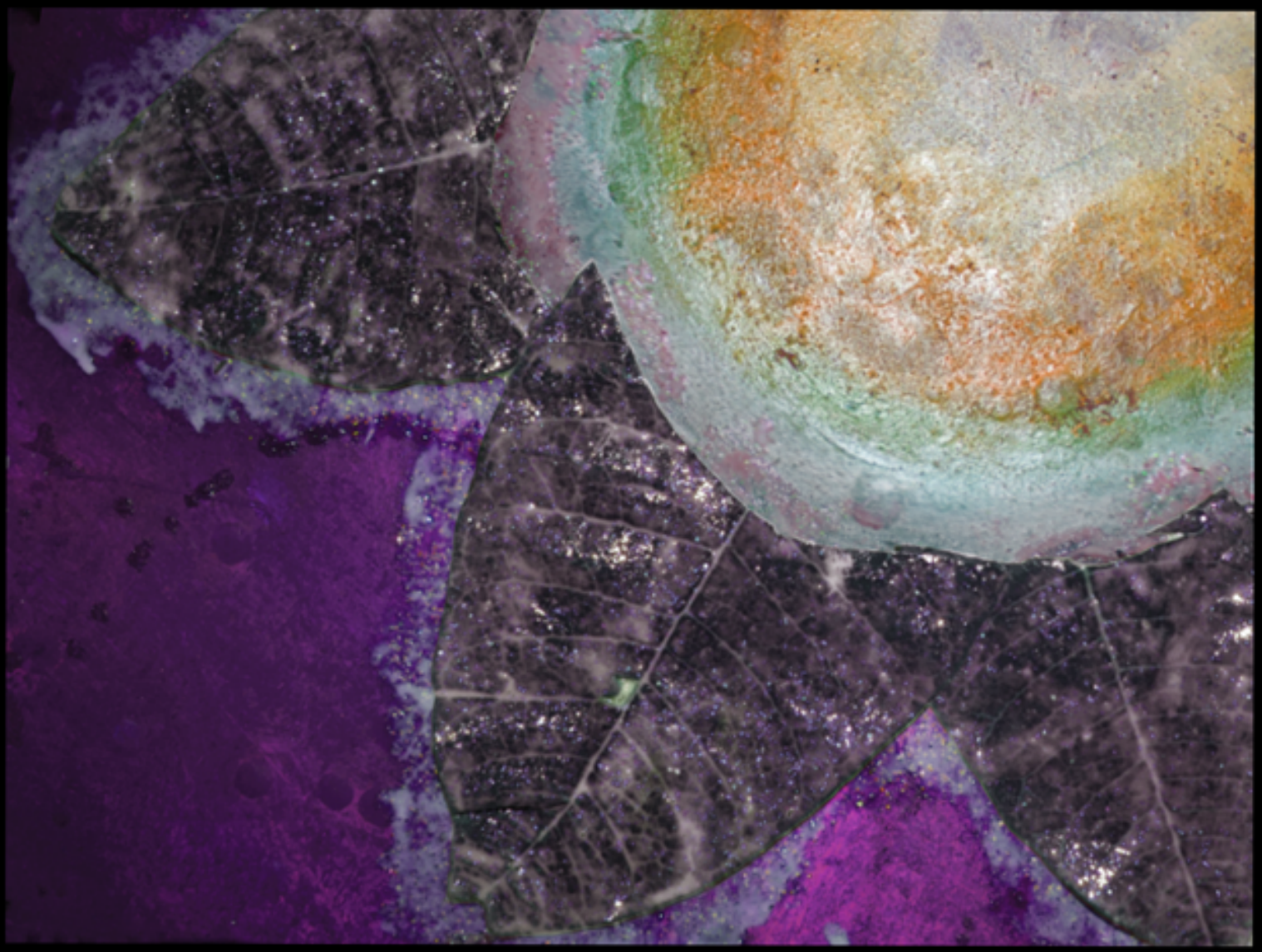
Black lives, White city:

Exploring entanglements of race, place, and identity, amongst young Afro-Australians in Melbourne

Solomon Charles



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School of Geography, Earth and Atmospheric Sciences
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Declaration

This thesis is submitted to the School of Geography, Earth and Atmospheric Sciences, University of Melbourne in partial fulfilment of the requirement of completing the Bachelor of Arts (Degree with Honours). The work contained in this thesis is the result of original research, and has not been submitted in whole, or in part, for a higher degree to this or any other university or similar institution

Signature:

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Abstract

African Diaspora Australians are a distinct diversification of Melbourne's urban multicultural landscape. Extremely heterogeneous but homogenised through racial categorisation, young second generation Australians of African Diasporan descent – Afro-Australians – are beginning to reshape racial geographies of the White-dominated settler-colonial city. Recent research into young Afro-Australian senses of identity and place in the city have focused on various forms of racism and deleterious outcomes associated with 'fitting in' with White-dominated society. Adjacently, recent studies into Melbourne's geographies of racial exclusion have deployed narrow, discrimination-centric conceptual frameworks and quantitative methodologies which obscure the Euro-colonial White supremacist foundations of racism. Though qualitative investigations into Afro-Australian experiences have begun to illuminate entanglements between race, place, and the Australian city, most researchers have thus far focused their scope on the 'New' African Diaspora (recent dispersion from the continent following the post-colonial era). This thesis uses a combination of qualitative methods – semi-structured interviews, autoethnographic field journaling, and (semi-)participatory observations – to explore interrelated processes of racialisation, cultural hybridisation, group/individual identity formation, and conceptualisations of place(-making) amongst young Afro-Australians from diverse ethno-national backgrounds. Though informed by a wide range of literatures, this thesis particularly brings decolonial literature and Critical Race Theory to intersect with Geography's spatial tools to form the overarching conceptual framework. Honing in on the city's entangled racial and cultural geographies, this research examines everyday and community-based urban activities that interweave diasporic *imagined* landscapes with *lived-in*, material urban environments. This thesis also builds on recent framings of the Australian city as a landscape comprised of overlapping Black geographies by investigating some of the socio-cultural interconnectivities among different Black racialised groups: Afro/Indigenous/Melanesian.

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1 Introduction

As an Afro-Caribbean descendant living in Melbourne, I often ponder on the great distances my African ancestors have travelled across space and time. Stories of migration – coerced, voluntary, and sometimes both simultaneously – are difficult to comprehend. Fragmented oral histories of trans-Atlantic transportation aboard a slave ship to Britain's plantation islands (through Bridgetown then Port of Spain), post-war Windrush migration to the imperial metropole (London), and the leap across Eurasia to a far-flung satellite of the Commonwealth (Melbourne). Centuries in diaspora have left me wondering if my roots still trace back to the fertile plains on which the seed of my family tree first germinated or whether the cumulative wounds inflicted by colonialism have severed my connection back to the red earth from which I once came.

Growing up in Melbourne's inner-south, I found myself isolated in White social surroundings, made painfully aware of my Blackness from a very early age. Other children frequently excluded me on racial grounds, taunting me with racially-charged catchphrases that had seeped into the playground; 'Black people don't belong in Australia' and the like. My father, out of love and protection, reinforced a sense that my Blackness was a burden: 'You must work harder', 'You mustn't ever step out of line', 'You are always visible'. These words have served me well over the years, yet they also produced a reclusiveness; I retreated into myself, attempting to evade the gaze of the White city I call home. Upon reflection, I now attribute my intense fascination with the city's geographies and my place within them to my socially withdrawn sensibility. I was trained to be an observer, watching the way people's behaviours shifted in my presence as I traversed different social and spatial contexts.

My childhood curiosities were nourished by my mother – who grew up semi-rurally– who created a horticultural paradise in the communal back garden of our subdivided 1930s flat. A narrow space betwixt the brick shed and neighbouring monolithic apartment blocks were

filled with purple beans; drought-stricken grass was torn-up and replaced with raised beds fashioned from urban debris; the figs tree and grapevines formed a canopy that softened the summer sun. My home was a forested micro-geography in and amongst the inner-city concrete jungle. A place where my imagination roamed, as I hopped the back fence to climb the brick terraces of my neighbours' apartments (often to their displeasure).

A Saturday ritual cherished by my father, sister, and I was our trip to the Prahran market. The fun began the moment we hopped into the car. My father would burn CDs, making compilations of our favourite family sounds. I was too young to recognise it back then, but this was his way of passing on Black culture. His selections were intentional, choosing tracks with positive, though often complex or contradictory narratives, whilst keeping things playful and attuned to the moment; switching between Bob Marley, Public Enemy, Marvin Gaye, Shaggy, et cetera. The market was where we collected ingredients for my father's signature Carib dishes. We always had to catch up with favourite stallholders before purchasing the final, and most important part of any good dish: Fish.

As I grew up, my curiosities about race and the city grew with me. Frustrated by my sense of isolation and confused by a city simultaneously providing me with sensorial joys (the fragrances of the market, convivial encounters, a seemingly endless playground to explore) and also degrading racial marginalisation that distorted my sense of self. The contradictions of my Black experience in the city compelled me to reach beyond my own experiences. I became endlessly inquisitive about the experiences of other, different African Diaspora Australians who, like me, have been shaped by this city. Are we alike? What makes us different? If the suburb across from me has a completely different social atmosphere, then how might a Black person – perhaps the child of a refugee from the Horn of Africa or an economic migrant from the Western Sahel – who grew up on the other side of the city understand race, experience place? I actively sought out friendships with other young African Diaspora Australians, and in doing so I discovered that I was not as alone as I first thought. If fact, others were seeking to build connections too. I quickly found myself part of a vibrant network of young African Diaspora Australians. Complementing my new social ties, I also pursued a greater understanding of my experiences through literature: Black literature.

Black literature interweaves critical (anti-colonial, anti-racist, anti-Western) and creative (poetry, essay anthologies, historical fiction) approaches to knowledge production within and beyond the academy (see Akala, 2019; Baldwin & Mead, 1970; Clarke et al., 2019; Davis, 2011; Fanon, 1952/2008, 1961/2007; Gilmore, 2002; Gilroy, 1993; hooks, 1989; James, 1938/2001; Mbembe, 2021; McKittrick & Woods, 2007; Procter, 2000; Stein, 2004). It is a

project of political activism separate from the mainstream Western literary canon, committed to dismantling racist epistemologies (re)produced by White supremacist, Euro-colonial institutions (Gates Jr, 2016). Black literature (self-)represents and (re)articulates the Black condition outside the entrapments of White supremacy, simultaneously revealing ontologies of Euro-colonial domination that have (and continue to) shape the Black condition. Black literature is also a practice – a *doing* – of (re)imagination, creating new, non-hierarchical, non-essentialised, pluralistic, and embodied understandings of what it means to be Black in everyday contexts (Clarke et al., 2019; Gilroy, 1993; McKittrick & Woods, 2007; Procter, 2000; Stein, 2004; Télémaque, 2021). This builds on Frantz Fanon's mid-century (1952/2008, 1961/2007) works that are widely regarded as the seminal texts of the decolonial genre (see Agathangelou, 2016; Fairchild, 1994; Tuck & Yang, 2012). Recently, Black scholars (particularly Geographers) have engaged with critical Indigenous and decolonial literatures to cooperatively imagine and advocate for futures beyond Euro-colonial hegemony (see Daigle & Ramírez, 2019; Estes et al., 2021; Hawthorne, 2019; Loperena, 2021; Mbembe, 2021).

Though Black literature has provided me with a theoretical toolbox and often guided me through my own racial struggles, it is largely situated with an Atlantic context. As a Euro-colonial society, Australia shares many qualities with its North American and British counterparts, namely, White supremacy and multicultural cities (Hage, 1998, 2002). However, Australia – specifically Melbourne – is a Black multicultural landscape comprised of Indigenous, Melanesian, and African Diaspora groups (Aboagye, 2018). The dynamics between Black racialised groups and co-constitutive effects on identity are under-investigated, and beyond the scope of Atlantic Black literatures.

My lived experience, flourishing connections with other African Diaspora Australians, fascination with Urban Geography, and engagement with Atlantic Black literature converge to form the underlying motivation for my research. All of this is compounded by the recent recognition of African Diaspora Australians as a distinct diversification of the Melbourne's multicultural landscape (Han & Budarick, 2018; Majavu, 2020).

African Diaspora Australians have shifted from being an obscure, largely unrecognised culturally eclectic group of first generation migrants, to a more cohesive identity group that is reshaping the city's racial geographies (Gebrekidan, 2018; Hersi et al., 2020; Mapedzahama & Kwansah-Aidoo, 2013). Be it through racially-charged media attention (Gaffey, 2019; Majavu, 2020), Maxine Beneba Clarke's (eds, 2019) *Growing Up African in Australia* installation in Black Inc Book's popular youth-orientated *Growing Up* series, or through everyday encounters across Melbourne's rapidly expanding migrant enclaves (Khan, 2014). African Diasporans

have been part of the Australians story since the very beginning of the settler-colonial project (Aboagye, 2018; Clarke et al., 2019), but academic focus has only begun expanding beyond niche discursive spaces within the two last decades (see Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2008; Gatwiri, 2019; Majavu, 2020; Meixner, 2021). This increase in interests corresponds with immense growth in populations of second generation African Diaspora Australians, who are presently a critically under-researched group, especially within Urban Geography (Majavu, 2020).

The unique heterogeneity, spatiality, and temporality of African diaspora is an additional point of inspiration for my research. Contemporary Urban Geographical studies have identified the emergence of African-centric identities that are diminishing ethnic and national (ethno-national) boundaries amongst diverse African migrants, and illuminating the Australian city as a site of social, cultural, and spatial confluence (Gebrekidan, 2018; Hersi et al., 2020). My own lived experience reflects these ideas. Academic focus on the 'New' African Diaspora (Falola, 2013) – like most interdisciplinary research into the African Diaspora in Australia (see Gebrekidan, 2018; Kalemba, 2021; Mapedzahama & Kwansah-Aidoo, 2013; Udah, 2013) – raises questions about the social dynamics and potential for collective identity formation between young second generation 'New' African Diasporan Australians and 'Old' African Diasporan Australians, who encounter each other throughout everyday urban life and are located within the same racial category.

The distinction between the New and Old attends to the temporally protracted nature of the African Diaspora. The Old Diaspora typically describes the descendants of African slaves in the Americas and Europe, whereas the New Diaspora generally refers to Africans who have left the continent in the post-colonial era, often due to conflict or to seek greater economic opportunities in the Global North (Falola 2013). African Diasporan Australians from vastly different ethno-national and diasporic contexts encounter each other, form connections with each other, and are racialised together across Melbourne's White-dominated multicultural landscape (Mapedzahama & Kwansah-Aidoo, 2013). Some may have been born in Africa and moved to Australia as children, others may have ancestors who were transported to the Caribbean over three hundred years ago and parents then born in Britain.

Acknowledging the diversity amongst African Diaspora Australians, particularly those whose connection to African cultures have been erased or hybridised beyond recognition, I describe African Diaspora Australians with the term 'Afro-Australian' throughout this thesis, rather than 'African-Australian'. This term does not replace 'African-Australian'/'African Australian', which broadly represents New African Diasporan Australians and their sense of

connection to the African continent (Gebrekidan, 2018). 'Afro-Australian' is not yet widespread in academic discourse, though is gaining popularity within social contexts amongst Afro-Australian communities. 'Afro' is commonly used to prefix other African Diaspora groups, particularly those with high levels of miscegenation or cultural hybridisation, such as Afro-Caribbeans (Hall, 1990). I use Afro-Australian to loosely describe both African Australians and Australians with African ancestry. My use of the term surfaces questions surrounding shared racial and cultural identity and the formation of new identities shaped by *lived-in* urban geographies.

This thesis begins by weaving understandings of Afro-Australian identity and senses of place in Melbourne from two angles: Racial identity and diasporic cultural hybridity. As Black settlers on Black Indigenous land, the racialisation of Afro-Australians is, first-and-foremost, informed by structures of racial oppression designed to expropriate, diminish, and control Indigenous peoples (Moreton-Robinson, 2015; Porter, 2018; Tuck & Yang, 2012). Melbourne is a social, cultural, political, and material assemblage of White settler coloniality (Porter, 2018). This city's racial geographies shape identity. Using a Critical Race Theory (CRT) and post-/decolonial frameworks, combined with Geography's spatial tools, I examine social and spatial processes that shape Afro-Australian conceptualisations of race. Diasporic cultural identities can be fractious, caused by simultaneous dislocation from one's *home* and *host*lands. Diasporans lack access to geographies from which 'authentic' ethno-national cultural identities can be drawn (Tölölyan, 1996). As Hall (1990) identified in the Caribbean, hybrid cultural identities have emerged, reflecting transnational, local, and colonial geographies/histories that co-constitute the cultural landscape. This thesis attends to processes of cultural hybridisation amongst ethno-nationally and diasporically diverse Afro-Australians.

My thesis responds to recent work published by the Monash Migration and Inclusion Centre (MMIC). This was racial discrimination-oriented, exclusion-focused quantitative research into Melbourne's racial geographies, mapping areas with concentrations of discriminatory or exclusionary attitudes and practices (Wickes et al., 2020). The MMIC report arguably obfuscates the socio-cultural and political structures that maintain such urban geographical arrangements (Bonilla-Silva, 2015; Lobo, 2014). Combining several qualitative methods to explore lived experiences of young Afro-Australians (including myself), my research draws attention to the complex, (re)imaginative, simultaneously degrading and joyful nature of Black life in the White-dominated city. This focus works to counter hegemonic knowledge production frameworks that obscures the multifaceted, unquantifiable dynamics between race, identity, Euro-colonialism, and everyday urban life (Amin, 2002; Lobo, 2010).

1.1 Research questions

1. To what extent is a shared identity emerging amongst young Afro-Australians from diverse ethno-national backgrounds, and what role does race play in this?

2. How does race shape young Afro-Australians' connections to place in the city?

3. How can analysis of Afro-Australian everyday urban life refine contemporary understandings of Melbourne's racial geographies?

1.2 Thesis structure

In Chapter Two, I review a range of critical (race, Indigenous, Australian multicultural), post-colonial/decolonial, diaspora, and Geographical (Urban, Cultural, non-/'more-than-representational') literature to establish this thesis' conceptual framework. Subsequently, I engage with a range of Afro-Australian and (mostly) Australian urban multicultural empirical studies which in their strengths and oversights provide direction for my research.

Chapter Three outlines my methodology. I use a variety of qualitative methods, mainly interviews, (semi-)participatory observations, and autoethnographic journaling to generate a 'thick description' (Ponterotto, 2006). I also discuss my methodological strategy, centring decolonial/anti-racist knowledge production.

In Chapter Four, I link Critical Race Theory (CRT) with Geography's spatial analytical tools to investigate the implications of social and spatial (socio-spatial) proximity to Whiteness and its effect on conceptualisations of Blackness. Attending to various conceptualisations of Blackness, I investigate common themes – particularly a sense of Otherness – and everyday acts of mutual recognition, investigating the formations of more cohesive racial identity.

Chapter Five examines the phenomenon of cultural identity hybridisation. My analysis draws attention to geographies of cultural entanglement amongst Afro-Australians in Melbourne. My investigation into cultural hybridity foregrounds Black identity as a potential convergence point wherein cultural exchange and reconfiguration occurs. I am cognisant of Australia's diverse Black cultural landscape (Aboagye, 2018) – Afro/Indigenous/Melanesian.

I explore potentials for cultural hybridity beyond the Afro context, examining race-contingent cultural intermingling across overlapping Black geographies.

In Chapter Six, I hone in on the relationship between racial dynamics and Afro-Australian connections to place across Melbourne. I examine the intricacies of everyday urban activities – the *doing-of-things* – that intertwine imagined and material landscapes to form new conceptualisations of the city. My analysis contrasts macro- and micro-scale understandings of place; looking at race-contingent perceptions of place and displacement across the cityscape, and investigating community-oriented place-making within micro-geographical contexts.

I draw conclusions from my findings in Chapter Seven, and examine my results in the contexts of Melbourne's racial geographic discourses, highlighting directions for future research. I weave together themes emergent from my research, and speculate on theoretical framings that work towards more nuanced understandings of young Afro-Australian's senses of shared identity and place in the city.

2 Literature review

2.1 Introduction

In recent decades, Black literature, Urban Geography, and a variety of critical multicultural and anti-/post-/decolonial studies have been busy building theoretical frameworks and empirically investigating the asymmetries (social, cultural, political, economic) and interconnections amongst race, place, identity in the city, and more broadly the nation-state (Allen et al., 2019; I. Ang, 2003; Bonilla-Silva, 2015; Daigle & Ramírez, 2019; Ferretti, 2019; Fincher & Iveson, 2008; Hage, 1998, 2002; Lobo, 2014, 2016; McKittrick & Woods, 2007; Moreton-Robinson, 2015; Porter, 2018). Geographers (particularly Black, Brown, Indigenous, and other subaltern Geographers) have honed in on the spatialities of racial and diasporic identities, examining the engagements between *lived-in* urban spaces and imagined, often transnational, geographies (see Amin, 2002; Jazeel & Legg, 2019; Lobo, 2010; McKittrick & Woods, 2007; Radcliffe, 2019). This review criss-crosses disciplinary boundaries to frame race, Euro-coloniality, and diasporic transnational imagining in the context of this thesis.

