has been approved by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact the Human Ethics Coordinator at 204-474-7122 or humanethics@umanitoba.ca. or the research Supervisor: Dr. Melanie Janzen, Associate Professor,

University of Manitoba, Melanie.Janzen@umanitoba.ca, Phone: XXXXXXXXXX

Thank you and kind regards, Hafizat Sanni-Anibire

Appendix H

Email (to be sent to participants together with journaling prompt)

Hello,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. Attached is the journaling prompt. It contains things you should look out for while recording your experiences.

The purpose of journaling is to enable you to record you and your child(ren)'s previous and present experiences. You can type them in short or longhand or write them down. You may share them with me if you wish but you do not have to do so. Please endeavour to record things as they happen or as you remember them, it makes it easier to remember and to keep the conversation flowing.

Thank you again for agreeing to participate in this study.

Kind Regards

Hafizat S-A

Appendix I

Script (for delivery to immigrant organizations)

Hello everyone/Ekaaro o/Assalamalaikum,

Thank you for having me and for giving me an opportunity to speak to you about my research. My name is Hafizat Sanni-Anibire, a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba. I am looking to carry out research on the integration experiences of Nigerian immigrant families and children in Canadian schools.

As we know, Nigeria is the most populous African Nation with a population of over 200 million people. Nigeria also happens to be a top source country for economic migrants to Canada many of whom intentionally migrate with the purpose of giving their children a better education and life chances. They also are the largest population of Black African immigrants in Canada.

However, most of the research about the educational integration experiences of Black African immigrants focuses on those who are refugees, do not speak English or are English language learners, those that have limited western formal education disrupted schooling or schooling in a language other than English. Given Nigeria's colonial history, many Nigerians in Canada do not fit into this demographic (meaning they are not refugees, they speak English and are highly educated; defined as having at least a post-secondary education). Most of the research that has been carried out about the experiences of Black African immigrants, therefore, does not reflect the experiences of Nigerians as a distinct population. That is why I have set out to explore the experiences of Nigerian immigrants as a distinct population.

Why is this research important?

Schools are the first point of socialization into Canadian society for many immigrant children and the extent to which schools are able to successfully integrate immigrant children has real implications for their

Nigerian Families' Integration into Schools in Canada

feelings of belonging and eventual success within Canadian society. While there is no universal definition for integration, *Integration* in this research refers to how immigrant families are welcome into educational spaces, made aware of the structures and workings of the school, and how they are made to feel a sense of belonging within the schoolcommunity. The schooling experience may also be particularly alienating for black children whose phenotype immediately places them on the margins and puts them at greater risk for bullying, dropout, and referral to special education services amongst others. Also, effective partnerships between parents and schools have been found to lead to positive outcomes for children. Therefore, it is important to understand how schools are making space for various identities in Canada. For this research, I am seeking participants who:

- are Nigerian parents and first-generation immigrants (that is they must have immigrated from Nigeria to Canada)
- have at least one child in the early years (K-6, or 5-11 years old)
- have at least one child in the early years that has attended school in Canada for at least a term and no longer than 3 years by the time of signing the consent form.

Participants in this study will participate in Journaling and two 60 to 90-minute interviews via Zoom.

Participation is voluntary, participants can withdraw at any time, and there are no negative consequences to withdrawing. Any data they have provided will be destroyed. I will be conducting the interview via Zoom and will be asking questions relating to their experiences and perception of their child(ren)'s experiences of integrating into the education system in Canada. A gift of a \$25 e-gift card will be sent to participants after the second interview as compensation for their participation.

While there are no direct benefits to the participants, the results of the research may prove helpful in recognizing elements of the experience of Nigerian immigrant children and families that may inform schools/teachers' practices and approaches to enhance their educational

Nigerian Families' Integration into Schools in Canada

experiences. This research may also prove helpful in understanding the unique challenges Nigerian immigrant children and families face in Canadian schools.

If you are interested in participating in this research or know anyone who is you can reach out to me at my email address: sannianh@myumanitoba.ca.

This research has been approved by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact the Human Ethics Coordinator at 204-474-7122 or humanethics@umanitoba.ca. or the research supervisor: Dr. Melanie Janzen, Associate Professor, University of Manitoba, Melanie.Janzen@umanitoba.ca, **Phone:** [REDACTED]

Thank you for your time and I look forward to hearing from you.

Appendix J

Email (to be sent to those who are not chosen to take part in the study)

Thank you for your interest in my study.

Unfortunately, I have reached the required number of participants that I require for my research and so will not be able to take any more participants.

Thank you again for your interest.

Kind Regards

Hafizat S-A

Appendix K



University
of Manitoba

Research Ethics and Compliance

Human Ethics - Fort Garry
208-194 Dafoe Road
Winnipeg, MB R3T 2N2
T: 204 474 8872
humanethics@umanitoba.ca

PROTOCOL APPROVAL

To: Hafizat Sanni-Anibire (Advisor: Melanie Janzen)
Principal Investigator

From: Zana Lutfiyya, Chair
Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB)

Re: Protocol # E2020:090 (HS24468)
Nigerian Immigrant Families' Experiences of Integrating into
Canadian Schools

Effective: December 4, 2020

Expiry: December 4, 2021

Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB) has reviewed and approved the above research. ENREB is constituted and operates in accordance with the current *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans*.