This literature review contains two-major sections. First, I establish this thesis' conceptual framework and key terms by drawing on a variety of theoretical works – Critical Race Theory (CRT), Indigenous/multiculturalism literature, post-/decolonial studies, 'more-than-representational' theory, Urban Geography, and adjacent fields to inform my understanding of racial/cultural identity, place, and the city. To navigate these literatures, I attend to a selection of theoretical contributions from each field's key authors, honing in on connections and shared concerns. Second, I critically review recent empirical research from Afro/African Australian and everyday/urban multiculturalism literatures. I discuss various theoretical, analytical, and methodological approaches to sketch out some of the limitations of current research and guide the empirical direction of this thesis.

2.2 Race and Diaspora

Race is integral to the foundations of European settler colonial societies and pre-figures contemporary geo-political arrangements that exploit the Global South (GS) to benefit the Global North (GN) (Erel et al., 2016; Estes et al., 2021; Hawthorne, 2019; Linley, 2018; Mills, 1999, 2017). Critical race theorists centre race as the Euro-colonial 'master tool' (Mills, 2017, p. 11) that justified/operationalised the domination of non-Europeans during the colonial era (Mills, 1999, 2017). The establishment of a racial hierarchy that envisaged White ascendancy categorised peoples of colour as 'sub-human' – exploitable, expropriat-able – to varying degrees, based on Euro-ascribed standards of 'civilisation' (Mills, 2017, p. 5). The bottom of this hierarchy was (and is) occupied by Black people – typified by 'the negro' (a beast-like creature) of West Africa – who were for centuries stolen, 'domesticated', sold, and purchased across the Atlantic, and transported as slaves to various European colonial projects (Fanon, 1952/2008; James, 1938/2001; Mills, 1999). Mills charts the conceptualisation of Euro-colonial White supremacy back to contractarian liberal philosophy (1999, 2017). Mills argues that leading White theorists of Western modernity (Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Kant) generally endorsed European expansionism into, and/or colonial rule over, non-Europeans territories by tacitly or explicitly approving of 'racial contracts' (Mills, 1999, 2017). These contracts were both literal and metaphorical, created and signed by White men to legitimise the racial domination of people of colour, such as: the 'carving up of Africa' at the 1884-1885 Berlin Conference, the expropriation contract, the slavery contract, or the colonial contract (Mills 2017, p. 5). Using a contractarian framework, Mills attributes contemporary race-based structural inequalities (global and local) to the West's ideological commitment to and (often forced) imposition of liberal philosophy.

Erel et al. (2016) expands on Mills' argument by underlining the (neo)colonial geo-political arrangements that reproduce a 'race-migration nexus'. This simultaneously destabilises the GS, causing many to flee (e.g. South Sudanese refugees to Australia), extract GS migrants' labour (e.g. the UK's post-war intake of Africa, Caribbean, and Asian migrants, see Procter, 2000), and marginalise them upon arrival (e.g. the relegation of African refugees to Perth's lower socio-economic status [SES] outer suburbs, see Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2008).

Popular 'colour-blind' fictions of racial equality, which frame people of colour as 'equal citizens' in society, obscure the still intact materiality of racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2015;

Mills, 1999, 2017). Building on Mills' critique, Bonilla-Silva's *New Direction in Critical Race Theory* attends to the 'psychology of racism' by explaining the 'role of culture and ideology' in the reproduction of racism (2015, p. 73). He argues that liberal interpretations of racism as 'irrational behaviour' (such as outbursts of discrimination) reinforces a 'common sense' view that racism is 'external to the structure of society' rather than institutionally and culturally ingrained (2017, p. 74). Bonilla-Silva's claims parallel Ahmed's (2007), Fanon's (1952/2008) and Frankenburg's (1993) assertions that contemporary racism operates as a socio-cultural regime privileging White raciality. Whiteness– the pre-eminence of White cultural practices and associated structural advantages – appoints itself to a position of racial neutrality (Ahmed 2007; Frankenburg, 1993). Whiteness manifests as an invisible, normalised 'superiority complex' that is conditioned through 'living in a White supremacist world' (De Bois cited by Bonilla-Silva 2015, p. 81). Whiteness structures social relations unequally, consequently reproducing psychologies of Black/coloured inferiority (Ahmed, 2007; Fanon, 1952/2008; Frankenburg, 1993). Living in proximity to Whiteness, accumulating Whiteness (by taking on White cultural and behavioural practices), but never *being* White confines Black/coloured people to the margins; lesser, Other, inferior (Ahmed, 2007; Bonilla-Silva 2015; Fanon 1952/2008). White supremacy constructs itself through inferiorising Black racialised peoples (Ahmed 2007; Fanon, 1952/2008).

Black inferiorisation is socially reproduced through enmeshing negative racial narratives with Afro identities. Taylor (1994) conceptulises identity as a dialogical construct defined by the acquisition of language and expression, which Appiah (2009/2020, 1994) metaphorically frames as identity 'narratives'. Appiah defines identity narratives as modes of behaviour that ascribe loose norms or models to those who are publicly recognised and recognise themselves as a part of a group identity (1994, p. 24). Taylor identifies two dialogical domains: the *intimate sphere* and the *public sphere*. In the former, dialogue takes place between the self and significant others (such as family, close friends, and cultural community); the latter refers to broader social environments (such as the street, school, or workplace). Applying a critical race framework, Appiah argues that Blackness is inferiorised by negative racial narratives that are reproduced socio-culturally, for instance, GN aid organisations representing Black Africans as desperately poor, or recent Australian media framings of young Africans as gang-affiliated criminals (see Costner & Kohli, 2018; Gaffey, 2019; Kaskure & Krivorotko, 2014; Majavu, 2020). However, Appiah also emphasises the power of anti-racist agency to collectively rescript Black narratives:

> An African American after the Black Power movement takes the old script of self-hatred, the script in which they are a nigger, and works, in community with others, to construct a series of positive Black life-scripts. In these life-scripts, being a Negro is recoded as being Black: and this requires, among other things, refusing to assimilate to White norms (1994, p. 25).

Taylor and Appiah's theorisations illuminate processes wherein individuals are socialised into identity categories, reproducing Black inferiority based on hegemonic socio-cultural norms, prefigured by Euro-colonial racial hierarchies, as aforementioned. Negotiating racial identity is inseparable from everyday life and cannot simply be ignored or forgotten, because it 'scripts' all social relations.

Whiteness operates possessively in the Australian settler colonial context, constructing itself as the national identity, as (illegitimate, colonial) sovereign of the Indigenous lands it occupies (Chiro, 2016; Hage, 1998, 2002; Jakubowicz, 2003; Moreton-Robinson, 2015). Hage's (1998) seminal text *White Nation* reveals how both liberal-progressive and nationalist-conservative discourses use Whiteness to retain dominance over increasingly multicultural society in an Australian context: politically, socially, culturally. Using a Bourdieu-ian analytical framework, Hage articulates Whiteness is a representational construct – a 'field' – of cultural/political power, (re)produced through everyday behaviours and public discourse. Whiteness possesses, manages, and marginalises Indigenous people and migrants of colour by delegitimising non-White identities and objectifying coloured bodies (Hage, 1998; Moreton-Robinson, 2015). For example, in the public debate about migration, White Australians 'ritualistically' argue over the quantity and quality of migrants based on increasingly vague ideas of cultural compatibility, national interests, and refugee intake quotas. This ostensibly frames migrants of colour as imported commodities which may (or not) culturally, demographically, politically, and economically enrich the White nation (Chiro, 2016; Hage, 1998, 2011). People of colour must work to be like the Whites – act like them, talk like them, look like them – while knowing White Australians are privileged in their ability to arbitrarily marginalise people of colour by reconfiguring the national field (e.g., the current flare-up of Sino-phobia) and are born into a position of default racial belonging (S. Ang & Colic-Peisker, 2021; Chiro, 2016; Hage, 1998). White-centric cultural belonging marginalises people of colour. Racially Othered by the White nation, people of colour are only allowed partial belonging, contingent on their willingness/capacity to assimilate into Whiteness.

In complex spaces of simultaneous inclusion and exclusion, people of colour form hybrid cultural identities across transnational geographies (I. Ang, 2003; Gilroy, 1993; Hall,

1990, 1993; McKittrick & Woods, 2007; Pieterse, 2001; Tölölyan, 1991, 1996). Founded by Tölölyan in 1991, the journal *Diaspora* revitalised diasporan discourses by reimagining transnationality in the post-colonial/globalised era (see Tölölyan 1991). Diaspora is a 'vocabulary of transnationalism' which questions the porosity of national boundaries, contending that the nation's perceived homogeneity is actually multicultural heterogeneity (Tölölyan 1991, p. 5). Hall (1993) and Tölölyan (1991, 1996) argue that diasporic transnationality destabilises narratives of the nation-state relying on a singular cohesive *imagined community* (also see Anderson, 1983). The racial/ethnic demographies of Anglo settler-colonial societies (Australia, Canada, the United States of America, New Zealand) and many Western European nations have 'diaspora-tised… beyond repair', becoming inextricably multi-ethnic/racial/cultural (Hall 1993, p. 356). However national projects still attempt to return to tradition, often through 'invented', imagined 'mythologies' of ethno-national 'White purity' (Hall 1993, p. 356). One major fallacy (among many) of 'traditionalist' ethno-nationalism is that racial exclusion actually encourages transnational imagined communities, because diasporic groups, like all groups, require stable cultural identities grounded in geographies of belonging, and will find/make them despite imposed constraints (Hall, 1993; Tölölyan, 1991, 1996).

Shifting to the Atlantic context, racialisation can be understood as the binding agent of the African Diaspora (Gilroy, 1993; Hall, 1990; McKittrick & Woods, 2007; Tölölyan, 1996). The uprooting and forced movement of twelve million (de Haas et al., 2019, p. 96) 'immensely heterogeneous' enslaved Africans (now more than 175 million Afro-Americans) to the United States, Latin America, and the Caribbean, was operationalised by race, maintaining a collective, mutually recognisable identity (Gilroy 1993; Tölölyan, 1996, p. 12-13). This is reinforced by the homogenising racial gaze of White plantation-/nation-states, and shared experiences of being colonised, enslaved, and marginalised (Akala, 2019; Gilroy, 1993; McKittrick, 2011; Tölölyan, 1996). African Diasporic imaginings of (an African) homeland are largely mythological (Tölölyan, 1996). Rather than maintaining cultural identities through 'authentic' ethno-cultural practices, which are inaccessible – connections forcibly severed through the processes of slavery – African Diasporans are bound by collective practices of cultural hybridisation (Gilroy, 1993; Hall, 1990; Procter, 2000; Tölölyan, 1996). This thinking draws on the geographies of both *home* and *host*lands to create new forms of African cultural identity and conceptualisations of what it means to be African, fashioned for the lived experiences of being in the Americas.

Gilroy's (1993) *Black Atlantic* highlights the inadequacies of defining African Diaspora in exclusively 'transnational' terms, though is still a popular and influential reference. The complexities of African Diasporan identities transcend the construct of the nation-state (not least because nation-states did not exist in Africa when the Diaspora began), and its imagined community spans wide-ranging global geographical contexts, yet is locally reproduced in Black territories across (mostly) Euro-colonial nations (Gilroy, 1993). Hall (1990) refines this point by exploring the 'presences' that co-constitute Caribbean cultural identity. He sketches out three geographies (presences): Africa, America, Europe, that are expressed linguistically, musically, and kinaesthetically in bodily movement throughout Caribbean culture. The experience of being-together as diverse Caribbeans, shaped by these three presences, produces simultaneously hybrid and cohesive identities.

In Australian, hybrid identities are more prominent amongst second generation migrants – individuals who are the children of migrants born overseas or migrated during early childhood – than their parents or adult migrants (I. Ang, 2003; Clarke et al., 2019; Skrbiš et al., 2007). Growing up in a nation that actively Others identities of colour gives primacy to race and/or ethnicity above any sense of 'Australian-ness' (Skrbiš et al., 2007, p. 263). Thomas further underlines this 'investment' in racial/ethnic identities by racially Othered youth (2009, p. 8), reinforcing second-generation identity arrangement with *Afro* ahead of *Australian*. Existing between home and hostlands – simultaneously in a state of belonging and un-belonging – folds multiple identities into young Australians of colour as they transition into adulthood. Youth is a 'transitional' period between childhood and adulthood, in which young people learn how to articulate their identities (Evans, 2008; Valentine, 2003). The malleable, creative, and transitional framing of youth (particularly Afro-Australian youth) enables nuanced understandings of identity (Jeffrey, 2010). Young second generation migrants – grappling with cultural, ethnic, and racial plurality in their everyday lives – are creative agents, forming new, hybrid identities to satiate needs of belonging (Best, 2011; Evans, 2008; Skrbiš et al., 2007; Thomas, 2009).

2.3 Making place in the (colonial) city

Urban Geography is, as the name suggests, concerned with the city and its inhabitants. I am fascinated by the idea of the city, what compose its key qualities and how contested metrics

might measure them. Unlike many Urban Geographers, Urban Planners ascribe to prescriptive taxonomies defining what is and is not *urban,* mostly based on material characteristics: population size and density, administrative boundaries, economic arrangements, and so forth (Frey & Zimmer, 2001). I conceptualise the city as an assemblage of coexisting, overlapping, and interconnected material and imagined territories in which urban inhabitants locate themselves through embodied senses of place (Calvino, 1978; Jacobs, 1961; Massey, 1999; McFarlane, 2019, 2021). I wish to draw attention to how embodied states of *being* work to territorialise urban *space* transforming it into *place* in the city.

Bourdieu defined place (through his concept of *habitus*) as the embodiment of one's lived environment, grounded in practices that 'connect social structure and agency in a dialectical relationship between culture, structure, and power' (Rooksby & Hillier, 2017, p. 20). I suggest that Grosz (2008) understands place similarly, though she expresses these ideas through *territory*, framed as demarcated, finite space that is 'calculable, measurable, and mappable', comprised of an 'inside' domain separate from the 'outside' world (Grosz, 2008, pp. 17–18). Like Rooksby and Hillier who spatially framed Bourdieu's line of thinking, Grosz describes processes of territorialisation as everyday embodied practices – a *doing* – of imagining or altering a space to locate oneself within it. These processes can be understood as 'non-aesthetic'/non-representational artistic practices (Grosz, 2008). People (re)territorialise space to suit ever-changing needs (be they social, cultural, political, economic, or beyond), creating bespoke 'inside' domains (Grosz 2008).

Since the mid 1990s, Geographers (particularly Cultural Geographers) have investigated territory/place(-making) through the processes joining material and imagined landscapes using non-/'more-than-representational' theoretical frameworks (Amin & Thrift, 2002; Carvalho & Tolia-Kelly, 2001; Lorimer, 2005, 2005; Thrift, 1996). A more-than-representational framework engages with the same concerns as non-aesthetic/non-representational thinking (Grosz, 2008; Hillier & Rooksby, 2005; Thrift, 1996), but reconfigures it to highlight the vibrant, creative, generative forces of this theory, expanding rather than limiting (Lorimer, 2005). More-than-representational thinking concerns 'fleeting encounters', 'embodied movements', 'affective intensities', 'sensuous dispositions' (Lorimer, 2005, p. 84). This framework allows me to attend to the processes through which people understand place by (re)territorialising, engaging the senses, drawing together the body, the material world, and the imagination (Carvalho & Tolia-Kelly, 2001; Hayes-Conroy & Hayes-Conroy, 2010; Lorimer, 2005; Massey, 2004). Building from this and returning to the idea that people (re)territorialise space as needed, identity is central to transforming space into place

(Amin, 2002; Amin & Thrift, 2002; Grosz, 2008). Likewise, place itself moulds identities, forming a co-constitutional back-and-forth between world and self, between human and material (Lobo, 2016; Massey, 2004). For example, a graffiti artist creates a sense of place through the representational and creative work of painting the Aboriginal flag on an elevated highway pylon, at the same time, the atmosphere, smells, sounds, trees, birds, water flowing through the adjacent urban stream, intertwines the body with the (im)material components of place. This interaction between artist and space casts new imaginings of the now-altered landscape. Drawing together (re)territorialisation and more-than-representational thinking emphasises the affective, sensuous, and embodied natures of place, particularly as people (re)configure spaces into more comprehensible, familiar geographies (Grosz, 2008; Lorimer, 2005; Massey, 2004; Thrift, 1996).

In contrast to Cultural Geography, Urban Geography literature tends to confine place-making dynamics to a rigid, materially-focused definition. Place-making is typically described as a top-down urban design strategy that physically alters the city to meet sets of pre-determined social, cultural, political, or economic goals (see for example Fincher et al., 2016 and Freestone & Wiesel, 2016). Place-making has yet to be retrieved from the 'Geography-Planning nexus' (Head & Rutherfurd, 2021, p. 3) that has shallowed the concept. Territory/(re)territorialisation is a more versatile and appropriate expression of place/place-making because it is easily expressed as a verb, adverb, and noun – (re)territorialise, territorially, territory – describing different people's senses of place, articulating processes of making and unmaking. Friedmann (2017) and Garbin's (2014) definitions of place-making frame active (re)territorialisations of space performed in everyday contexts by the city's inhabitants, emphasising the creative agencies of marginalised groups. I draw on Cultural Geographic literature in an Urban Geographic context to conceptualise place-making as an act of (re)territorialisation. People converge and territorialise space to suit their everyday needs, materially and imaginatively (re)constructing the city.

Fincher and Iveson's (2008) concepts of *redistribution, recognition,* and *encounter* illustrate the social, cultural, and political processes through which different groups co-create and engage with the city. Ideally, the recognition of different group identities (race, gender, class, sexuality) would enable the 'just redistribution' of urban resources (school, transports, public space, formal/informal civic and cultural centres) to meet the specific needs of the city's diverse inhabitants (Fincher & Iveson, 2008). Encounter is framed through interactions between individuals or groups occurring at local places: streets, cafes, markets, parks (Fincher & Iveson, 2008, p. 171). These are moments wherein diverse groups peer into each other's

imaginaries of place, interconnecting different territories in everyday contexts (Anderson, 2004; Fincher, 2003). Anderson (2004) refers to sites of sustained encounter as 'cosmopolitan canopies', shared places I understand to be territorialised by diverse peoples as they engage with each other and cityscape. Broadly, encounter links different fragments of the urban environment, creating/maintaining cohesion across the city's socio-cultural landscape.

However, cities in general – Australian cities specifically – are not passive entities of settlement, inclusion, or multicultural embrace. Guha argues that modern histories of empire are lived and acted out in settler-colonial cities (cited by Jazeel & Legg, 2019, p. 11), privileging its architects: White Australians in this project's context (Porter, 2018). Histories of efforts to exterminate Black Aboriginal peoples are still built into the present-day structure of the city, reproducing processes and outcomes of violent marginalisation (Porter, 2018; Tuck & Yang, 2012; Wolfe, 2006). Tuck and Yang's foundational essay *Decolonisation is not a Metaphor* presses this point:

> Settler colonialism is different from other forms of colonialism in that settlers come with the intention of making a new home on the land, a homemaking that insists on settler sovereignty over all things in their new domain… Settlers make Indigenous land their new home and source of capital… [This] disruption of Indigenous relationships to land represents a profound epistemic, ontological, cosmological violence. This violence is not temporally contained in the arrival of the settler but is reasserted each day of occupation (2012, p. 5).

They parallel Wolfe's argument that 'settler colonisation is structure rather than an event' (2006, p. 390). Continual practices of Indigenous-led unsettling (reterritorialisation) are required to decolonise land occupied by settler-colonial regimes (Tuck & Yang, 2012).

The Australian city is an assemblage of colonial territories influencing how the city is used, and normative imaginings of place (Jazeel, 2011; Lobo, 2016; McFarlane, 2019; Porter, 2018). This is reinforced by everyday practices, for example, using colonial naming schemes in conversation to describe a location. Hegemonic White settler territoriality marginalises Black/Indigenous peoples (and other subaltern peoples) to peripheral urban spaces, restricting their ability to make their own territory. As such, subaltern peoples are forced to inhabit oppressive urban territories until they are able to (re)territorialise fragments of the city to meet their own ends (Clayton, 2011; Jazeel & Legg, 2019; McFarlane, 2021; Radcliffe, 2019). This project is curious about how new Black Afro-Australian settlers are placed and place themselves in Australian settler colonial city.

2.4 Afro-Australian literature

In the past two decades, interdisciplinary research conducted by Afro-Australian scholars has investigated the African Diaspora experience in Australia, focusing on race, racism, identity, and belonging. These small but rapidly emerging ethnographies predominantly uses CRT frameworks, complemented by multicultural, critical Indigenous, and decolonial literatures (Clarke et al., 2019; Hersi et al., 2020; Kalemba, 2021; Mapedzahama et al., 2018, 2018; Mapedzahama & Kwansah-Aidoo, 2013, 2017; Udah, 2013; Udah & Singh, 2018). Mostly Atlantic theoretical frameworks are imported and refit to the Afro-Australian context; though in turn Afro-Australian research is increasingly exported, appearing in the UK-based journal *Race and Class* (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2008). Many recent works have been published through a dedicated journal, the *Australasian Review of African Studies*, which has accrued an international readership.

Mapedzahama and Kwansah-Aidoo surface Afro perspectives, exploring racialised belonging and the displacement of Black Africans in Australia. They argue that 'racism is systemic' in Australian society, 'embodied in the way we "normally" conduct ourselves and our business in everyday life' (Kwansah-Aidoo & Mapedzahama, 2018b, p. 89). Using an *everyday racism* framework across the body of their collaborative research enables 'an exploration of the experience of Black migrants in an environment where the discussion of racism is often silenced', highlighting the 'interconnected histories of Indigenous Australians and other Black subjects' (Kwansah-Aidoo & Mapedzahama, 2018a, p. 84, 85). Mapedzahama and Kwansah-Aidoo's research specifically focuses on the ascription of 'migrant status' to 'new' (i.e. non-Indigenous) Black bodies, exploring complicated senses of belonging in a nation that Others and inferiorises Blackness. They contend that Blackness manifests as a 'burden' that distorts Afro-Australian identities to a point where people are 'unable to recognise themselves' (2017; 2018a p. 93). Belonging is framed as a complex negotiation conditioned by everyday racism.

Gebrekidan's (2018) investigation of young 'African-Australian' identity foregrounds Blackness as the connective tissue between diverse second generation African migrants. Shared experiences of racialisation as well as dislocation from *home*land and ethno-national culture are main factors compelling young African-Australians to adopt race-focused identities centring 'Africaness'. This study identifies a research imperative for greater investigation into second generation, race-focused, Afro-Australian hybridity. Gebrekidan's participant sample

was mostly from a single geographic context, The Horn of Africa (Somalia/Somaliland, Ethiopia, Djibouti, and Eritrea), limiting the work's broader claims about 'African-Australian' identity and representation. The study does not address spatial contexts of where participants live, work, socialise, et cetera, presenting an opportunity to research the places wherein identity formation is situated and conditions it is enabled by.

Hersi et al. (2020) examine the local geographies of 'Afro-cosmopolitanism' in Moorooka, Brisbane. Their place-based approach sketches out Black spaces wherein Africans become 'locals' and 'hosts' to White Australians who enter the African-dominated 'migrant hub'. This study emphasises the everyday encounters that highlight a reconfigured socio-cultural landscape in which White Australians are reframed as 'visitors', hosted by the local Africans. This study draws attention to emergent pan-African identities, which in the context of my thesis I understand as (re)territorialisation, creating Black place within a White settler-colonial nation. I am interested in the nature of everyday practices that have established Afro-Australian territory, and how this might function in Melbournian contexts.

Afro-Australian literature seems intrigued by Afro and Indigenous connections. Two main research angles address the uniquely Australian phenomenon of Black-settler/Black-Indigenous interaction: One focuses on the formation of robust relationships grounded in Blackness (see Aboagye, 2018), the other looks at Afro-Indigenous conflict (see Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2008). Aboagye describes the Black Australian 'bi-cultural' landscape as a 'confetti of many Black embodied and identifying people' – African Diaspora, Indigenous, Melanesian – connected through 'kinship' (Aboagye, 2018, p. 72). Illustrating rich histories of Afro-Indigenous miscegenation and cultural exchange, Aboagye describes how Black Australians (both Afro and Indigenous) gravitate towards each other's social spaces – exemplified in late-twentieth century Redfern (Sydney), Fitzroy (Melbourne), and South Brisbane, 'flourishing', 'culturally safe, Black spaces', hidden away from an 'overwhelmingly White Australia' (Aboagye, 2018, p. 75). In contrast, Colic-Peisker and Tilbury (2008) highlight Afro-Indigenous tensions in Perth's lower SES migrant centre, Mirrabooka. They focus on the hostilities between the (then) recently resettled South Sudanese refugees and local Indigenous communities, characterised by violent clashes between young men. Colic-Peisker and Tilbury's research suggests that perceived competition over 'material (housing, welfare, education) and symbolic (position in the racial hierarchy) resources' is responsible for conflict between the two communities (2008, p. 38). They argue that Afro-Indigenous tensions epitomise the 'strained race relations' of modern Australia (2008, p. 38). Both Aboagye and Colic-Peisker and Tilbury's accounts foreground race and space in marginalised urban

geographies, but their research presents contradictory findings. My project engages with understandings of everyday dynamics between *kinship* and *conflict*, as well as the in-betweens of these polar extremes.

2.5 A critical overview of urban multiculturalism studies

This section focuses on various multiculturalism studies to draw out compelling research interests, as well as various strengths and shortcomings of methodologies and/or theoretical frameworks. The Monash Migration and Inclusion Centre (MMIC) report: *Understanding the context of racial and cultural exclusivism: A study of Melbourne neighbourhoods* provides quantitative insights into spatial patterns of racial prejudice across Melbourne's suburbs (Wickes et al., 2020). The study constantly over-represents Afro-Australians as subjects of racial discrimination (Wickes et al., 2020, p. 37). MMIC findings show that 16.31 per cent of the White Melbourne population sampled hold 'feelings of high anger towards' African peoples, and 64.75 per cent believe immigrants should conform to 'Australian norms' (Wickes et al., 2020, pp. 38, 41). The MMIC quantifies racial tensions, however, such approaches diminish the racialised aspects of everyday urban life, contributing to the 'invisibility of race' and more subtle forms of racism and racialisation that are prevalent in mainstream urban multicultural discourses (Lobo, 2010, p. 86).

Lobo's Darwin-based investigations of everyday race relations on public transport suggest that living under White socio-cultural regimes 'tensions' racially differentiated bodies, arguing that racially 'tensioned' bodies are volatile (2014). Stresses being Othered cause emotional eruptions during minor altercations (such as spilling water on a nearby person while riding a crowded bus), releasing frustration as bodies of colour collide. Conversely, in her Dandenong-based (Melbourne) research, Lobo describes formations of 'inter-ethnic understandings' among diverse urban inhabitants. She attributes these to accumulations of everyday encounters that engender new imaginings of one's own identity. Cultural practices seen as different gradually become part of one's own everyday life, creating hybrid cultural practices that eventually become representative of the local places they are performed in. Inter-racial encounters underscore the dynamic nature of race-relations across the multicultural city. Lobo's work centres the bodily nature of racial marginalisation and complex interracial negotiations, while exploring the *doing* of everyday multiculturalism.

Ien Ang's research of Chinese diaspora communities in Sydney's western suburbs illuminates formations of hybrid identities (2001, 2003). Her work is based on extended field observations, and interviews with Chinese Australians from spatially and temporally diverse diasporic contexts. Ang argues that Chinese Australians cannot 'say no to Chineseness' because White Australian society ascribes Chinese identities through racial identification and Othering, which in turn leads to self-identification as Chinese – new migrants and fourth generation Chinese alike (I. Ang, 2001). This is reinforced by desires to remain Chinese and feelings of cultural and racial incompatibility with mainstream White Australian identity. Ang also highlights spatialities of Chinese identity reproduction (2003). Culturally/ethnically diverse Chinese Australians are often clustered – or confined – in 'Asian' enclaves of the city wherein differences amongst various ethnic and diasporic groups are negotiated in everyday encounters. As racialised Others, converging and (re)territorialising presents an opportunity secure a place in the city. Sharing different conceptualisations and practices of *being* Chinese fosters cultural hybridity, which Ang terms as 'together-in-difference' (2003).

Contemporary Urban and Cultural Geographers have begun to use non-/more-than-representational theoretical frameworks to investigate diasporic and Indigenous identities alongside place in the multicultural city (Amin, 2002; Amin & Thrift, 2002; Carvalho & Tolia-Kelly, 2001; Lobo, 2014, 2016; Radcliffe, 2019; Thrift, 1996; Wise, 2010). Shifting beyond the representational is driven by research imperatives to reorient empirical investigations to sensorial, embodied, affective, and imaginative dimensions of human engagement with the *lived-in* environment, *being* in the city, and the *doing* of life. Carvalho and Tolia-Kelly's (2001) research into South Asian (former East African indentured labourers) diasporan senses of place and identity in the UK illustrates the (re)creative functions of artistic practices to reimagine cultural landscapes. Through research collaborating with local Indigenous women, Lobo (2016) describes the anti-racist potential of artistic practices – painting, drawing, dancing – that entangle the body with the more-than-human world (biodiverse lagoons, beaches, and parks). Lobo argues that embodied, sensory engagements with the landscape are imaginative processes co-creating identity with place and, most importantly, freeing from racial mediation typically controlling how Black Indigenous bodies interact with the city. Attending to the *doing* of everyday urban life across racially differentiated groups (also see Wise, 2005, 2010) illuminates the nuances of place and identity (re)configuration.

2.6 Conclusion

This review has mapped the streets interlinking the theoretical concerns of Black, Indigenous, Australian multiculturalism, (African) diaspora, post-colonal/decolonial, and Urban/Cultural Geography literatures. Afro-Australian work uses CRT to understand everyday racism dominating Afro-Australian life. I emphasise the contention that racism is fundamental to Euro-colonial projects and (re)produced by liberal political philosophy as shared by many CRT scholars. Yet-to-be-dismantled colonial power structures maintain socio-cultural regimes of White supremacy, inferiorising Blackness through socially reproduced negative identity narratives. They preserve geopolitical arrangements exploiting the GS to benefit the GN, perpetuating African Diasporic migrations first set in motion by the commodification and theft of Black bodies. Beneath the veneer of Australian multicultural politics, Whiteness operates possessively, (illegitimately) claiming sovereignty over Black Indigenous lands and the national identity. Dislocated from both *home* and *host*lands, diasporic people of colour shape hybrid identities, forming transnational imagined communities. Further, I centre hybridity as a creative means to build new understandings of identity and belonging in spite of the (typically) violent resettlement and racial marginalisation of African Diasporans. The transitional nature of youth identity formation highlights research imperatives to uncover new forms of hybrid identity creation amongst second generation Afro-Australians. My understanding of place and the city develops through a more-than-representational theoretical framework, attending to the embodied, sensory nature of *doing* urban life and specifically practices that (re)territorialise space. Foregrounding spatiality, I assemble the discussed literatures as theoretical building blocks to frame and inform my exploration of young Afro-Australian lives in Melbourne, interrogating racial identity, cultural hybridity, and senses of place.

Through critically examining Afro-Australian and urban multicultural scholarship, I outlined some of the strengths and limitations of contemporary empirical research. Blackness may be understood as burdensome, but (re)territorialisation of previously White-dominated urban spaces can establish enclaves of belonging. Existing studies tend to be outcome-orientated, and processes of *doing* Afro (re)territorialisation are yet to be explored. Afro and Indigenous relations are complex negotiations fielded by race; the nuances between *kinship* and *conflict* await further attention. Urban multiculturalism research engages with race using various methodological and theoretical approaches, fuelling lively debates about how race-focused research can best be conducted. These studies hone in on racial diversity and the *doing*

of everyday urban life in the White-dominated city, producing intricate understandings of inter-racial relations, hybrid identities, and place formation. My thesis seeks to reach between and build on these bodies of empirical work, drawing together CRT-driven approaches of Afro-Australian research, and the hybridity-focused, more-than-representational directions of urban multicultural studies.

3 Methods

3.1 Overview

The thesis draws on four main qualitative methods. (1) Non-representative sampling: Purposive and snowball sampling were combined to select thirteen interview participants. (2) Semi-structured interviews: Conducting twelve 30-40 minute 'go-along' (Bergeron et al., 2014) interviews to generate 'thick descriptions' (Ponterotto, 2006). (3) Participatory field observations: Visiting a variety of sites to simultaneously engage in and investigate everyday Afro-Australian urban life. (4) Autoethnography: Reflecting on my own experience as an Afro-Australian researcher to guide knowledge production about the co-creation of place and identity. Several auxiliary methods also complemented the research: Perception-mapping, creative field journaling, and qualitative GIS (QualGIS).

3.2 Autoethnography and being an 'insider'

My Afro-Australian positionality was fundamental to this thesis' methodological framework and, indeed, co-constituted all aspects of my research. Being an 'insider' – a member of the group being researched – foregrounds the way in which researchers and participants 'simultaneously engage in the construction of [identity]' (de Andrade, 2000, p. 269). Dowling's (2017) recent PhD thesis *"Find One of Your Own Kind"* was informed by her insider positionality in investigating Aboriginal female oral histories. Dowling framed her research as a 'personal journey', in which knowledge production was a 'co-creational project' between herself and participants. She relocated the value of knowledge production from the academy to

her community, highlighting this as a decolonising approach to (auto)ethnographic work. The benefits emerging from this method are tied to 'the doing of research', rather than to its outcomes and publishability (de Andrade, 2000; Dowling, 2017, pp. 56–57; Radcliffe, 2017). An insider approach complements autoethnographic methods, whereby the researcher draws on their own experiences to co-create ethnographic accounts, reflexively participating in fieldwork/interviews (de Andrade, 2000; Dowling, 2017; Ellis et al., 2011; Kanuha, 2000). The researcher's own thoughts, feelings, experiences, et cetera, are consciously braided into the methodology.

Australian urban multiculturalism discourses host a treasure-trove of insider and autoethnographic works, especially at the overlap of Geography and Sociology (see I. Ang, 2001; Aboagye, 2018; Lobo, 2014). Dowling and de Andrade's works are formative to my interpretation of insider and autoethnographic methodologies, aligning with my own positionality and research imperatives. De Andrade's methodological discussion focuses on ethnicity and race, contextualised through the Cape Verdean diaspora (a subset of the African Diaspora with a similar history and geography to my own Caribbean peoples). Dowling's decolonial ethic influenced my knowledge production goals: Oriented towards Afro-Australians in general, and particularly for the participants (there is admittedly something distressing about conducting race-based research at an institution committed to reproducing White-settler coloniality: The new Menzies Institute for instance). Beyond this, Lobo's work, opened my eyes to the versatility of autoethnographic research (2014). Her first-person accounts of emotional stress in racially differentiated bodies of colour influenced my field journaling to include my own thoughts and feelings as I sketched out and jotted down my observations, as well as my interview style.

To isolate the 'insider' and autoethnographic aspects of this research into sections of their own would erode the structural integrity of its integration in sampling, interview, analytical, and observational methods. Instead it is integral to every component of the methodological assemblage.

3.3 Recruitment

I used a combination of purposeful and snowball sampling techniques to select thirteen interview participants. The main goal of the sampling method was to reflect ethno-national and

migratory diversity among young Afro-Australians. As previously outlined, African Diasporans originate from various geographic contexts, with migration driven by a range of social, political, economic, and environmental factors that have varied over the centuries. As such, I selected candidates from multiple African continental and Diasporic contexts (East African, West African, Southern African, Caribbean, African American) and migratory pathways (refugee, economic migrant, etc.). Certain migration pathways and ethno-national heritages are associated with different areas of the city. Participant selection was informed by these contexts. I also emphasised multi-racial dimensions of Afro-Australian diversity by selecting some participants with mixed Afro-Euro and Afro-Asian backgrounds. Afro-Australian diversity counters notions of 'typical' group identities that could be randomly sampled to give a snapshot on behalf of all Afro-Australians (Clarke et al., 2019; Gebrekidan, 2018). With these considerations in mind, I used the following selection criteria:

1) Identify as member of the African Diaspora
2) Grew up or currently lives in Melbourne
3) Is between the ages of 18 and 35
4) Was born or has lived in Australia for most of their life

Justifications for each criterion are as follows. (1) Self-identification as African Diasporan, acknowledging the malleable and plural nature of diaspora identities (I. Ang, 2003; Hall, 1990; Tölölyan, 1996), and destabilises hegemonic or single cultural understanding of Africaness. (2) This study is concerned principally with producing a contemporary snapshot of Afro-Australian experiences and connections to place in Melbourne. The aim was to select candidates from appropriately diverse backgrounds – some who grew up in Melbourne and recent arrivals, be that from overseas or interstate. (3) The age range was 18 to 35 is loosely derived from the definition of 'youth as transition' (B. Evans, 2008; Jeffrey, 2010). (4) Basing selection on birthplace or living in Australia for extended time, rather than citizenship, allowed me to deploy a malleable understanding of *being* Australian, contingent on cumulative, place-based senses of belonging, which are characteristic of second generation experiences (Mansouri & Mikola, 2014; Skrbiš et al., 2007). Selection was informed by interest in understanding people whose lives have been shaped by Australia and who grew up here.

I used a three-step recruitment process. (1) I reached out to my existing networks of Afro-Australian contacts. This network is a loose constellation of Melbourne-based community groups, friendship circles, and individuals that I have connected with over the last few years. I

initiated dialogues with potential participants via social media direct messaging to gauge interest in the project. Seven participants were recruited though this method. (2) I used my contact network as a base from which to snowball sample. Being cognisant of friendship circle arrangements during the snowball processes, I only selected associates of contacts who were not participants. I was not interested in interviewing a contact and then their best friend, but a diverse range of participants from across the city. Three participants were recruited using the snowball method. (3) Three participants were recruited through everyday 'convivial encounters' (Anderson, 2004). Over the summer and autumn of 2020-2021 I met many Afro-Australians whilst engaged in everyday activities at bars, nightclubs, and on the street. In these social settings, I could strike up conversations about race, place, heritage, and experiences growing up. At the end of these interactions we exchanged contact details, which I then used to gauge interest in research participation.

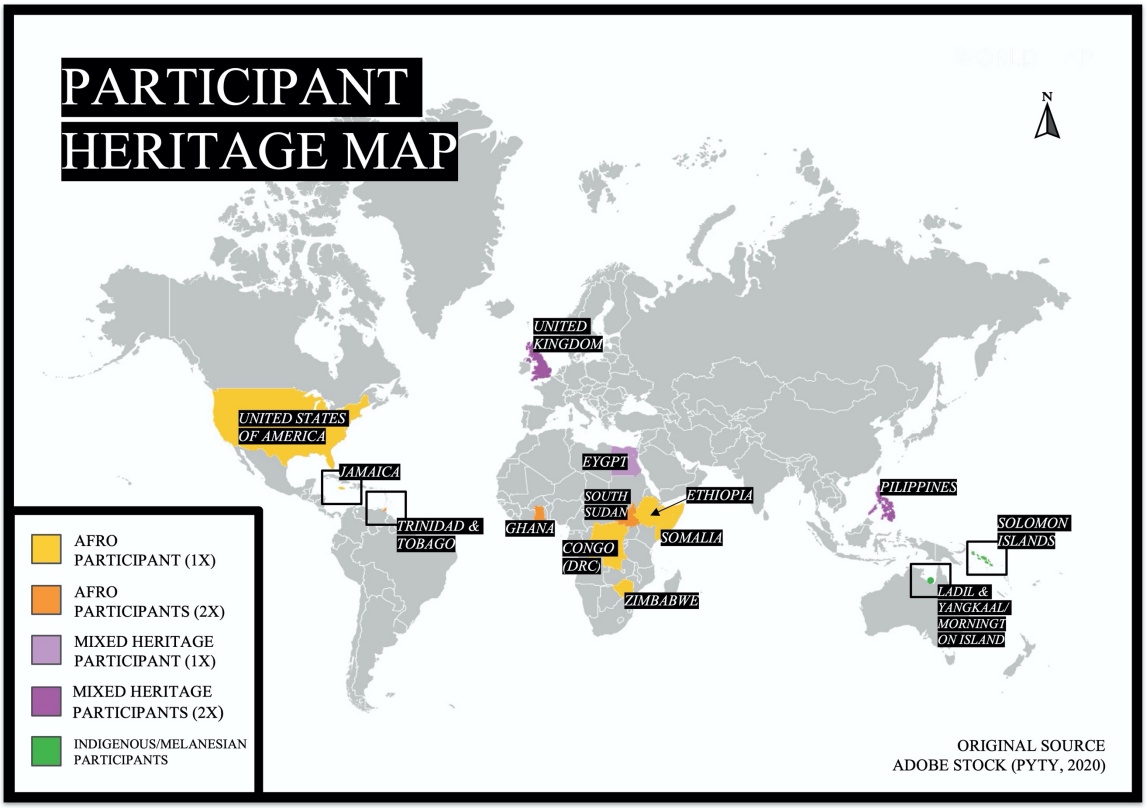
I used a purposeful method at each stage of participant selection. I spoke to each participant about their backgrounds to assess interview suitability. This was performed in a casual, understated manner at social events, through phone-calls, or via social media messages. Word quickly spread amongst my community and beyond. Towards the end of the sampling period, people were contacting me, asking to participate. In a sense, the snowball had rolled a little further than intended. Unfortunately, I had neither the time nor resources to interview everyone who reached out.

My Afro-Australian positionality was integral to each stage of the recruitment process. I was able to draw from a extensive list of contacts because of my engagement with Afro-Australian social networks and communities of colour. Most of the individual contacts I met outside of my networks were at social events, bars, the supermarket, and other gathering sites that were typically White-dominated. We often gravitated towards each other to escape the otherwise totally White setting we found ourselves in.

Two non-Afro-Australian participants were selected: one Indigenous and one Melanesian. I drew inspiration from Lobo's (2010, 2014) inter-ethnic identity research, and used their perspectives as Black racialised subjects. The objective of this was to examine the overlaps, tensions, and relations between different Black minority groups in Afro-Australian and Indigenous discourses (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2008; Kaiya Aboagye, 2018). The Indigenous participant was first connected with using the snowball method, and I met the Melanesian participant at a workplace social event.