This approval is subject to the following conditions:

- i. Approval is granted for the research and purposes described in the application only.
- ii. Any modification to the research or research materials must be submitted to ENREB for approval before implementation.
- iii. Any deviations to the research or adverse events must be submitted to ENREB as soon as possible.
- iv. This approval is valid for one year only and a Renewal Request must be submitted and approved by the above expiry date.
- v. A Study Closure form must be submitted to ENREB when the research is complete or terminated.
- vi. The University of Manitoba may request to review research documentation from this project to demonstrate compliance with this approved protocol and the University of Manitoba Ethics of Research Involving Humans.

Appendix L



Research Ethics
and Compliance

Human Ethics
208-194 Dafoe Road
Winnipeg, MB
Canada R3T 2N2
Phone +204-474-7122
Email: humanethics@umanitoba.ca

PROTOCOL APPROVAL

TO: **Hafizat Sanni-Anibire** (Advisors: M. Janzen & Z. Lutfiyya)
Principal Investigator

FROM: **Shaelyn Strachan, Vice Chair**
Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB)

Re: **Protocol #E2019:115 (HS23388)**
The Experiences of Nigerian Immigrant Parents in Winnipeg Schools

Effective: December 3, 2019

Expiry: December 3, 2020

Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB) has reviewed and approved the above research. ENREB is constituted and operates in accordance with the current *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans*.

This approval is subject to the following conditions:

1. Approval is granted for the research and purposes described in the application only.
2. Any modification to the research or research materials must be submitted to ENREB for approval before implementation.
3. Any deviations to the research or adverse events must be submitted to ENREB as soon as possible.
4. This approval is valid for one year only and a Renewal Request must be submitted and approved by the above expiry date.
5. A Study Closure form must be submitted to ENREB when the research is complete or terminated.
6. The University of Manitoba may request to review research documentation from this project to demonstrate compliance with this approved protocol and the University of Manitoba *Ethics of Research Involving Humans*.

Funded Protocols:

- Please e-mail a copy of this Approval, identifying the related UM Project Number, to the Research Grants Officer at researchgrants@umanitoba.ca

Appendix M

Table 3:

Examples of coding

| THEMES | DATA INSTANCES | NOTES |
|---|---|--|
| Belonging (Through friendship) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • So, she was always with them, with the older... with an adult instead of being with her friends and you know, maybe sometimes you're driving past, or walking past, you're feeling somehow because you feel like they've not really made friends, or they're trying to, you know, and it's not really happening. For my son, I'm not sure he had that much of a struggle although he's also had his challenges, when he felt like you know maybe they didn't really like him, but typically he is someone who...if he sees some boys, young guys playing basketball somewhere he'll just go join them, you know. It doesn't matter if he knows them, or doesn't know them, but yeah, but for my daughter it was that third term, that clique being formed, friendships made, so she kind of struggled trying to adjust herself at that and you know..." (Mrs. Nkem) | Friendships were a source of tension and a potential facilitator of belonging |
| Deficit conceptions of children: as colour-blind/unaware) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I mean I didn't like that, they are four-year-olds, why should anybody be thinking about color at this age, they should be colour-blind right? But I don't know who brought that into [daughter's friend's] head. But I was worried about it because I heard so much about bullying and racism..." (Mrs. Huwa) • "but another thing is that maybe when they grow a little bit more, they will tend to understand...maybe there are some racial differences or racial bias. But for now, they really don't notice that, they don't know that because everyone is treated the same way." (Mr. Lanre) • "See this idea that these [children] are immature, irrational, inexperienced, you know...whatever way they do define them here [Canada], it's not consistent with their lived experience. I mean they have insights | Deficit conceptions of children were both upheld and challenged by participants. Also, in Mr. Lanre's comment is the discourse of diversity and equal treatment... |

Accent

- into some things. Yeah, they may not have the facility of language to express it but the fact that...to think that they don't have insights into the environment, into what people are doing, into what people are not doing, that's not true." (Mr. Seyi)
- "So, the following morning I was getting him ready for school, and in the process I had said would you kindly go over some of the things we have been talking about in the last few days about your presentation? And he would not go on, and I just said why? After a little more prodding, he then said, "they wouldn't understand me". How do you mean they wouldn't understand you? "They wouldn't understand me because I don't speak like them". And I said oh! It's a question of accent. He said "yeah" so it was a teachable moment for me as I said it was something that...if something was coming you just have to be prepared. So, we had that conversation, which was tailored towards, you know what...accent doesn't define you. Again, everybody has [an] accent. What we do is...and I asked him, when they speak to you, do you understand them? He said "yes", and I said you also must speak in the accent you understand, and in time they will understand you...you know. You don't need to feel very bad..." (Mr. Seyi)

Accent was a recurring theme in participants' responses and while participants did not report that their children were bullied because if this – their children were themselves conscious of it.