Participants	Age	Gender	Country of Birth	Place where raised	Currently lives	Heritage
Chanel	24	Female	Auckland, New Zealand	Bayswater, Melbourne	Richmond, Melbourne	Ghanaian and Filipino
Gloria	23	Female	Kakuma, Kenya	Mirrabooka, Perth (WA)	Footscray, Melbourne	South Sudanese
Iman	23	Female	Auckland, New Zealand	Braybrook, Melbourne	Braybrook, Melbourne	Somali
Jordy	24	Male	Harare, Zimbabwe	Ivanhoe, Melbourne	Preston, Melbourne	Zimbabwean
Kofi	26	Male	Perth, Australia	Joondalup, Perth (WA) and Kambah, Canberra (ACT)	Thornbury, Melbourne	Congolese (DRC) and Ghanaian
Lex	24	Male	Melbourne, Australia	Yarraville, Melbourne	Ivanhoe, Melbourne	Trinidadian and Arab Egyptian
Nicholas	31	Male	Wau, South Sudan	Kakuma, Kenya and Reservoir, Melbourne	St. Kilda East, Melbourne	South Sudanese
Rez	24	Non-binary	Philadelphia, United States of America	Adelaide (SA)	East Melbourne	African American and Dutch-Indo Malay
Tamika	23	Female	Melbourne, Australia	Bendigo (VIC) and Greenvale, Melbourne	Greenvale, Melbourne	Trinidadian and Anglo-Australian
Teej	24	Female	Nambour (QLD), Australia	Mapelton (QLD) and Sunning Hill, United Kingdom	Carlton, Melbourne	Solomon Islander and Anglo-Australian
Tina	22	Female	Melbourne, Australia	Mildura (VIC)	Ascot Vale, Melbourne	Lardil and Yangkaal (Indigenous)
Yazmin	29	Female	Cobram (VIC), Australia	Merimbula (NSW)	Ivanhoe, Melbourne	Jamaican and Anglo-Australian
Zala	23	Female	Auckland, New Zealand	Footscray, Melbourne and Tarneit, Melbourne	Richmond, Melbourne	Ethiopian
Total: 13	**Age range: 22-31**	**F: 8 / M: 4 / NB: 1**				

Table 1 - Participant demographic characteristics



Map 1 - Participant heritage map

All participants were assigned pseudonyms to maintain anonymity, and overly-specific details have been omitted. Table 1 charts the demographic characteristics of each participant, with 'heritage' and 'area where raised' being of particular importance to the following empirical chapters. The heritage map below spatially represents the diasporic and ethno-national heterogeneity of the participants (Map 1).

3.4 Interviews and analysis

I conducted twelve place-focused semi-structured interviews. Each interview was 30 to 60 minutes long – most were approximately 40 minutes – captured on a Zoom GH5 recording device. Eleven one-on-one interviews were complemented by one group interview with two participants. I asked each participant to select a 'site-of-significance' to them and interviews were based sites chosen by participants. I defined a site-of-significance for participants as a place in the city where they are most comfortable, and feel connected to their Afro-Australian identity. This method(ology) intended to uncover the 'micro-geographies of meaning' tucked away in 'emplaced' memories across the city-scape (Bergeron et al., 2014; Ratnam & Drozdzewski, 2020). 'Going along' with each participant brought me to lounge rooms, family restaurants, libraries, back streets, upstairs CBD bars, and lush sections of urban bush, where the embodiments of memory interplayed with the physical space (Bergeron et al., 2014). This approach established lively conversations at the beginning of interviews that mostly remained as the interviews progressed from place-oriented questions, towards more sensitive/challenging race- and racism-oriented questions.

Throughout the interviews, I encouraged participants to locate thoughts, feelings, and memories in the physical domain. Questions like, 'If this space is the most comfortable to you [signalling to the surrounding] where do you feel most uncomfortable?' provided visual references to unpack the contrasts between comfortable and uncomfortable spaces (see Appendix 5.3 and 5.5). Using physical reference points whist asking questions elucidated spatial responses, focusing on (dis)comfort to map wider perceptions of Afro-Australian place and displacement across Melbourne. Interview-based and emplaced perception-mapping techniques were inspired by Wise's (2010) methodological approach to emotional landscape cartography in Sydney's inner-west.

Structured sections of the interviews were framed by scaffolding questions (see the Appendix) that either focused on or drew connections between the major research themes of

racial/cultural identity and place. A contingent of sub-questions were furloughed unless required to prompt more descriptive discussion. Interviews usually flowed more like guided conversations. Participants often spoke to the themes without requiring structured questions. With the exception of four more timid participants, I only had to ask a few of the main questions.

My insider positionality was a great asset to the interview process for three main reasons. (1) Discussions about race, experiences of racism, Whiteness, et cetera, were both emotional and with depth. Racialised people often use emotional fortressing strategies in the presence of White people to avoid the emotional labour demanded by casual racism, micro-aggressions, and unwanted race-focused conversations (L. Evans & Moore, 2015). Recognition of shared experiences between myself and participants allowed for candid discussions. Participants indicated a sense of mutual connection by using inclusive language and saying things such as, 'you get it', 'you know what I'm saying', 'we as Black people', etc., and at times code switching to use Black-exclusive language. (2) I furthered discussions and clarified points by using personal anecdotes or inclusive scenarios. For example, 'As a person of Black British Trinidadian descent born in Australia, I often feel like my identity is scatted across continents. How do you feel as a Zimbabwean who moved here when you were young?' (3) Interjections would, at times, develop into a conversation, in which I was asked by participants to share my opinions or experiences relating to a question, illustrating the co-creative relationship between the insider researcher and participants (de Andrade, 2000; Dowling, 2017).

The go along method expanded each interview beyond its discrete timeframe. I would often spent hours – sometimes the whole day – with participants. We might commute to a location together, have lunch, or walk around a neighbourhood whilst chatting about interview themes and life experiences. Go alongs blurred the distinction between the interview process and (semi-)participatory observation, providing insight into a participant's everyday life and their negotiation of the city.

I analysed the interviews thematically. I manually transcribed interview recordings to perform thematic coding in NVivo 12. This arranged the interview text around emergent themes which then informed the subsequent empirical chapters. I also used a mind-mapping technique to illustrate spatial relationships between different aspects of racial identity formation. Further, I produced a perception-map to express (dis)comfort in urban spaces into a larger-scale representation of Afro-Australian place and displacement across the city.

Lastly, a comment on COVID-19. The Victorian government's 'stay at home' order impacted some of the interviews. One interview was conducted over Zoom, while several were relocated to outdoor (second-preference) sites-of-significance. However, overall, restrictions had a minor impact. Most interviews were conducted in their originally intended formats, prior to the reimplementation of severe COVID-19 restrictions.

3.5 Field observations

Participatory field observations accompanied the interviews. Using a field journal, I documented my observations throughout the year (2021) and key points of the go along interviews. I also noted relevant personal encounters occurring through everyday urban life. Prior to the tightening of COVID-19 restrictions, I conducted field observations in a variety of public (particularly around Footscray, Flemington, and Sunshine) and semi-public (bars, restaurants, and (super)markets in the inner-northern and western suburbs) urban settings – often as bookends to the go alongs. I was invited into the home of an interviewee two months prior to their participation to hang out and get to know each other. This turned into a fourteen-hour long participatory observation, both at the interviewee's house and around the streets of Preston.

I also drew field sketches – which have been scanned and touched-up in Adobe Photoshop – to illustrate my perceptions of place. Drawing is a creative method that hones in on 'attuned', sensory, and atmospheric experiences of 'being' in place (Hawkins, 2015, p. 255). Drawing 'apprehends place through practice' beyond just representing it as a 'finished piece' (Hawkins, 2015, p. 256). My field sketches drew the auto into my ethnographic research by creating and representing my senses of place through observational and interpretive practice.

Finally, I had initially planned to volunteer with an African Australian youth support organisation. However, due to COVID-19 restrictions my role moved online. I volunteered as a tutor, running a weekly session with a young Afro-Australian student over Zoom. Here, my fieldwork entered digital space. Online 'field' work created new (and unexpected) possibilities for participatory observations. During one session I experimented with Buckle's (2020) QualGIS method by screen-sharing Google Maps over Zoom as a storytelling device to describe familial and ancestral narratives of migration across the African Diaspora. This activity – though small in the scheme of overall methodology – helped to sustain my field

observations throughout lockdowns. It also illuminated different (and thought-provoking) ways to do fieldwork whilst isolated from the city.

4 Becoming Black

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I examine various processes of racialisation that shape my participants' conceptualisations of Blackness. Using Taylor's (1994) theory of dialogical identity and Appiah's (2009/2020, 1994) concept of racial identity narratives (see Chapter 2.2) as scaffolding, I have arranged my participants' accounts of racial identity formation into a spectrum-like framework that demonstrates diverse conceptualisations of Blackness situated between extremes: Negative (an insignia of marginalisation, Otherness, inferiority); and positive (representation of Afro-heritage, ancestry, strength, creativity).

Positive and negative identity narratives dialogically constructed my participants' racial identities throughout everyday life. Participants were exposed to manifold configurations of narratives across their *intimate* and *public spheres* – in family settings, at school, in the work place, during everyday urban encounters – which were often contingent on gender, perceived class, ethno-national identity, and sexual orientation. Exposure to various Black narratives was loosely determined by each participant's social and spatial (socio-spatial) proximity to Whiteness across their intimate and public spheres. Participants who grew up in neighbourhoods with large African/Afro communities more frequently expressed positive conceptualisations of Blackness, whereas those who grew up in White-dominated areas often spoke to the prevalence of negative racial narratives. In the second half of this chapter, I hone in on more elusive forms of racial Othering that consistently emerged through participant responses and explore the marginalising implications of the 'White gaze' (Fanon 1952/2008). Finally, I examine everyday *encounters* between my participants and other Afro-Australians, discussing Black mutual recognition as a subtler, joyful process that illuminates Afro-Australian identity cohesion.

4.2 Proximity to Whiteness and a spectrum of Blackness

Participant accounts highlighted negative framings of Blackness throughout everyday urban life. White Othering of participants was experienced across a variety of everyday social contexts, re-emphasising that Blackness is not simply a marker of ancestry, but is constructed through inferiorisation by Whiteness (Fanon, 1952/2008; Mapedzahama & Kwansah-Aido, 2017). Jordy's description of fleeting encounters with White members of the public highlighted subtle processes of marginalisation informed by negative framings of Blackness:

> I've had so many instances where I'm sitting on the train and people are like clutching their bag and you know. So therefore, I'd feel like if I was walking into a space I'd have to be overly friendly and overly approachable. I can't just go into a space and be who I am with my friends. I'd have to like smile at this person, that person, introduce myself. Really make sure that I'm a nice-Black-guy not a scary-Black-guy.

Jordy's account reveals the synonymising of Blackness (particularly Black masculinity) with criminality within the White Australian imagination: White fears. This perpetuates and is perpetuated by framings of young Afro men as violent or gang-affiliated throughout mainstream Australian media, particularly contemporarily (Gaffey, 2019; Majavu, 2020). Jordy highlighted the performative aspects of race: he must manoeuvre carefully through White-dominated spaces, constantly assessing how he might be perceived by White strangers, adjusting his behaviour to mitigate social exclusion. Kofi noted a conversation with one of his Black female friends, wherein she used her 'Becky voice' (altering her voice to sound like a White Australian woman) during job interviews. Many participants described behavioural adjustments to soften their outwardly Black appearance as a part-and-parcel of everyday life.

Rez, an androgynously-presenting gender non-binary participant, echoed Jody's description of White fears when describing their experiences of moving into a wealthy White-dominated neighbourhood:

> There's a family across the road, and when they'd come out into the front yard, this mother would like shun her child away from me. Her doing that shows fear.

White fears were predominantly spoken about by male participants, some female participants also noted that these fears disproportionately targeted Black men. As articulated by Rez,

however, these narratives were not exclusively gendered. Some female participants also commented they were susceptible to criminalised framings of Blackness, though this was less frequent.

Participants who grew up in White-dominated areas, disconnected from Afro/African communities, typically understood their own Blackness through negative racial narratives. Kofi attributed his sense of racial Otherness to his schooling, where he was the 'only Black kid'. He emphasised constant accusations of disruptive behaviour from teachers, despite his best efforts to evade attention by reducing his presence in the classroom environment. He expressed that his phenotypical difference (very dark West African skin) made him a target for unwarranted disciplinary action, often for invented transgressions. During adolescence, Kofi retreated 'into [his] shell' to avoid drawing attention to his already 'hyper-visible' skin. He described the relationship between processes of racialisation and the production of an inferiorised self-image in both himself and other Black family members:

> Me and my little cousin were walking through The City [of Melbourne]. He had his hand up in the air and he said [to members of the public], 'hi-five me if you're not scared of me'... That's what's going through your mind all the time. What does that do to you? You get typecast in these ways. And it happens all across, from primary school to high school into adulthood. It's maddening, you know it.

Tamika paralleled Kofi when reflecting on her high school experience, where she was positioned as the 'token Black kid' by her (former) White friends. Fearing total social isolation, Tamika 'played into' her typecasting by perpetuating racially-charged jokes and stereotypes. Enacting negative narratives shaped Tamika's conceptualisation of her Blackness as a *burden*, resigned that her race was something she would have to compensate for throughout everyday life. Tamika also attributed her susceptibility to racial marginalisation in part to her androgynous appearance and queerness, which made her stand out from her Whiter, straighter, femme-presenting friendship circle. Tamika reflected that she continues to struggle with her racial identity because of her experiences of racialisation:

> It took me a while to come to terms with the fact that I'd aid them in making jokes because that's when I felt that I could fit in… It's only been recently that I've started thinking about what it actually means to be Black. Sometimes you may never feel like you'll fit in anywhere, but it's all about trying.

Tamika also spoke about the perpetuation of negative Black narratives in her familial household, honing in on proximity to Whiteness in the intimate sphere. She described a 'full-on divide' in her family during the 2020 *Black Lives Matter* protests wherein her White mother and auntie adhered to rhetoric of the *All Lives Matter* counter-movement and often became aggressive during discussions about Black racial inequality. This caused a racial rift in Tamika's family, as she struggled to comprehend how/why her mother could have opposed Black equality and espouse anti-Black views, as the mother of Black children. Tamika 'really took on board the…conflict in [her] own house', citing her family's White ignorance as triggering a period of 'hard-core turmoil'. Tamika was positioned as the Other in both her broader social environment (public sphere) and family (intimate sphere) and being Black lacked alternative context beyond degrading narratives.

Yazmin's experiences growing up in a small Victorian surf town were characterised by hyper-visibility as a 'Black early-developed teenager'. She emphasised the entanglements between the racialisation and fetishisation of her young feminine body, which caused ever-present awareness of difference and a disjointed self-image. Dialogues across Yazmin's public sphere and the fringe of her intimate sphere provoked a severe sense of racial Othering, but were routinely invalidated by her close family. Family-friends, community members, and strangers alike would frequently commented on her skin's 'nice brown colour', whilst her White mother perpetuated myths that skin colour 'doesn't really matter'. For Yazmin, overexposure to negative Black narratives resulted in the formation of a fortressed and discontiguous psychology containing a series of 'closed doors' (suppressed internal monologue about race) maintained by strategies through which she disassociated herself from her race. Despite attempts to avoid the subject of race altogether, she was constantly reminded of her Blackness and racial difference, once through verbal abuse: her former partner called her a 'coon' in a public setting. Though that is jarring and upsetting, Yazmin spoke more comprehensively and extensively about the deleterious effects of more casual everyday racialisation; she moved to Melbourne after high school, first landing in the 'Whitest suburb' (Glen Iris), where she was assigned the nickname 'Black Yazmin' in the local cafe where she worked.

Image 1 - Being looked at; creeping isolation

Tessa Walker-Charles, *Ancestral Altar Pieces,* 2021. Acrylic paint, wax, dirt, coffee, oil pastel, glue, natural materials on Alpine MDF panels. Dimensions (entire piece) 90 x 120cm

Participants who grew up in suburbs near urban centres with established African communities (such as Footscray and Sunshine) but attended White-dominated schools and had mostly White social circles were exposed to more negative Black narratives. Lex grew up in Yarraville, a 'very White' suburb (though less than a kilometre from Footscray). He was often typecast by his White friends' parents as a basketball player among other stereotypes, and suffered playground discrimination, being called 'poo skin', among other slurs. Despite his spatial proximity to African communities, Lex's lack of social ties to other Black folk left him isolated. However, a profoundly formative moment that shaped Lex's conceptualisation of race – a touchstone he frequently returns to in reaffirming his sense of self – was a Caribbean get-together in a Fairfield park he attended with his father as a ten-year-old:

> [My father and I] walked down to towards what looked like a small festival, of all Black people. And then I found out that it was a West Indian get-together, like cookout. And the reason that was special to me is because up until that point, I thought I was like an island, and the only person that I knew that was even like remotely similar to me was my Dad. And to see that there was this entire community of people with the same background was mind-blowing to me, like HOLY SHIT! And all these people were greeting my Dad like they were friends, because they were. They were all people that moved here in the 1980s, this small, but strong, West Indian community.

Kofi's description of his Ghanaian familial environment expands my examination of the spectrum of racial narratives across public and intimate spheres. Narratives that found strength in racialised adversity were centred in Kofi's home:

> Do you know how resilient Black people are man? It's crazy. I got these cousins and friends that I met when we went to Uganda… they were fresh outta refugee camps like a decade ago, fifteen years ago. Catch up with them now and they're running their own businesses, you know!

Connections with community were shown to have insulating properties from the negative Black narratives prevalent in participants' White-dominated social environments. Contrasting accounts from Albert and Nicholas, both young men of South Sudanese descent with refugee backgrounds, demonstrate this. Albert (a pseudonym), whom I chatted with during field observations at a Brunswick Street bar, described growing up in Swan Hill. He described how framings of Blackness that interlaced criminality, welfare-dependency, and low intelligence were articulated in the local vernacular through terms like 'typical African'. Processes of racialisation Othered him by positioning him as racially inferior compared to the broader White community [field journal, Fitzroy, July 12, 2021]. Nicholas' account suggests that his spatial location in the city (Reservoir) exposed him to degrading Black narratives in the public sphere:

> The visibility of my skin in a very White-dominant suburb… [I] see a lot of racism, not just talking structural, but on a day-to-day basis. This is a White people issue. Discrimination, we all have, but racism is coming from a White identity, because that's how it was developed.

However, Nicholas highlighted the association between connection with Afro community and positive racial narratives. His social involvement with Footscray-based African communities insulated him, to a certain extent, from prevailing negative racial narratives that often manage to infiltrate the intimate sphere:

> When I'm around trusted community members… all my African brothers and sisters. We have that sense of belonging and share that sense of identity.

(Dis)connection from community marks a key point of difference between Albert and Nicholas' accounts of racialisation. Nicholas experienced racial Othering, but his social connection to African communities reinforced positive conceptualisations of Blackness based on trust and belonging, working to peripherise degrading Black narratives. Albert spoke to a lack of community and negative narratives that gradually shaped his conceptualisation of race, demonstrating the spectrum-like diversity of Black narrative arrangements, shaped by socio-spatial proximities to Whiteness across intimate and public spheres.

Participants who grew up in African households in neighbourhoods with well-established African communities centred positive racial narratives in their conceptualisations of Blackness. These participants – Iman, Gloria, and Zala – were of full continental African heritage belonging to sizeable ethno-national groups: Somali, South Sudanese, and Ethiopian respectively. Zala and Iman grew up in Melbourne's migrant enclave Western suburbs, and Gloria grew up in and around Mirrabooka (Perth's migrant/refugee portal). All three participants attended schools and community centres with strong African or non-White migrant presences. Two of the three speak English as an second language, and reported their experiences at school and English catch-up community centres as formative for positive conceptualisations of Blackness. Gloria appreciated the racial/ethnic diversity of her schooling experiences:

> I went to a school that was like specifically for children that had like migrated to Australia through whatever pathway, but didn't speak English. It was like an intensive English school. So I was around like mad ethic kids! [It was] a representation of the world in the school, and we were all in fucking school together! I went to school with some of my cousins. It was such a beautiful experience.

Iman spoke fondly of time spent learning English after school in a diverse cohort of African children at Brimbank Civic Centre (formerly Sunshine Library), because she felt like she fit in with the surrounding African migrant community:

> Sunshine has a lot of African communities, a diverse set of African communities. A lot of African people stayed here after school to catch up on English… I didn't feel left behind, or like if was stupid for not knowing how to speak properly, because everyone else was the same.

Iman, Gloria, and Zala understood race through narratives of Black Africaness bound to their broader community. The boundaries between the intimate and public spheres were described porously. Members of the public recognised each other as brothers and sisters, uncles and aunties – an ever-expanding imagining of family networks across community. Centring Africa as an ancestral 'Motherland' rather than a category marking inferiority, Gloria, Iman, and Zala's accounts reflect the positive side of the Black narrative spectrum. These participants highlighted the importance of understandings of the self through attachment to a community bound by collective Black African heritage. Zala's description of her childhood in Footscray's Africa Town encapsulated this:

> Those times felt really natural because I was surrounded by African people that look like me. We're all from the Motherland, you know. So there's that unquestionable acceptance among us, yeah. It's really weird not being in Africa for a lot of people. [It's like] we're in this together, in a White place.

Iman, Gloria, and Zala also spoke to their experiences of racial marginalisation outside of their community, experienced most commonly in White-dominated areas of the city. Iman and Zala emphasised a sense of Otherness at university, often being among the few if not only Black people in their courses. Despite the personal pressures of negative racial narratives in this particular public sphere, their positive conceptualisations of Blackness were not destabilised. Rather, it induced a desire to return to community public spheres where their identities were not marginalised.

Experiences of racial discrimination were still jarring, degrading, unfading memories. Zala was denied a lease because of her race after meeting a landlord in person following a positive phone-call. She regarded this moment as a potent 'reminder of racism', however such degradation sits at the outskirts of her everyday social life, far from her intimate sphere. Iman

was hyper-aware of her epidermal susceptibility to racialised Othering, and her experiences of racial abuse from White members of the public has prompted her to distance herself from Whiteness to avoid marginalisation and threats of violence.

Irrespective of participants' connection with African communities, being Black in a White-dominated society required careful social navigation to ensure one's safety and/or social position, but Iman, Gloria, and Zala's conceptualisations of Blackness were still positive and enmeshed with their sense of community and African heritage. However, negative framings of Blackness still affected their everyday experiences and informed senses of Otherness from broader White-dominated society. Living in a White-dominated society inherently Others Black people (Fanon, 1952/2008; Mapedzahama & Kwansah-Aidoo, 2017). Participant responses consistently reflected senses of Otherness across the spectrum of racialised experiences, irrespective of socio-spatial proximity to Whiteness across public and intimate spheres, but those connected to community were provided nourishing conceptualisations of Blackness that insulated them from fundamentally racist, negative Black narratives.

4.3 Reconceptualising race

Racial identities are not static. Participants who grew up in White-dominated spaces practiced racial re-conceptualisation to build more positive Black identities. This was characterised by socio-spatial reconfigurations of their intimate and public spheres. Reconfiguration of the intimate sphere typically involved complete overhaul of social life, severing ties with friendship circles or community groups that were exposure sites for negative framings of Blackness. Public sphere reconfiguration was usually performed through spatial movement (e.g. to cities, between suburbs and households). These reconfigurations often occurred simultaneously. For example, after high school, Chanel abandoned her friendship group and found a place with a 'mostly Black' group of friends she first accessed through her sister. Since finding her new community, she has embraced her identity as a Black woman and 'feels herself'. Chanel and Zala – who are both members of the same community and were interviewed together – now live in the same household, where Chanel is surrounded by positive conceptualisations of Blackness:

> I used to be around White people… it was a regular thing [for them] to be racist to other Black people… It got to the point where I was calling them out on it and saying, 'hey that's not cool', and they would laugh it off and they'd make me feel bad for calling them out on it. Eventually it got to a point where I couldn't be around those people anymore. And now that my community has changed, it's made me realise that my Blackness is not a weakness, it's actually a power.

Kofi made a similar transition by joining a community organisation call Afro Hub, building the confidence to be his 'true African self' by forming new connections with diverse Afro people:

> I was in a pretty negative place, and it was around that period that I started coming here [Afro Hub]. And it was one of the first times when you're talking to someone, and we would get deep! And you realise that these problems I'm facing in my life, a lot of us are facing this shit… How honest and open you can be with someone without worrying. The way that I found myself talking and connecting with people, it's extremely liberating…When you think, 'ahh how am I going to carry on', there's this rich, deep Black African history to dig into, to find strength in. And you can always find strength in it. And if you can't find it, reach out to your people.

Reconfiguration was described as a process of identity reformation, aligning with framings of youth as a period of identity transition (B. Evan, 2008; Jeffrey, 2010). Reimagining Blackness beyond Otherness, beyond inferiority to Whiteness, draws on positive narratives contributing less fractious, un-degraded conceptualisations of one's own racial identity. Chanel and Kofi's recollections also illuminate processes wherein race draws young Afro-Australians into a shared identity, coming together in Blackness.

4.4 The White gaze

A common thread woven through the majority of my Afro-Australian participants' experiences was a sense Otherness caused by the abundance of White stares throughout everyday urban life: in the workplace, the classroom, at social events, on the street. My participants' phenotypical differences – dark skin, coily hair, long dreadlocks, fresh braids, even height – were features of public fixation in White-dominated social contexts. Chanel and Zala described

White stares as ‘mysterious’ and uncomfortable, an epidermal reminder of Otherness. Fanon (1952/2008) defines these stares as a racialising White gaze that reinforces Black peoples’ marginalised social location by reproducing feelings of Otherness within their internal monologues – an ever-present reminder of one’s own ‘negrotude’.

My participants expressed their awareness of White people’s surveillance of their presence (such as being watched/followed by security guards while shopping) with third-person-like voyeurism of the self. Rez described:

> The way people looked at me, it was like they were scared of me, but also like they were questioning why I was there… I’m assuming that all of these White people have all of these assumptions about me, which might or might not be true. But because of my experiences, these are my assumptions.

For Yazmin, being constantly stated at caused hyper-vigilance of her own presence whilst doing simple things like crossing the street. Gloria’s description of the White gaze mirrored Yazmin’s experiences, describing, ‘The stares, I’m very, very aware of who is around me. If I enter predominantly White spaces, I will be looked at, which is something that I have experienced my whole life.’

Image 2 - Gazed upon, gazing within

Tessa Walker-Charles, Ancestral Altar Pieces, 2021. Acrylic paint, wax, dirt, coffee, oil pastel, glue, natural materials on Alpine MDF panels. Dimensions (entire piece) 90 x 120cm

In my own experience, the abundance of White stares turns mundane everyday activities into a cognitive labyrinth, wherein my internal monologue becomes lost in a maze of overstocked supermarket shelves:

> Is that White lady in the aisle staring at me with genuine intrigue because she has never seen cornrows before? Or does she think I'm here to steal these overpriced Coles mangoes. She's still staring, still. Endless speculations yield nothing but more questions, discomfort, displacement even [field journal, Fitzroy, March 03, 2021].

Lived experiences of being Othered, being inferiorised by pervasive negative Black narratives, denied my participants the option to comfortably assume that stares were merely innocent fascinations, random glances, or – as has been inferred by my own White family members – completely imagined. The White gaze has a siloing effect on the Black body, excising my participants from any given social context. White stares draw well-understood ontologies of Black inferiority to the surface of one's conscience without needing to say racist things or overtly behave in a way that shows a fear of Blackness.

4.5 Race, recognition, and encounter

Moments of mutual recognition were grounded in shared experience of Otherness in White-dominated public spheres. Mutual recognition of Blackness is integral for my participants' everyday encounters with other Afro-Australians (and people racialised as Black more generally) in the White-dominated city. Feelings of Otherness are momentarily disrupted. Fincher and Iveson emphasise encounter as central to everyday urban life and is the process by which one is either legitimised or delegitimised as an urban citizen (Fincher, 2003, 2012; Fincher & Iveson, 2008). Encounters between participants and other Afro-Australians provided brief but important opportunities to validate each other as Black urban citizens, deserving of legitimate, secure social standings in the city.

Recognition – when in passing – was often performed through 'the nod' (an upwards flick of the chin or downwards tilt of the forehead at first eye contact) or simple greetings in Black-coded language, such as *wassup*, *wassgood*, or *wagwan*. Jordy described the performance of recognition as 'comradery between the Black people in Melbourne' and an essential precursor to the beginning of Black friendships. It was through this very process that I first met Jordy at a CBD bar with an overwhelmingly White patronage. Following our initial head nod and a short while at the bar, we struck up conversation and spent the evening together. As is often the case, we were on the periphery of each other's social circles and shared a few (Black) friends. After meeting, it was clear Jordy was a strong interview candidate and I contacted him over social media [field journal, Collingwood, April 23, 2021]. Prefaced by a discussion about feelings of Otherness, Nicholas described the importance of recognition processes:

> When [I] see another dark-skin person we just nod our heads. And someone's like, 'do you know that person?' Nah, I don't know that person, you just [haha]. You know what I mean. It's just the nod! You see me, I see you. You know.

Black encounters were described as moments wherein feelings of Otherness were mutually recognised, instances where Black people could validate each other's experiences of being inferiorised, being of common ancestry, being together as one race. Lex emphasised this when asked to elaborate on how he felt when entering spaces inhabited by other Black bodies:

> In spaces with Black bodies…I feel valid, validated, comfortable, less self-defensive. You're not going through the process of perceiving yourself through how you think other people are going to perceive you because you're Black.

Similarly, Zala described mutual recognitions as small joys breaking the monotony of White-domination:

> I really loved the acknowledgement nods when do you bump into the rare Black person [at] Melbourne Uni. I did maths, and I was probably the only Black person and only Black woman in my cohort, which is crazy.

Mutual performances of recognition assure individuals that they are not alone in their Otherness. As Rez put it, 'I want all Black people to feel seen'. Seen as a person – a Black person – rather than just Black skin. The nod represents collective awareness of a need for racial recognition beyond negative – and fundamentally racist – framings of Blackness in the White imagination. This encourages the formation of new connections between Afro-Australians bound by shared Black identity.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter demonstrates the interweaving of race with identity. Being Black in the city demands strategic social navigation, which for my participants often required cultivating behaviours and repressing honest forms of self-expression. Processes of everyday racialisation centring negative racial narratives were perpetuated by White behaviours around Black people.

My participants' accounts of racialisation varied drastically, but using a spectrum-like framework illustrated a strong socio-spatial association between exposure to negative racial narrative and proximity to Whiteness across the intimate and public spheres. Broadly, participants with close proximity to Whiteness – especially in both intimate and public spheres – conceptualised Blackness in negative or burdensome terms. Conversely, participants with strong Afro community networks in local neighbourhoods understood Blackness through positive and generally empowering racial narratives bound to their African heritage. Many accounts painted inconsistent pictures, and identities were dialogically constructed from a consortium of racial narratives that were also gendered and intertwined with sexual orientations.

Participants demonstrated agency to reconceptualise Blackness by reconfiguring their intimate and public spheres, choosing to socio-spatially distance themselves from Whiteness, adopting more positive racial narratives entwined with community. Participants shared a sense of racial Otherness informed by experiences of everyday racism. Accounts of racialised Othering drew attention to the subtleties of racial marginalisation – particularly the intangible White gaze – that reinforce White hegemony in Melbourne. However joyful encounters of mutual recognition highlighted everyday small acts contributing to Afro-Australian connections through Blackness, between and beyond pre-established ethno-nationally-oriented community networks, sometimes drawing isolated individuals into community for the first time. Black community networks centring positive Black narratives undermined the coercive powers of negative racial conceptualisations. Through positive reconceptualisations we can begin to understand ourselves beyond Euro-colonial White supremacy.

5 Diaspora, dislocation, cultural hybridity

5.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on cultural and spatial aspects of identity. Building on notions of racial Othering and Black identity cohesion discussed in the previous chapter, I now move to examine the preconditions of transnational identity – the experience of being between *home* and *host* (Tölölyan, 1996). Do this through analysing participants' expressions of race-based cultural exclusion from the Australian nationality, as well as dislocation from familial/ancestral ethno-national identities. Alert to the ethno-national heterogeneity of the participants, I centre transnational diasporic imaginings and reconfigure Hall's (1990) theory of diasporic cultural identity by bringing its underlying spatialities to the surface, and apply this modified framework to analyse processes of cultural hybridisation. I expand on processes of ethno-national cultural exchange and identity entanglements amongst Afro, Indigenous, and Melanesian participants, drawing attention to simultaneously creative and challenging practices of hybridity. Just like the African Diaspora, this chapter traverses a range of geographic contexts, gradually building a narrative along its migration course.

5.2 Framing cultural hybridity

I recontextualise and reframe Hall's (1990) trifurcate modelling of Caribbean diasporic identity to sketch out three domains that shape Afro-Australian identity. Hall foregrounded his framework by analysing Caribbean cultural unity through common history: transportation, slavery, and colonisation. Hall identified three *presences* that shape Caribbean cultural identity:

the African presence, European presence, and the American presence (1990, p. 230). The African presence refers to the continuity of African cultures beyond the bondage of slavery (Hall, 1990 p. 230). Africa is expressed in everyday life, interlaced in language, entwined into religious practices, and infused in the 'rhythms and bodily movement of Caribbean people' (Hall, 1990, p. 230). The European presence is a 'dialogue of power' (Hall, 1990, 233). European colonialism has irrevocably shaped the past/present/future of Caribbean cultural identity. Black Caribbean bodies are subjected to regimes of racial subjugation; they are a product of enslavement (among other forms of race-based labour exploitation). From language to poverty rates, Europe's colonial projects and current geo-political arrangements have ensured a central location in the Caribbean identity (Hall, 1990). The American presence is a territorial influence. Hall describes this as the 'junction-point where many cultural tributaries meet, the "empty" land (the European colonisers emptied it) where strangers from every part of the globe collide' (1990, p. 234).

My empirical analysis applies Hall's (1990) logic of unity in difference to my participants' common history of dislocation from the African continent. In lieu of cohesive ethno-national identities, participants drew from African Diasporic narratives and locally accessible cultures to form hybrid identities. Their personal narratives revolved around three domains: Africa, Diaspora, and 'Australia'. The African domain is a near-direct transposal of Hall's African presence. This is the reproduction of African cultures – either hybrid or explicitly tied to ethno-nationality – in Afro-Australian cultural identity. The Diasporan domain contains hybrid cultures fashioned by African Diaspora peoples across the various geographies they reside in; for example, African American, Black British, or Afro-Brazilian cultures. Participants drew from the Diasporan domain to co-constitute their own cultural identities. The 'Australian' domain reinterprets Hall's American presence. Australia is a confluence point for African Diasporans from diverse ethno-national backgrounds and migration pathways. However, unlike the 'empty' islands described by Hall, Indigenous peoples are *still here*, despite the colonial project's ongoing violent occupation (Moreton-Robinson, 2015; Tuck & Yang, 2012; Wolfe, 2006). The cultural implications of Afro-Australian settlement on stolen Indigenous land is a recent and largely unexplored area of study (see Aboagye, 2018; Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2008). Melanesian people are also integral to the 'Australian' domain as they are also racialised as Black and have been steadily co-opted (often coercively) into the 'Australian' socio-cultural landscape since the establishment of British colonial projects in the Pacific region (Mar, 2016). The convergence of distinctly different Black groups is fertile ground for cultural miscegenation and inter-ethnic

(mis)understanding. The 'Australian' domain refers to the continental landmass illegitimately occupied by the colonial project, hence the use of inverted commas.

I have made two major reconfigurations to Hall's theoretical framework. (1) Hall's 'presences' are reframed as domains to enrich spatial analysis. Participants are situated in or draw from different material/imagined geographical domains. (2) Euro-coloniality is recognised as a constitutive feature of each domain inextricable from African, Diaspora, Indigenous Australian, and Black Pacific ontologies, rather than an isolated category.

5.3 Between home and host

All the interviews conducted shared the question: 'Is it possible for a Black/Afro person to fully be Australian?' (Appendix 7.1). All participants answered to the negative. Most supported their claim by explaining their conceptualisation of the Australian identity as fundamentally White. Tamika contrasted herself with her grandmother, who she considers a 'true-blue Aussie'. To Tamika, being Australian is being proudly White, which because of her light brown skin, is inaccessible to her as a Black person. Iman bluntly stated, 'You'll never be in the group [Australian] unless you're White', and did not feel the need to elaborate any further. Kofi was a little more descriptive in summarising his internal monologue:

> I still feel very much invested in in this part of the world, in Australia. This is where I grew up. But then a deep sadness. Because, how can you love a country so much? But how much does it love you back?...It's a toxic relationship. Sometimes you do just spend a day and you get to like three o'clock in the afternoon and you're like what the fuck am I doing here?! I need to buy a flight to Ghana yesterday. I need to be in Ghana yesterday.

When the question was posed to Gloria, she responded by adamantly identifying with her familial ethno-nationality and rejected the notion of being Australian altogether:

> I'm not Australian. I am not Australian! It's so funny because I'll introduce myself as an Australian South Sudanese model [child's voice] and I'm like, 'Gloria why are you doing that!?' I'm Australian via citizenship, but I don't feel Australian.

The Australian identity felt inaccessible to these participants because of its racial exclusivity, however their claims to familial/ancestral ethno-national identities were also chronically unstable. All participants have at some point – either during childhood, adolescence, early adulthood, or in Gloria's case, whilst taking part in this study – come to accept a fragmented, constantly evolving relationship with ethno-national identity. Nicholas illustrated his process of accepting a dualistic identity:

> It's quite odd. Because when I go back home – when I'm here I feel more African – back home I feel more Australian. You see, the dual identity kind of thing. And the last time I went back home I just accepted man, I'm just African Australian. Yes, my parents, I was born there, but I'm losing much connection. I've been here for too long… I used to wrestle with it, think like, 'nah man I'm not Australian, I'm African'. Until I went back a few times, then I realised, oh shit, I'm actually both.

Visiting familial homelands often challenged participants' sense of belonging to their ethno-nationality. Australia-born participants typically described their ancestral lands as a home and the journey to Africa as a *return*. Home and return are imaginative concepts grounded in an embodied understanding of ancestry – ancestors travel within, and part of living generations across space-time. Familial/ancestral lands are framed as an eternal homeland to which one returns, sometimes generations later, yet the return is often disorienting. Feeling at home in one's homeland is complicated by incomplete or 'inauthentic' (Tölölyan, 1996) understandings of ethnicity, ancestry, and culture. Yazmin described her moment of realisation – a simultaneous (*re*)connection to her roots and recognition of displacement – during her first return trip to her father's homeland, Jamaica, as an adult:

> After going to Jamaica as an adult for the first time by myself and not knowing what to expect. Part of me feeling really rooted there and part of me feeling like the biggest imposter. I think that that trip sparked something in me, and I realised how much I hadn't been thinking about my Blackness. And it was overwhelming. But the people, I don't know, they just have this different vibration, and it's just contagious. I also think the environment, it being tropical. It's like ahh okay, this is where my body want to be. This is what I'm missing. So that is definitely something that's grounding and comforting. Feeling like an imposter. And having that feeling of like: Okay, I've got some work to do. How to understand where, how Jamaica became Jamaica. Yeah, I felt like I was thrown in the deep end, some shit to work out, to read.

Yazmin's visit to Jamaica elicited (*re*)discovery of her Black identity, but also a sense of alienation from both her Australian and her Jamaican identities. Zala spoke to a similar feeling of ethno-national dislocation caused by misrecognition during a trip back to Ethiopia:

> Going back home, or 'home' as in the Motherland or Continent, [I] also feel Othered there. I'm Ethiopian, both of my parents are Ethiopian, and when I went back they also called me the word for White person, called *farangi*, they also balled me *barīya*, which is the word for enslaved people that were darker skin. It was like one or the other. So even though I look very Ethiopian, I'd still get stared down because they knew I was a foreigner in some way. So yeah, that was quite uncomfortable and jarring. Only when I was visiting my mum's family or my dad's family did I feel comfortable.

Transnational/transcultural positionalities locate participants on the peripheries of ethno-national fields because claims of 'authentic' (Tölölyan, 1996) cultural belonging are delegitimised by both home and host nations. Afro-Australian cultural identity is neither home nor host but product of the in-between: a hybrid. The following section charts the overlapping geographies that co-constitute Afro-Australian hybrid cultural identities.

5.4 The African domain

Participants adopted locally accessible ethno-national narratives from their Melbourne-based peers. Most participants highlighted the diversity of their respective Afro-Australian communities and found these hybrid spaces most conducive to identity formation. Zala and Chanel described their shared community as 'quite a diverse group of people [yet] mostly Black'. Zala continued to detail the importance of this community to her identity:

> I think it's the deep comfort because there's an underlying understanding. We don't always have to talk about race and explain ourselves in any way. We all get it. So getting that conversation out of the way and just be ourselves outside of Blackness, it's really beautiful. I feel most myself in those spaces.

Afro communities provide a place for unique, often enigmatic identity configurations that lack single, easy-to-explain origins. Members of Zala's community often exchange elements of

their ethno-national cultures, whereby each member brings an incomplete narrative that is gradually expanded and reimagined – a merging of incomplete stories to produce a community anthology. My volunteer work revealed a similar narrative exchange process. This took place during one of my weekly tutoring sessions with an Afro-Australian high school student:

> As I was about to end our session, Nami inquired into my family heritage. Seeing as we had time, I decide to provide the best answer possible. I opened a share-screen of Google Earth and began explaining my Caribbean family heritage. I shared my story of transatlantic transportation, an oral history that had been passed onto me by my great uncle and cousin when my father, sister, and I visited Trinidad in 2010. Interested but unsatisfied, Naomi further questioned me about Trinidadian traditions and cultural practices. 'What kind of food do you eat? What religion do you follow?' I shared everything I knew about my – at times mysterious – Trinidadian origins.
>
> I then turned the question back to Nami. She instructed me to rotate the Earth back eastward, and asked me to place the cursor on Ethiopia and Rwanda. I had been quite curious about her ancestry. Nami was frustrated that she couldn't tell me much about Rwanda, her father's homeland. Like many young Afro-Australians, she's a child to a single parent. She stressed her connection to her mother's side by illustrating the vital role of her church-based Ethiopian community to her social life. We spoke for a good fifteen minutes or so about our experience as Black people in Melbourne. Basic things really. Some of the places we like to eat, and some of the suburbs we like to visit. Our similarities and our differences. Far more than just tutoring, these weekly sessions criss-crossed our parallel Black lives. Moments to share, relate, and reflect. [field journal, Zoom, June 22, 2021]

Far from being a burden or struggle, hybridity provides an opportunity for the (re)construction of fractured cultural identities. Jordy foregrounds cultural hybridity as the precondition for the creation of authentic Afro-Australian identity:

> There has been an influx of Africans migrating to Australia in the last 40 years. And our parents didn't get the opportunity to pursue whatever they wanted because they had to put food on the table. And we're sort of like that first generation that's gone through school and really seen that the sky is the limit. And I'm really excited by this ability, this rare opportunity to create a culture here! You know. There's been Black French people for 300 years. There's been Black Englishmen for 200 years. And they've got their full cultures that've been around forever, their style of music. And I think that we here, have the opportunity as Afro-Australians to be pioneers

> … we don't have a Spike Lee, and I know there are plenty of OG film makers that are [Black] British, plenty that are Brazilian as well. And I think it's really exciting.

The African domain is a field of ethno-national entanglements, where frayed edges fuse to produce a new fabric of identity.

5.5 The Diasporan domain

The African Diaspora has produced Black/Afro cultural narratives that participants often identified with. Jordy articulated his connection to Black cultures located in the Americas and Britain:

> I think I'm more assimilated with worldwide Black culture as opposed to just African. Like, you know, there's an example [pointing to the records in his room]: That's Black Cuban music, obviously, there's an African American example [pointing to 90s rap record]. But also like Black people from England, you know. I think I land myself more with a worldwide Blackness, as opposed to being Zimbabwean.

I asked Jordy to elaborate on this point by introducing a regional framework into the line of questioning – the notion of being Black in the Commonwealth (of Nations). This is a catch-all for British-colonised Black peoples that – like the empire itself – orbits London as the focal point of Afro-cosmopolitan Black culture. Jordy responded:

> Yooo!! Okay, shit. I'm going to use that. I like that… Makes complete sense! Especially for like my mother and her family. They all went to private schools that were run and owned by British people. And even like that way that I speak, is very British. And it's from that, it's from Zimbabwe being colonised by the British.

Jordy finds self-understanding through his diverse interests in Diasporic cultures that reflect lived experience here in Australia. Just as much of White Australia fashions itself as (White) British (Tölölyan, 1996), participants look towards their Black British and American family to better understand their positionality as Black minorities in a White society. Iman feels connected to British Somalis through social media. She finds their humour relatable to her lived

experiences in Melbourne, Iman identifies with this alignment of hybrid cultures. Iman feels detached from the local inner-Western Somali community due to disagreements associated with shifting intergenerational cultural dynamics, and so this transnational connection substitutes local community. Zala and Chanel both expressed their interest in one day relocating to London, in response to their aforementioned ethno-national dislocation and frustration with their sense of racial isolation in Australia. London was imagined as a space with an 'unspoken understanding' of hybrid identities. Zala described this as a welcomed lack of the 'where are you from conversation'.

Gloria inferred her connection to African Diaspora identities through her strategic adoption of the African American Vernacular English (AAVE) to emphasise particularly Black points throughout her interview, such as a point on racism where '*mother-fuckersss* will say some *sheeit* about Aboriginals'. Similarly, Jordy periodically code-switched to incorporate AAVE to express his excitement about connecting with other Afro-Australians in his community:

> YOOO! That *homie* hit me up trying to hangout! *Yo, I gotta reply to that nigga*! Hahaha. Exactly, that's what I'm talking about. Fuck man! So it makes me happy to see Black people, it does, it really does. And Black people just like, doing them.

Participant accounts reveal conscious effort to engage with established African Diaspora cultures. Participants enter the broader *imagined community* that binds the African Diaspora (Anderson, 1983; Tölölyan, 1996), foregrounded by race-based cultural belonging (Tölölyan, 1996; Wilkins, 1998). Appropriations of language and cultural practices recognise collective experiences that transcend boundaries of the nation-state and is an appreciation of the stateless power vested in the African Diaspora to (re)constitute identity through the (usually violent) dislocation from the Continent (Tölölyan, 1996). Rather than resistance to change, participants have embraced their place in diasporic hybridity by drawing on narratives from their brothers and sisters on distant shores. The formation of hybrid identities (re)conceptualises Africa from a literal homeland to which one can return, to a mythologised ancestral Motherland accessed through dynamic modes of self-expression. Tölölyan emphasises hybridity as the defining feature of diasporic identity (1996). A departure from some 'purer homeland' is not something diasporans need to feel shameful about (Tölölyan, 1996, p. 7). Rather, living through 'new regimes of multiplicity' (Tölölyan, 1996, p. 7) opens up new forms of identity and belonging.

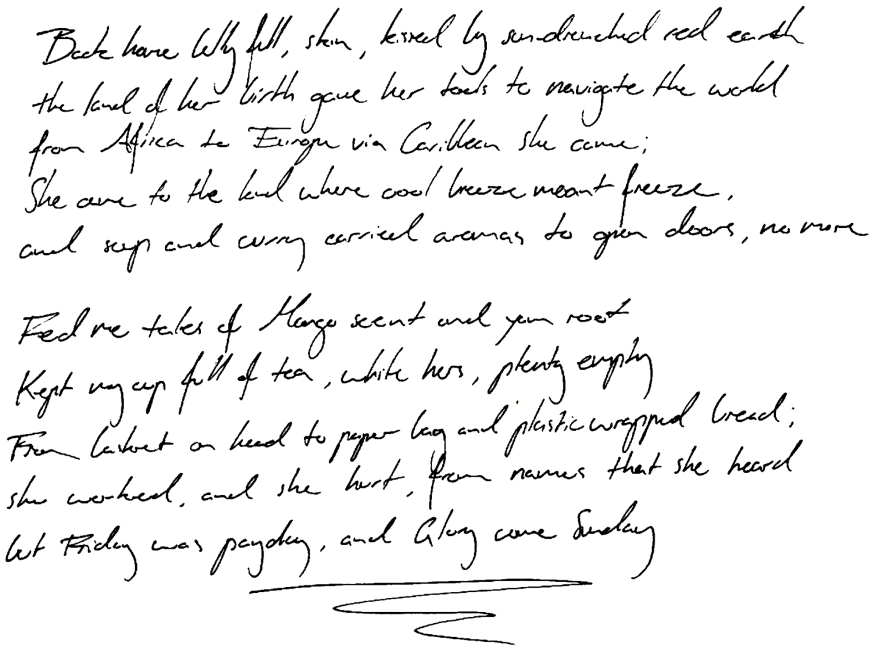


Image 3 - Handwritten copy of a poem by Hilary Thomas
presented in spoken word form in Last Card (Bumper Cars) [song] by Alfa Mist, 2021 [field journal, Moonee Valley Drains, September 23, 2021]

5.6 The 'Australian' domain

Afro, Indigenous, and Melanesian social relations have shaped participants' cultural identities. Irrespective of migrant status (refugee, economic migrant, etc.), most participants articulated their positionality as disintegrated and uncomfortable. On one hand, participants described strong affinity to Indigenous peoples through mutual recognition of race-based Euro-colonial subjugation and perceptions of Black cultural similarities. On the other hand, Afro-Australian participants were cognisant of their complicity in the Australian colonial project. Chanel commented:

> There's that connection that a lot of African countries were colonised as Australia was, and now I'm living here on stolen land, and my ancestors experienced that. So I guess it's like, it's hard. Should I be here too? It isn't my land. We still do connect here with Indigenous people, we are all minority.

Likewise, Iman juxtaposed her parent's motives for moving to Australia as refugees with the implications of non-Indigenous settlement. On an interpersonal level, she drew attention to race-based cultural similarities that support her Indigenous friendships:

> I know it might be a bit weird, but I can't help but feel guilty. Because there's still a sense of colonisation that's happening to them. Did I contribute to that by just moving here? Just being a part of the Australian landscape? … I have a couple friends that are Indigenous and we have similar Black perspectives. They feel very Black to me, they are Black, they have a lot of African qualities like personality and culturally. It feels like they grew up similarly to how I grew up.

Gloria attributed her feeling of connection with Indigenous Australians to shared Black histories by charting the impacts of colonialism on her life course. She identified Blackness as the connective tissue between herself and Indigenous folk in her community:

> The British! That's where [the connection] comes from. We were colonised by the British for a bit there. When you understand colonialism – like the reason I grew up in a refugee camp was because my home was unsafe – that is a shared experience that I have with Indigenous populations. I know what that oppression feel like basically, I'm a product of that shit… Black people all over the world, motherfuckers have been going through it. I'm looking for the Black people that haven't gone through it because of colonialism and White supremacy. There's nobody. And it's so sad that that's what brings us together, it's so fucking negative.

Similarly, Zala and Lex described their Blackness as a conduit to better understand Indigenous challenges. Blackness has oriented Lex's values around a desire to 'give back and empower Indigenous people', which he was able to do because of the 'privileges afforded' to him as a settler. This imperative is tethered to Lex's racial identity, described as 'something [he] has to do… because of [his] Blackness'. Lex felt inaction violated his sense of moral decorum as a Black person. Zala rationalised her adoption of the acronym Black, Indigenous, people of colour (BIPOC), as opposed to the ambiguous the people of colour title (POC) by pointing out the differences between her experience as a Black settler to Indigenous peoples'. The incommensurable differences between people racialised as Black, Indigenous, and other people of colour points back to the spectrum of positionalities across the Euro-colonial racial

hierarchy. Zala's recognised these differences yet linked her Black Australian identity to the Indigenous decolonial struggles:

> Even if Black [Afro] people have a struggle here, and we do have a struggle here, we still need to support the Indigenous fight for justice on this land. It's paramount, you know. Colonialism wreaked havoc everywhere, so their fight is also our fight, you know. And so… it makes me feel more passionate about Indigenous rights here.

Tina (an Indigenous participant) expressed similar concerns, though further emphasised the importance of collective struggle – both Afro and Indigenous – for Indigenous sovereignty:

> You can't talk about Black issues without talking about the land and the Black people it's been stolen from. It doesn't take sense to move forward talking about equity and rights. To have rights, Aboriginal people need to have sovereignty. It doesn't make sense not [to have this]. The Balance is off, we need to have our Sovereignty. What I'm trying to get at – in order for these things to formulate – is that we walk together on these issues [walk, not work, as in walk in protest].

Nicholas poetically paralleled Zala and Tina's points through his conceptualisation of the race-based identity nexus that entangles Indigenous and Afro-Australians together in difference:

> Indigenous people have been going through a lot. It's because of their fight and struggle that I'm able to walk these streets freely. When it comes to Black identity, it's like, are you talking about me? I'm second Black. Aboriginal people are first Black. I'm Indigenous from somewhere else. So I don't tend to say, 'Oh racism this, because I'm African'. No, no man, I know Aboriginal people are going through some shit! [My experience] is just collateral damage, I look like them, we're all people of colour, so therefore, the structural racism towards the Aboriginals is affecting me as well.

The difference between Afro-Australian and Indigenous positionalities was one of Kofi's main contentions. He fielded his analysis with an acknowledgment of racial connectivity, but highlighted Afro and Indigenous difference, underpinned by the settler-Indigenous dynamic. Kofi outlined the imperative to centre Indigenous agendas in advancing Afro-Australian goals:

> We come together in many ways. But we also realise that it's to a point. We recognise that these are different histories… This idea that our Black stories are somehow entwined as one journey is not the case. We are very different. Insofar as we can understand Indigenous issues, I feel that Black people have a better understanding. There were oppressed people and the people that did the oppressing. And we're on that on that side of the spectrum, in which we were oppressed. So we have to make sure that we're not continuing that… how do we make sure that we're engaging in these issues properly, respectfully, and that we're doing something about it? And you know, you can't be comfortable in the answer… We have to acknowledge that our very presence on this land is continuing the White Australia project. And that is a motherfucker isn't it!? Because we don't like to think of ourselves in that light. No. Maybe we could do something and maybe White people could look at African and Afro-Caribbean people in this country and go, 'Oh man if they're able to do some truth-telling on this topic, we really have some truth-telling to do on this'.

Afro-Australian colonised-coloniser positionality appeared profoundly schismatic when participants identified themselves through narratives of the colonised. They described acts of Black Afro-Indigenous solidarity that centres decolonisation goals contributing to the establishment of stable Afro-Australian identities. Albert was concise on this point: the 'shit' treatment of Indigenous people in Swan Hill angered him to a point of total community dissociation [field journal, Fitzroy, July 12, 2021].

Many participants described formative relationships with non-Afro Black peoples. Tamika explores both her mixed race and Black identities in partnership with her best friend, who is of Papuan descent. Their relationship provided mutual support for each other (as Black people) during the turbulence of the 2020 *Black Lives Matter* protests. Teej, a participant with Melanesian heritage, admitted that Jordy was the first friend she had felt fully comfortable around:

> He understood the experiences that I went through as a Black person. He also understood my privilege as a lighter-skin woman…If I'm with Jordy and we're hanging out with a bunch of White people, it almost feels like we're in a team, yeah. I remember, one of the first time we were hanging out, this song was playing, it said the word nigga multiple times. Jordy and I in front of all our White friends said the word 'nigga'. So I got a sense of connection through that. It was like Jody and I versus everyone else.

Teej expressed that her Blackness isolated her from the White world she grew up in and that she had little connection to her Solomon Islander roots. For Teej, meeting Jordy showed her positive conceptualisations of Blackness through friendship and mutual understanding, rather than the trauma of racial discrimination. Irrespective of Teej and Jordy's different ancestral geographies, the two have written their own Afro-Melanesian narrative from shared forms of Black self-expression.

Afro-Indigenous relationships were often described as formative sites of mutual Black connection that shield participants from Whiteness. Yazmin expressed she had 'always felt a sense of connection with Aboriginal people'. Tina recalled the significance of her connection with an Afro-Caribbean classmate during high school. The two were drawn together through their mutual dislocation in an otherwise all-White Catholic school, finding joy through sharing each other's cultures. Tina emphasised her comfortability in Black communities – Indigenous or otherwise. Moving to Melbourne 'opened up [her] world' to a global understanding of Blackness. At times, Afro-Indigenous misunderstandings were challenging for Tina, for example, having to justify her Blackness to two Zimbabweans, or an incident when a South Sudanese person infiltrated the Indigenous lounge at her university. Tina framed these moments as learning experiences for herself and those she had difficulties with, choosing to see these moments as opportunities to broaden each other's conceptualisations of Blackness in Australia. An interesting indicator of Afro-Indigenous togetherness was Tina's use of 'brother' and 'sister' to describe all people racialised as Black. Tina, Zala, and Chanel also emphasised a sense of Black solidarity when reflecting on how different Black groups all 'walked together' at the 2020 *Black Lives Matter* protest in Melbourne. Likewise, Nicholas was clear about his feelings of kinship with Indigenous people, foregrounding his sense of familiarity as a field of cultural exchange:

> There's that sense of brotherhood and sisterhood. When I meet Indigenous people it's, 'ah hey brother!' Almost like we get along instantly, there's that shared identity, shared struggle, experiences. Kind of make us bond together in that sense. I'm not saying all of us get along, [but] I've gotten along with a lot of Indigenous [people]. Even, to be honest, I've dated an Indigenous woman back in the day, so I got to know her tribe, her family. And as African person, it was just like family! The only difference that I felt was that we speak different languages and I'm Indigenous to another land. I got to learn a lot about their experiences. From their brothers, uncles, cousins, the whole mission settlement thing in Lake Tyers. The girl I was dating at the time was, she was from that are of Gippsland, Morwell. So I went there and I've

> seen their Country, and they were very welcoming in every way possible. And growing up here I had some Indigenous brothers and sisters that I went to school with. So, you know, I've always had that connection in a sense… Even to a point where I'm like, 'Are you sure man, are you sure not a lost brother a long time ago? You left Africa a long time ago, before me, I'm just catching up! I'm the one you left behind!'

5.7 Conclusion

Exposure to diverse Black cultural identities in Africa, Australia, and the broader diaspora fostered hybridity for participants. Participant responses demonstrated practices of cultural exchange, illustrating the reconfigurative and creative processes formative to hybrid identities, interwoven with the African Diasporan imagined community. Cultural identity was continually (re)defined through engagement with narratives of other Black people. At times, Black raciality was malleable in the 'Australian' domain, wherein participants connected with different Black groups – together in difference. This was complicated by some participants' positionality as Black settlers on stolen land, recognising an impetus to configure new cultural identities and move towards decolonial practices. Hybrid cultural identities have the potential to overcome ethno-national dislocation, sidestepping barriers placed by Australia's racially exclusive national identity.

6 Black places and White displacement

6.1 Introduction

In this final empirical chapter, I explore place and place-making in everyday urban life. I weave racial identity and cultural hybridity into my analysis, focusing on the socio-cultural aspects of different suburbs. Drawing on Wise's (2010) cartography of emotional landscapes I map participant perception-scapes of the city. *Comfortability* (place) and *discomfort* (displacement) are deployed as a spectrum to arrange sections of the city into geographies of place and displacement, sketching out a city-wide perception-scape. Like Wise, I use a more-than-representational framework to investigate place and displacement at the confluence of physical and imagined landscapes. I hone in on the sensorial nature of urban life, in which everyday activities – the *doing-of-things* – produce complex bodily entanglements: social, cultural, and physical. To blend comfortability/place and discomfort/displacement into mutual concepts, I framed interview questions around embodied accounts of socio- and spatio-cultural experiences of Melbourne's suburbs. I proceed to focus on hyper-local examples of place-making, delving into practices that (re)territorialise urban spaces to create microcosms enmeshing material and imagined landscapes, linking the city to distant socio-cultural domains.

6.2 Comfortability where?

Participants indicated strong connections to place in the 'ethnic' quarters of multicultural suburbia. Zala, Gloria, and Iman defined comfortable spaces as areas where people 'look like you', 'don't judge you', and 'you feel in the majority'. Spaces that participants as comfortable

were not necessarily entirely African. Conceptualisations of racial identities that emphasise looking *like* other people in the street centres *like* experiences and engenders *like*-mindedness. Melbourne's multicultural suburbs foster inter-ethnic(/racial) understandings (Lobo, 2010), that anchor feelings of comfortability in areas where Whiteness has been disestablished as the dominant socio-cultural regime by a critical-mass of Black, Brown and Yellow bodies.

Participants' sense of place was moulded by racial and cultural perceptions of Melbourne's socio-cultural landscape. In areas described as comfortable, participants illustrated their connections to communities of colour inhabiting the streets, cafes, market stalls, station platforms, and civic centres. The busyness of the streets was often framed as an enthralling composition of everyday entanglements with the city-scape and its inhabitants, filled with social interactions offering glimpses into the daily routines of familiar strangers. This is what Anderson refers to as a 'cosmopolitan canopy' (2004). As I observed:

> There's a group of South Sudanese uncles that have permanently occupied the prime outdoor seating at Nicholson Street Arcade, always chilling, watching the street ebb-and-flow as the sun moves from high-noon to dusk. [field journal, Footscray, April 13, 2021]

Feelings of comfortability are grounded in the synchronous *doing-of-things* with others, particularly with people who recognise each another's belonging in the area (Anderson, 2004; Wise, 2005). Nicholas story-boarded the distinctly African social qualities of Footscray – the location he selected for our interview because of his connection to the neighbourhood – which anchor his sense of place:

> When I go to Footscray, I just want to see my brothers and sisters of the African continent, as well as many other African descents that I haven't even got to know yet; maybe African American, Caribbean, you know … Just having a friendly catch up, a coffee. I sometimes just come to Footscray and [it's like], 'I see you brah'. And we all just grow in numbers. In one minute, there'll be five people all just sitting and having coffee. And that's the kind of activity that brings us together. Just tapping in as seeing how we've been doing.

Yazmin's first connection to the Footscray community uncovered new comfortable modalities of urban life. The following anecdote was contextualised by Yazmin's involvement with a Footscray-based podcast project that elevates life stories of people of colour:

> I drove there, it was a sunny day. I was really nervous, but once I got there… I don't know, I've just never had that experience of feeling so comfortable. It was just so nice, I remember meeting one of the girls who was interviewing me. She was having a coffee, and she was like, 'You gotta come meet my Mum'. They're Iranian-Australians. So I met her mum and it was really nice. It was just like family. And then afterwards [the interview] went a bit longer than expected – I was going to meet a friend who lives in in Footscray and messaged saying 'aw sorry it's a bit late, maybe we could catch up another time', and I turned around and he was laying in the sun just outside the Arts Centre, by coincidence. It was so nice, it was just like it was my backyard.

Zala regularly ventures to Footscray to feel more secure in an otherwise often-alienating city. Childhood memories of the Ethiopian (Amharic-speaking) community are enmeshed with the streets, cafés, and arcades:

> I think there is a really natural comfort coming to Footscray. With the comfort, you don't really get stared at, because most people are Black, it's a really nice feeling of acceptance. There are a lot of uncles and aunties around – just a really nice feeling just walking in the central parts of Footscray. A lot of childhood memories as well… I've always been around this area, so not only is it comfortable because there is a lot of African people around and people that look like me, it's also just a memory or feeling of fondness. Being four or five and just running around with my brother and feeling really safe. There'd be uncles and aunties looking out for us.

Everyday encounters become opportunities to see one and other as community members who belong to the streets they walk. Little gestures – such as the nod – are practices that reaffirm a mutual appreciation for sharing space with likeminded people.

Diverse urban centres support hybrid cultural identities. The exchange of ethno-national cultural practices occurs during encounters with other African Diasporan, Indigenous, Vietnamese, South Asian peoples, et cetera. Different streets offer different arrangements of dislocated ethno-nationalities; Sudanese on the corner, Afghani right besides, flanked by a Cantonese grocer [field journal, Sunshine, July 13, 2021]. The streets look and feel as mixed-up as one's own hybrid identity. Yet this is more than a spatial representation of jumbled cultural identities. Practices of being *together-in-difference* kindle new hybrid imaginaries of the city and connections to place (I. Ang, 2003). Seemingly-incongruous shopfronts from all corners of many diasporas – African, Chinese, Indian, et cetera – form a vibrant patchwork of cohesive urban fabric.

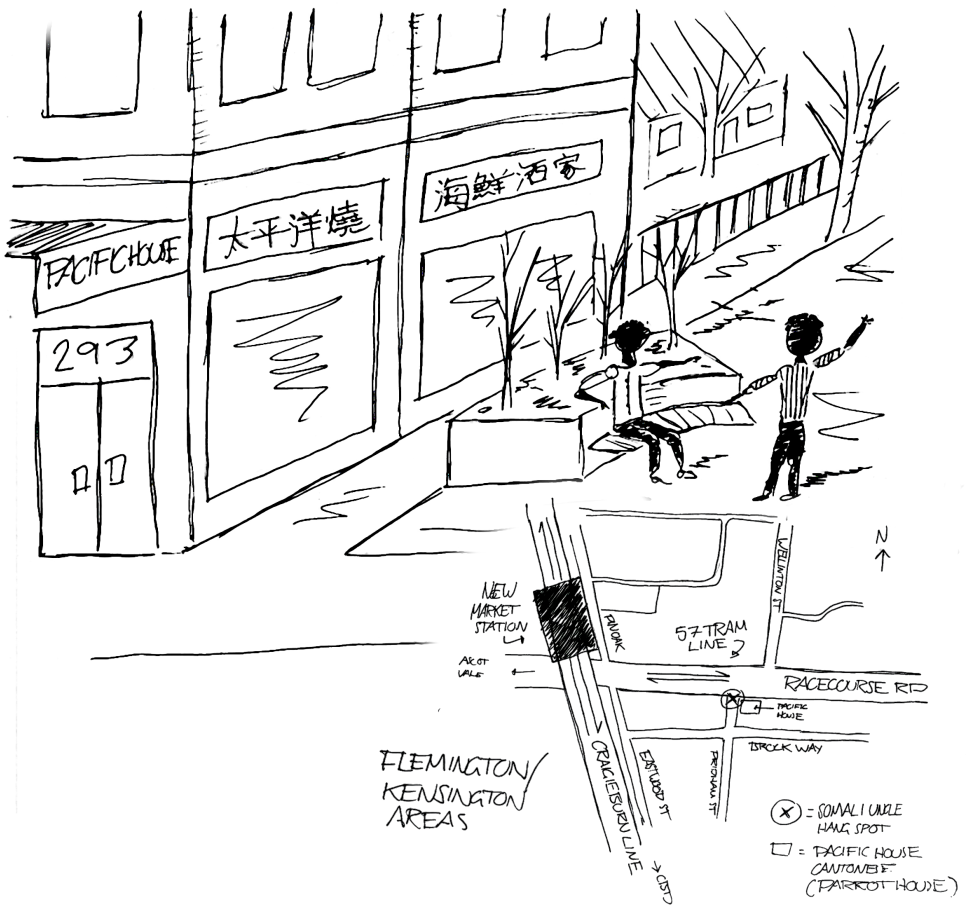


Image 4 - Illustration of the Somali uncle hang spot
Pridham St, and Racecourse Rd pocket park, Kensington.
[field journal, Flemington/Kensington, September 2, 2021]

6.3 Discomfort in the White city

Participants experienced a sense of displacement in areas characterised by secure socio-cultural regimes of Whiteness. Their accounts highlighted the White gaze as the main source of discomfort. As Gloria colourfully described, 'Where motherfuckers look at you like you don't deserve to be in that space'. Everyday activities were marred by epidermal awareness of difference. Yazmin recalled her experiences of discomfort when first moving into the affluent inner-eastern suburbs:

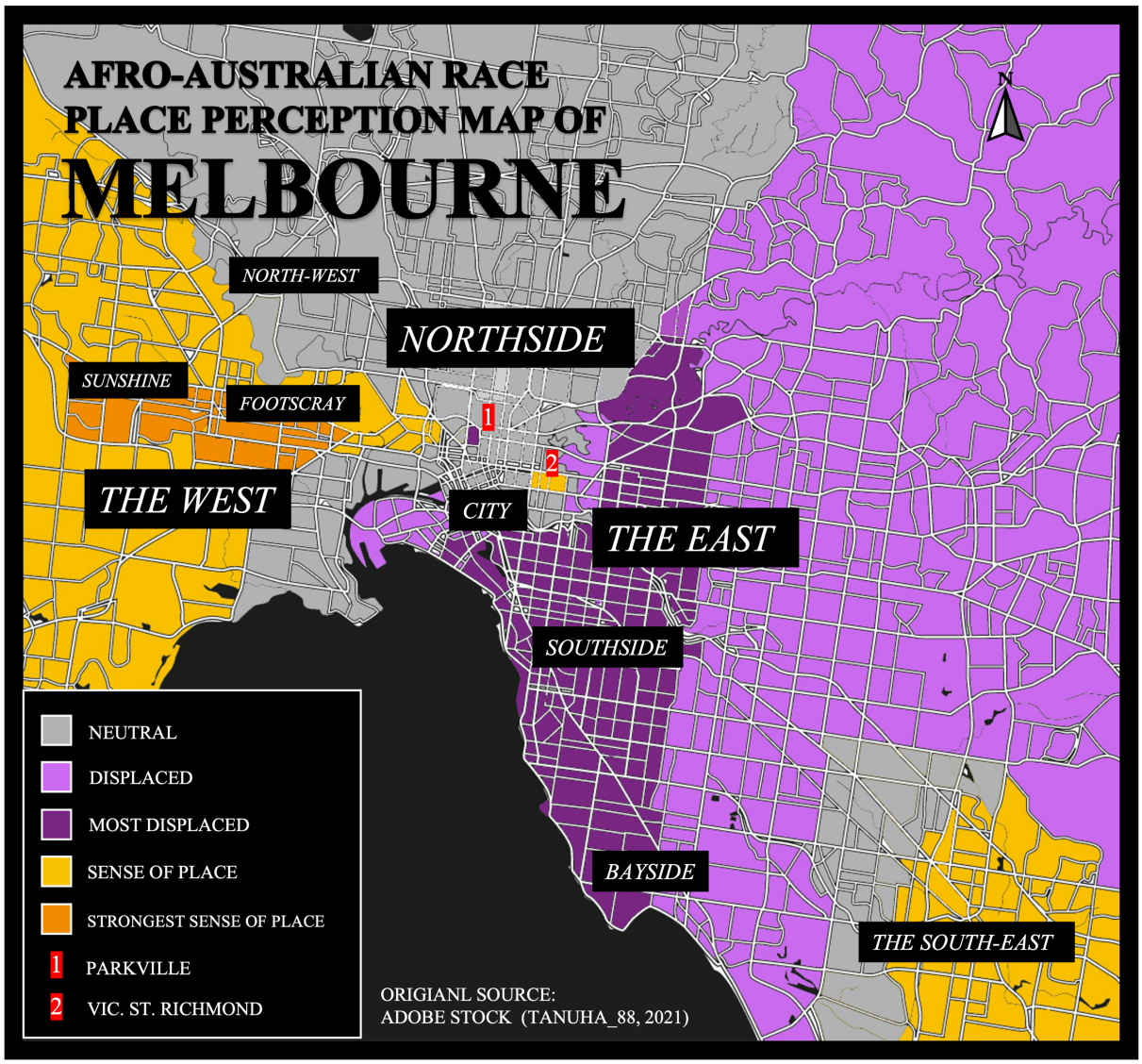
> When I first moved here I lived in Malvern and Glen Iris. This extra attention, extra gazes of eyes, questions about your appearance, your hair, nicknames. Questions not asked to my [White] friend standing next to me.

Whiteness disorientates 'like an un-syncopated polyrhythm that reverberates off the brick and mortar shopfronts of frozen yogurt dispensaries and up-market yoga studios' [field journal, Prahran, April 28, 2021]. To this effect, basic participation in urban life was filled with ever-present reminders of un-belonging. Many participants' accounts painted pictures wherein Black bodies were seen as an aberration to the White public, unable to participate in the everyday activities to (re)produce a sense of place. Encounters sub-texted by Whiteness actively delegitimise hybrid identities; being asked, 'Where are you from?' simultaneously implies that an Afro-Australian is out of place in the White city, and essentialises the Black body as a foreign Other from single, Black geography.

6.4 Mapping place and displacement

(Dis)comfort was mapped to spatially represent my Afro-Australian participants' perceptions of place/displacement. During interviews, participants would point towards areas of the city – such as signalling towards the East or gesturing at a nearby street – to indicate their sense of the spatial distribution of place/displacement. Participants identified three main regions in Melbourne: The West, Northside, and The East. Each region also contains sub-regions – such as specific suburbs – that were specifically mentioned. These geographies were demarcated through Melbourne's suburbs, though regions themselves were guided by the city's socio-cultural characteristics. Each region was described colloquially.

Perception-mapping silhouettes place/displacement. The seemingly well-defined borders are interpretive. Actual boundaries are porous and often transitional, barring major boundaries (like 'crossing the River'). I used Melbourne's physical geography – rivers, highways, arterial roads – to draw regional boundaries. Figure 2 provides a macro-scape snapshot of my participants' senses of place/displacement.



Map 2 - Afro-Australian race/place perception map of Melbourne

Participants framed The West as the most comfortable region. Footscray and Sunshine were often used in anecdotes to illustrate specific socio-cultural characteristics grounding senses of place. The South-East was also associated with feelings of place/comfortability, though less-frequently than The West. The East, a contiguous urban region covering southern and eastern, was framed by most participants to manifest displacement. Inner-southern through inner-north-eastern suburbs – Prahran, South Melbourne, South Yarra, Malvern, Glen Iris, Ivanhoe – were strongly associated with discomfort. The Northside was generally described neutrally, as was the City and North-West. Participants also referenced specific areas of (dis)comfort situated within otherwise neutral regions. Zala mentioned Parkville [1] as a pocket

of discomfort. She described feeling isolated amongst the 'mostly privileged White people' dominating the University campus and surrounds. As an ethnic enclave surrounded by gentrifying/gentrified White(r) communities, Victoria Street in Richmond [2] was a pocket of comfort. Like Footscray and Sunshine, grocers catered to both Southeast Asian and African Diasporans: Plantain, yam, cassava, okra [field journal, Richmond, July 24, 2021]. Following the interview with Lex, we went Victoria Street for lunch. We both remarked on the inviting disorderliness of the street, 'a level of not-giving-a-fuck-about-people-using-the-street-for-things-other-than-walking that completely alters the feeling of the city' [field journal, Richmond, July 24, 2021].

6.5 Shifting perception-scapes

Despite being mapped on paper, perception-scapes are not static. Participants' reflections indicated two major processes that shifted feelings of (dis)comfort. (1) Gentrification displacing communities of colour; and (2) Exposure to different modalities of urban life that broadened their understandings of the city's socio-cultural landscape, coinciding with participants' transition from childhood into their early twenties. Gentrification – particularly in the Western suburbs – was depicted as the forced relocation of Black/coloured urban space to serve White interests. Gloria spoke to her gradually shifting perception of Footscray with a tone of resignation:

> Footscray is becoming gentrified by the well-meaning Whites, so that changes things, it's only like the hub that is still very ethnic. When I step outside my door, it's predominantly White people… But that's what happens, gentrification, you can't stop it.

Tina expressed anger at the current state of gentrification of inner-western suburbs, foregrounded by melancholy at her estrangement from Fitzroy and Collingwood following the near-total eviction of the once-vibrant Indigenous community:

> I'm like, COME ON! GO AWAY! … There's like this wine bar in the centre of the mall, and I'm like you look so out of place. Next door to all these two-dollar shops. It's like, when I think about it, the White fellas are making their places, but it's erasing the community.

Perception-scapes are altered by exposure to new socio-cultural layers of the city. Experiences such as moving out of home into 'diverse inner-city neighbourhoods' (Jordy), going to university, or engaging with different communities, provoked often-jarring reconceptualisations of the city. During adolescence, Iman was 'very sheltered', truncating her imagining of Melbourne as 'mostly Black and Asian'. Attending Monash University in The East radically altered her perception of the city, re-contextualising an entire region of the city in discomforting terms. Perception-scapes are expanded and reconfigured by lived experiences, through both the city's rearrangement around the individual, and the individual's exploration of different urban geographies.

6.6 But what about the racists?

Participants' accounts correlated racial discrimination with sense of displacement in non-White dominated areas. Iman recalled prominent discrimination occurring in her local community, Sunshine, where she also described having the strongest sense of place. She attributed instances of discrimination to Sunshine's changing racial profile in the mid-2000s:

> It was during the time when a lot of White people were moving out and a lot of African people were moving in. I can remember one, we were walking to the car park, just finished up shopping with my Mum. Some random guy came walking up towards us, screaming, 'Go back to where you came from!' The usual.

My experience of racial discrimination at the borders of Flemington, North Melbourne, and Parkville mirrors Iman's account:

> I was crossing the lights, opposite a White woman. There were no cars, so I choose to cross a moment before the green signal. The White woman yelled out, 'I don't know where you're from, but in Australia, we cross when the light is green!' [fieldnotes, Flemington/North Melbourne/Parkville, June 5, 2021].

This incident occurred a few hundred metres from my home, in a neighbourhood I chose to live in because of its diversity and prominent Afro-Australian community. Though the woman's outburst of racial anger was jarring, my sense of place (and self) was unaffected.

Racial discrimination reinforced senses of displacement in participants who grew up in White-dominated neighbourhoods. Chanel anecdotally emphasised her discomfort in The East:

> [I grew up in] The East. My mum is Asian, I have childhood memories of being in the front garden, and these White girls would yell at my mum, 'Go back to your own country'. And there was even a point when I was really young some [high school kids] kicked down our fence in the middle of the night.

Racial discrimination demonstrated a complex but roughly two-fold relationship with senses of place/displacement. Areas with diminishing White-domination – due to non-White territorialisation – saw increasing instances of racial discrimination. In these areas, overall sense of place were not significantly impacted, as White people were no longer the majority, whereas racial discrimination in White-dominated areas deepened senses of displacement.

6.7 Making new places

This section turns to look at smaller acts of place-making at hyper-local levels, outside pre-established *comfortable* areas of the city. This was performed through embodied practices, territorialising often-alienating urban space. My field work drew me into intimate micro-geographies, hidden sanctuaries for Afro-Australian life tucked away in back courtyards of vacant buildings, and in lounge rooms of above-shop apartments.

Trespassing into imagined landscapes: A go-along with Kofi to the former Afro Hub buildings, Nicholson Street, Carlton North

This sub-section illustrates and analyses place-making through Kofi's interview. I also describe pre- and post-interview activities, combining transcribed interview quotes and field journal from July 6, 2021. Kofi and I travelled across town to the interview site, Afro Hub. I let on that it was my first time visiting. Kofi was taken aback:

> What?! You never been to Afro-Hub? Surely you must have at least seen the beautiful mural of an African lady out the front? The girl with a massive Afro, all colourful.

We parked nearby and walked up and down the street several times. Kofi was confused. Perhaps we were on the wrong block. It became apparent that we were in the correct spot. The colourful mural had been completely painted over, in white. Afro-Hub had unfortunately not made it through Melbourne's rolling lockdowns:

> Man, I can't believe they'd paint over such a beautiful mural! IN WHITE! It's like it never existed. I can't believe it! You know what, I'm gonna come back tonight and paint that wall black! You see, it's this kind of thing, just senseless wiping away of culture because they [White people] don't understand it.

Kofi was still determined be interviewed at (what remained of) Afro-Hub, we collected two coffees from an old-school Greek grocer, and scoped a second entrance. Naturally, the alleyway provided us with everything we needed: Milk crates for seating, a stool for the audio equipment, and a poorly-secured gate for an entrance. The building was still vacant, so trespassing was of little concern. I entered first, it was unremarkable by all accounts. A slanted concrete rectangle partially covered by half-adhered AstroTurf, and an adjacent refrigeration unit filled the air with a warm mechanical hum. Kofi's colourful elation upon re-entering Afro-Hub suggested I had been seeing in greyscale. My first questions attempted to draw Kofi's memories into conversation, into the space where I could see them:

> This place isn't here anymore, but it still has a special place in my heart, and in lots of people's hearts. It's still in itself a concept or idea that has a lot of weight to it, even though the physical space no longer serves that purpose.

I attempted to draw a distinction between Afro-Hub as a now-derelict physical space and as an imagined place. I asked, 'Can Afro-Hub ever really die?'

> It can't, can it, no. You have to think about the sorts of conversations and sorts of scenarios we found ourselves in… It was very much-so a space that you could just go and be your full self and meet new people. You'd come here one night and someone'd have a show on. It was music, it was poetry, comedy night, people could hire it for their own events, you could just pop in and

> say hi. It was the first time that I'd ever witnessed or been around anything like that before. Because I grew up around a lot of White people. [laughter]

Kofi spatialised his storytelling, using his body to project memories into the courtyard. He showed me where a tiny bar once stood, where musicians played, where he engaged in passionate conversations with newly-acquainted attendees. I was gradually drawn into Kofi's imagined landscape, one in which he could *be* himself:

> I got some work here, behind the bar and running events and stuff. I was able to *become*, I felt a lot of growth here. And a lot of the friends that I made here are quite scattered, spread all over the world now. But when were link up, it's just how we left it.

Kofi drew a picture wherein the courtyard was situated within a broader imagined landscape, interweaving material and imagined domains across space-time; from 'Australia', over to Africa, into the Diaspora. The map was a radial network that strung each domain together via the central node, Afro-Hub. We traversed various terrain through conversating, stopping off to discuss Afro-Indigenous relations, Diasporan music, and the vibrancy of African people living back on the continent.

Afro-Hub is a site of embodied place-making. The facade no longer projects a visual representation of Afro-Australian life onto the grey streets of Carlton North, and the back courtyard is in disrepair, fenced-off from the public. Yet a sense of place is sealed into the pavement. A concentration of purposeful encounters in a single terrace shopfront re-territorialised a slice of the mostly-White inner-northern suburbs into an exclave of Afro-Australian place. It was a site where positive conceptualisations of Blackness flourished (and momentarily did again during our interview), through conversation, musical performance, poetry, art exhibition, and dance. The physical space was made into a safe-haven of Afro-Australian hybrid cultural identity. Kofi's – and many other's – past acts of place-making have tethered together distant socio-cultural domains to the city. Afro-Hub has been erased from the streets, but it lives on in memory and imagination, providing a sense of place to its community members, wherever they might find themselves.

Image 5 - Lossless radio dance in the front room of Capers (a family-run Greek restaurant), Thornbury. Lossless radio is an online, Afro community-focused platform [field journal, Thornbury, March 14, 2021]

From the lounge room into the Diaspora: An evening of participatory observation at Jordy's house, High Street, Preston

The following is a continuous participatory field observation from an evening spent at Jordy's house prior to the research phase of the thesis. It introduces three new characters who were not interview participants. They are all Afro-Australians who have been assigned the following pseudonyms: Bell (Somali), Felix (Nigerian), and Mille (Kenyan and Anglo-Australian). Field observations we made over a twelve-hour period on April 9-10, 2021:

> It was Friday afternoon when Jordy and I had finished work/uni early. It was the second time Jordy and I had ever spent time together, and the first time just the two of us. We agreed that a few beers at his place would be a nice way to see out the afternoon. Jordy shared a couple of

his short films. The first was an Afro-Australian coming-of-age story set around Sydney Road. It was the first time that I'd seen a proper piece of young Melbourne-based Afro-Australian storytelling. I felt tender joy throughout watching the short. The second was a five-minute recreation of Jordy's migration narrative.

A short while later, my friend Felix send a message into a WhatsApp group that myself and a few other young Afro-Australian men are part of: 'Come by, one for each of you, plus some beef stew and some plantain', accompanied by a photo of four large take-away containers filled with Jollof rice. I was both hungry and about a three-minute walk from Felix's house. What's more, Jordy had mentioned that he'd intended on linking-up with Felix after an encounter at a neighbourhood bar-restaurant (Capers, Thornbury). Jordy and I both arrived at Felix's starving, left uncomfortably full – a typical affair when visiting a Nigerian household.

The evening had arrived and drinks were flowing at a steady pace. Jordy introduced me to his housemate, Mille. Felix and my friend Bell were inbound. What started with just the two of us had snowballed into a little gathering of Black folk, each from a different corner of the Diaspora.

At about midnight we were properly in the dance. Felix was dropping some proper Grime and UK Rap. I took a moment, sitting towards the back of the space with a full view of my surroundings. It was stuck by a visceral sensation of joy. Looking across the room and out into the city, all I could see were Black faces, Afros, dreadlocks, skin as light as mine and as dark as it comes. The room vibrating with music and conversating. Bell, Felix, and Jordy were loudly sharing thoughts and feelings on the current state of Blackness in Melbourne – slipping in personal narrative and everyday experiences. It's so rare, especially on this side of town to be completely immersed in what I can only image is Afro-Australian life, Afro-Australian culture, in Afro-Australian place.

These anecdotes illustrate the reconfigurative practices of Afro-Australian place-making and demonstrated several factors of (re)territorialisation. Place-making was aided by freedom from misrecognising social dynamics which marginalise authentic self-expression. This freedom was crucial to the production of new, hybrid cultural imaginaries of the city-scape. Spaces that are contained and can be made exclusive (Jordy's lounge room) safeguard place-making practices from the displacing gaze of the (usually) White stranger. This was complemented by a pre-established Afro-Australian touchstone (Jordy's household) that provided place-makers with a secure starting-point

Sharing culture though cooking and music – and in Jordy's case, film – draws distant ethno-national and diasporic cultures together in physical and imagined spaces. Eating, conversing, dancing, and listening to music are interwoven multi-sensory practices (Lobo,

2016). The sounds of Black British rap, the flavours of Nigerian cooking, the synchronicities of bodily movements, and the exchange of unfinished narratives opens up new possibilities for identity formation and belonging in the city (Grosz, 2008; Lorimer, 2005). Lounge rooms become sites where cultural identities can be hybridised, rearranged, reimagined. Afro-Australians reconfigure rooms, households, and streets by interlocking the Diasporic and African domains with their surroundings through creative practices of reimagining which carve new out territories in the White city; to make new Afro-Australian place. Place-making furnishes Afro-Australians with new creative possibilities, new ways to *be* in the city, where identity resonates with the steel, brick, and concrete structures that tower above, tunnel below, criss-crossing the imagination.

6.8 Conclusion

This chapter focused on everyday aspects of urban life, examining where participants find a sense of place/displacement and how they (re)territorialise space. I interrogated the socio-cultural characteristics of different suburbs, examining interrelations amongst racial identity, cultural hybridity, and the city. Participants' connections to place were strongly associated with areas of disestablished Whiteness: where racial diversity is abundant and cultural hybridity is the norm, where the doing-of-things freely entangled the self with the city. While senses of displacement were prevalent in White-dominated areas, was most dominant, my participants still demonstrated the creative capacities of place-making, entwining material and imagined landscapes, practicing cultural hybridisation collectively, transforming alienating spaces into diasporic micro-geographies contained within single buildings and stretching far beyond.

7 Conclusions

7.1 Overview

This thesis has explored Afro-Australian identity and place through the entanglements between lived-in and imagined geographies in Melbourne. The qualitative methods used to conduct this research gathered accounts from twelve go-along interviews, supplemented by participatory observations and my own Afro-Australian perspective. I began this thesis by piecing together a theoretical framework from an assortment of literatures: CRT for its epistemological deconstruction of race/racism; post-colonial studies to frame diaspora as transnational imagining; critical Indigenous/multiculturalism literature for its attentiveness to Australian settler-colonial Whiteness. Centring on geographical scholarship, I used more-than-representational theory to frame my understandings of place as territory, wherein one locates themselves through embodied practices of reimagining and materially altering space.

I conceptualised the city as an assemblage of overlapping, interconnected, simultaneously material and imagined territories. Territory is neither static nor neutral. I used a decolonial framework to describe the Australian city which continues to reproduce colonial processes and outcomes. In Chapter Four I deployed this to examine processes through which Blackness was Othered and marginalised in everyday contexts. Chapter Five focused on cultural hybridity and identity reconfiguration in the context of ethno-national dislocation, expressing lived-in and imagined geographies. Chapter Six tied the thesis' four major concerns together – race, hybridity, place, and the city – through the entanglements between imagined landscapes the urban environment. Racially contingent place and displacement was experienced variously in areas of White-dominated space compared to where communities of colour have destabilised White territory. My participants' accounts of place-making depict the

convergence of imaginative, diasporic geographies with the physical city-scape, reterritorialising space into place through practices of cultural hybridity.

These conclusions synthesise key discussion points and major findings to address the thesis' guiding research questions. First, I compare my findings to the MMIC 2020 report, applying CRT to argue that non-White reterritorialisation of White-dominated urban areas causes social friction. I contend that non-White territorialisation is anti-racist and as such provokes racial tensions. Second, I attend to intersectional aspects of racialisation. Third, I examine overlapping Black geographies unique to the Australian context, highlighting ongoing research imperatives into Afro, Melanesian, and Indigenous identity cross-pollination, particularly within the context of decolonial geographies. Fourth, I draw out diasporic imaginings and (re)territorialisation as a means to secure hybrid identities in the lived-in geographies in the city. I finish with a final few words on Black Joy in the White-dominated city.

7.2 Disestablishing Whiteness and racial discrimination

Participants' perception-scapes provided insight into contemporary arrangements of Melbourne's racial geographies. In White-dominated areas of the city, Afro-Australians experienced high levels of marginalisation and displacement. The spatiality of my participants' experiences contest the MMIC's reported distribution of racial exclusion (Wickes et al., 2020). Both my own findings and the MMIC report show that Footscray and adjoining inner West suburbs are most inclusive of people of colour generally, and Afro-Australians specifically. However, in contrast with my perception-scape (Figure 2), the MMIC's mapping of race-based 'exclusionary attitudes' across Melbourne suggests the East and the Southside are less racially exclusionary than areas in the outer West (Wickes et al., 2020, p. 75). I understand the discontinuities between our findings as a result of different theoretical framings of racism. The MMIC definition of racism centres discrimination, whereas I view racism through a CRT lens contending that a prejudicial interpretation of racism obscures the (social, cultural, economic, political) structural nature and settler-colonial foundations of racism in Melbourne (see Bonilla-Silva, 2015). Direct discrimination is replaced by more covert modes of Othering that reinforce White racial hegemony through liberal political culture, impeding efforts to reconfigure colonial-era power arrangements (Bonilla-Silva, 2015; Erel et al., 2016;

Frankenburg, 1993; Mills, 1999). Participants experienced high levels of exclusion in Melbourne's White-dominated neighbourhoods. The MMIC study is limited by its focus on direct discrimination. However, joining its findings with my own creates a more robust explanation of our discrepancies.

The MMIC reported that White-dominated areas near migrant neighbourhoods for instance Melton, are the most 'exclusionary' (Wickes et. al., 2020, p. 75). My research frames non-White territoriality as the disestablishment of White socio-cultural regimes at a local level. Wise (2010) argues that White residents living in neighbourhoods with changing racial demographics often feel high levels of discomfort as their territory reconfigures around them, eroding their sense of place. This draws attention to the difference between racial discrimination and racism. The erosion of Whiteness indicates greater opportunity for migrants of colour to participate in urban life without being Othered, enabling bodily encounters that entangle identity with the city. Areas with higher levels of racial discrimination are in flux, prompting conflict over territory as migrants of colour gradually territorialise White spaces, destabilising White possession of the city. I propose that racial discrimination could be an outcome of increasing migrant territoriality which is supported by Hage's (2002) argument that Australian Whiteness is 'paranoid'. Though highly speculative, migrant territorialisation and associated disestablishment of Whiteness could explain the prevalence of racial discrimination in contested areas.

7.3 Race, gender, intersectional directions

My research has examined the threads of racialisation that knit diverse Afro-Australian identities, but my results also alluded to gendered differences in the construction of my participants' racial identities. For example, Jordy's insight into his public perception as the 'scary-Black-guy' highlights criminalised and violent framings of Black masculinities. A gender-focused reconfiguration of my theoretical framework and analytical approach to my data to provide greater insight into various framings of Black masculinities, drawing on sections of interviews that move beyond the scope of this thesis.

Intersections between race and gender illustrated multi-layered framings of Black feminine identities that further complicated efforts to resist identity distortion. Reflections on the sexualisation and fetishisation of young Black female bodies emerged during some of my

interviews – particularly Yazmin's – further demonstrating gender-differentiated modes of Black racialisation. Kediye's (2017) recent Psychology thesis, *The Victimisation of Animalised Black Woman,* specifically focuses on Afro-Australian female racialisation in Melbourne, building on research imperatives to understand race-gender intersections in Afro-Australian studies.

A Black Feminist reconfiguration of my theoretical framework and re-examination of my results could provide alternate nuance to young Afro-Australian racialisation and senses of place in the city. My analysis has not specifically focused on gendered racialisation. Future interdisciplinary research building on Kediye's and my own data could better unpick the gendered spatialities of racialised young Afro-Australian psychologies. This could expand on my race-place perception mapping by incorporating Valentine's (1989) spatio-temporal illustration of 'woman's fears' across London. Examining gendered temporalities of young Afro-Australian race-place perception-scapes at different times of the day could provide insight into the complexities of Melbourne's racial geographies, potentially indicating experiences informed by gender that are currently obscured by my race-focused approach. Future work could build on Plan International Australia's *Free To Be* archive (2016), a crowdsourced project that mapped the safety-related experiences of young women across Melbourne. The *Free To Be* project demonstrates potentials for participatory GIS (PGIS) to be reconfigured and simultaneously map race/gender perception-scapes (Elwood, Schuurman, & Wilson, 2011).

7.4 Overlapping Black geographies

If Australian nationality is a manifestation of settler-colonial Whiteness (Hage, 1998, 2002; Moreton-Robinson, 2015), then Blackness is antithetical to national belonging. Since the political 'embrace' of multiculturalism (Chiro, 2016), race has been scrubbed from the national vocabulary (Hage, 1998; Jakubowicz, 2003). Echoing Australian critical race/Indigenous/multiculturalism scholars (see Hage, 1998, 2002; Lobo, 2014; Mapedzahama & Kwansah-Aidoo, 2017; Moreton-Robinson, 2015), my findings contest popular conceptualisations of Australian post-raciality (Hage, 1998) by excavating buried spatialities of racism that marginalise young Afro-Australians in the settler-colonial city. My participants' accounts of racialisation illustrate the reproduction of settler-colonial racism on which

Melbourne was founded (Moreton-Robinson, 2015; Porter, 2018). My results parallel critical Indigenous and decolonial scholars' assertions that settler colonialism is a structure – social, cultural, political, material – designed to continuously dispossess Indigenous people, by reproducing marginalisation against Black people (see Porter, 2018; Tuck & Yang, 2012; Wolfe, 2006). Participants' experiences of racial Othering via the White gaze dislocated their bodies from the city as though their presence was trespassing on White civility. Racialisation occurs throughout everyday activities such as going to the supermarket or riding the train; the Black body is stared at, displaced, Othered. Being racialised and Othered inferiorised participants, gradually infusing with identity, especially for those surrounded by Whiteness in their public and intimate spheres.

My findings centre the importance of geographic context by speculating that Afro-Australian racialisation is a product of Black Indigenous oppression that resonates throughout Australian society and varies across local geographic contexts (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2008; Moreton-Robinson, 2015; Porter, 2018). This brings greater nuance to Afro-Australian racial identity narratives. Rather than viewing Afro-Australian racial marginalisation exclusively through the geo-historical lens of Euro-colonisation of African peoples and land, I expand this view to include the colonisation of African people produced by Euro-American notions of Black inferiority (see Mills 1999, 2017), which was reconfigured to colonise Indigenous people and land in Australia (Mapedzahama & Kwansah-Aidoo, 2017; Moreton-Robinson, 2015). Afro-Australians are situated at the converging plate boundaries of Black Geographies and are thus exposed to different Black epistemologies, as well as various Black identity groups (Afro/African, Indigenous, Melanesian).

Black Afro-Australian identity is emerging in a uniquely Australian way, differently to African Diasporans elsewhere. My findings suggest that overlapping Black geographies interlink Afro, Indigenous, and Melanesian Black identities. The relationships between Afro and Indigenous participants (and people more generally) are intricate. Being both Black and settler provokes introspection into positionality and complicity in the Australian settler-colonial project. Racial commonalties are undercut by incommensurable geo-historical differences, which can lead to misunderstandings. However, building relationships has shown that Afro-Australians and Indigenous peoples can form *kinship*-like bonds, such as those illustrated by Nicholas' interview and Aboagye's (2018) work. My results highlight some of the complexities between *kinship* and *conflict,* showing an evolving dynamic that tentatively draws different Black identities together. This builds on Aboagye (2018) as well as Mapedzahama and Kwansah-Aidoo's (2017) Black Indigenous racial ontologies in their Afro-

Australian ethnographic work, emphasising the need for cognisance of geo-historical difference when applying theory (particularly CRT) developed in Atlantic contexts to Afro-Australian research.

Speculating on future research, my findings indicate that shared experiences of racialisation draw different Black groups together. This builds on research imperatives concerned with Black/Indigenous decolonial coalitions in and beyond Geography (see Daigle & Ramírez, 2019; Estes et al., 2021; Radcliffe, 2019). Different Black groups are cognisant of one another, observing respective similarities and differences throughout everyday social interactions. Blackness forms the substrate of decolonial collaboration within the Australian context, and future studies with targeted scopes and attuned methodologies could make more substantive claims in these spaces. Attending to Afro, Melanesian, and Indigenous racial/cultural hybridity in future studies could build on Daigle and Ramírez's decolonial geographic theorisations by refining understandings of 'Black/Indigenous constellations' (2019, p. 79). Given that Daigle and Ramírez write from the North American context – wherein Indigenous and Afro peoples are located in different racial categories – Australian-based geographical investigation needs to approach race differently. Informed by my findings, I advocate that the emergence of new conceptualisations of Black identities requires the development of bespoke theoretical frameworks that centre racial identity across geographically different yet overlapping groups.

Most of my participants, at some point or another, mentioned the 2020 *Black Lives Matter* protests. This was not a focus of my thesis, but further investigation of this movement might serve as compelling starting point for investigating Black Afro, Melanesian, and Indigenous coalitons, building on Aboagye's (2018) reseach on topographies of Australian Black identity landscapes. A question emerging from my reseach and these thoughts is: To what extent does the doing-of Black activism (community organising, artistic representation) entagle young Afro, Melanesian, and Indigenous racial identies in the Australian city?

7.5 At home in Diaspora

Ethno-national dislocation between home and host necessitates cultural hybridity. Home is framed as nebulous, intangible, suspended in the imagination, rather than grounded in lived-in geographies. My participants' accounts parallel those in Clarke's (2019) essay anthology. Is

home where one lives, or where one is from? My participants spoke to feeling simultaneously racially displaced in Australia and detached from 'authentic' ethno-national homelands (Tölölyan, 1996). This sense of un-belonging is emotionally challenging and surfaces in one's consciousness during everyday contexts. Amongst other adolescent transitional challenges (gender, sexuality, life responsibilities), Afro-Australians must navigate a social environment that views them as Other. Cultural dislocation is an ongoing challenge that drives the desire to (re)constitute fragmented identity. The 'journey' toward composing one's cultural identity is shared among young Afro-Australians – their pathways intersect and converge, creating new possibilities for cultural hybridity.

Refitting Ien Ang's (2003) 'together-in-difference' for the Afro-Australian context, my participants' descriptions show that shared Black identity draws young Afro-Australians from heterogeneous ethno-national and African Diasporic backgrounds together. Participants' accounts frame Blackness as a conduit for collective imagining, wherein home is re-contextualised as the Motherland, a singular but non-homogenising Black geography binding diverse cultures, ethnicities, and diasporic backgrounds. In lieu of stable ethno-national identities, participants appropriate, exchange, and reconfigure African/Diasporan cultures to form their own hybrid cultural identities. Cultures identified as Afro belong to all Afro peoples.

Building on Hall's (1990) theory of diasporic identity, I sketched three geographic domains – Africa, Diaspora, Australia – that shape my participants' hybrid cultural identities. These domains function as both physical and imagined landscapes. Participants living in the 'Australian' domain access the African and Diaspora domains through sharing cultural knowledges with each another (food, storytelling, music performance, language), and/or through exposure of their own accord (music via digital media or record stores). This is a practice, a doing-of discovery. Of course, travelling to the Continent provides direct access, though this challenged conceptualisation of identity for some participants.

The Diaspora domain is the most challenging to spatially define because it lacks clear geographical boundaries. If imaginings of Africa are tied to its continental landmass, where then, is the Diaspora? Relevant theorists argue that diasporas are transnational imagined communities (Hall, 1993; Tölölyan, 1991, 1996). Following this logic, diasporas exist only as imagined constructs. However, geographic work has noted the interlocking of diasporic imaginaries with lived-in landscapes (see Carvalho & Tolia-Kelly, 2001; Garbin, 2014). My findings suggest that the Diaspora domain entangles with material geographies at sites of Afro-Australian (re)territorialisation, tucked away in little pockets across the city. These are places where culturally dislocated Afro-Australians gather and engage in place-making, where hybrid

cultural identities take shape through creative processes of reimagining the meaning of being Afro in Australia. Diasporic imaginings, the doings-of Afro-Australian cultural creation are inscribed into concrete courtyards, carved into wooden floorboards, sealed into the mortar between the bricks that construct the four walls within which Afro-Australians dance, laugh, sing, cook, live. These are the spaces where second generation, young Afro-Australians have made, and continue to make, places of their own. Diasporic cultural knowledges are reconfigured, reimagined, hybridised, then etched into the landscape, creating home in the Diaspora that is lived-in within the city.

My participants gathered together in spaces and practices that reflected their identities: Black community centres, performing Black music, telling Black stories. Working towards race-based territorial goals is a representational operation, yet the doing-of-things moves beyond racial representation. Places created for and by young Afro-Australians are respites from Whiteness, where one is free to experiment, recreate, and redefine their cultural identity, entangling Diasporic imaginings with the lived-in cityscape. My findings parallel Lobo's (2016) observations that joining imagined landscapes to the lived-in environment through practices of being in the city presents imaginative opportunities to live beyond the confines of racism. This suggests that Afro-Australian territorial practices have anti-racist outcomes with profoundly positive implications for conceptualisations of identity and senses of place in an otherwise alienating city.

7.6 Final thoughts

In this thesis, I have spatially examined functions of Whiteness in shaping, locating, and distorting young Black Afro-Australian identities. Although my study focused on the empirical phenomena of Afro-Australian identity and place formation in Melbourne, this thesis' findings speak more broadly to the practices of cultural hybridity that have come to define African Diasporan identity across the innumerable lived-in geographies we find ourselves in. It reaffirms how race creates the connective tissue maintaining the Diaspora's imagined community. In this respect, Afro-Australian identity represents another sub-group of the African Diaspora, alongside African Americans, Caribbeans, Black Brits. Our identities are uniquely shaped by fragmented ethno-nationalities, Diasporic ontologies, and the Australian context in which we live.

This thesis also contributes to Australian urban multiculturalism discourse from an Afro-Black perspective, which until recently has been heavily underrepresented (Aboagye, 2018; Ede, 2016; Kalemba, 2021). Melbourne is a racist city. Its social fabric is the product of settler-colonial Whiteness that continues to displace and dispossess Black bodies. The multicultural progressivism that Melbourne has come to be known for is like a sheet of cellophane: Whiteness shines through like a spotlight, excising Black bodies, dislocating us from the city. Misrecognition of Black identities informs how we see ourselves, and how we navigate the city. Avoiding some areas is a matter of self-preservation, while inhabiting others provides a space in which one can feel grounded. As my results demonstrate, the city is not homogenous. Assemblages of overlapping, interweaving, conflicting, imagined, and material territories co-exist. Though the city is White-dominated – some areas entirely – people of colour have territorialised sizable chucks of the urban landscape; sometimes whole suburbs, though more often single streets, single shops, or single homes. Afro-Australians and other people of colour take back the agency to live in the city according to the needs of their identities, breaking the continuity of White dominations. It counters the ways the White gaze confines the Black body, turning the simplest aspects of everyday urban life – like the heinous crime of walking down the street – into psychological prisons.

To finish, I would like to echo Black British Geographer Nathanial Télémaque in his recent piece *Annotating Black Joy on the White City Estate* (2021). Télémaque writes that context matters, the remit of an unequally experienced pandemic, the tragic loss of George Floyd and its very public discourse, and everyday racism that is seemingly indissoluble from the White-dominated city – these things lack satisfactory descriptions. Yet the Black Joy in and amongst these hardships requires our attention. Words often fail to capture Black Joy, its fleeting moments scattered throughout everyday life (Télémaque, 2021, p. 2). My hope is that in researching and writing this thesis, I have captured some of the Black Joys threaded through my participants' accounts and interwoven with the doing-of this research. Encounters of mutual recognition of Black identities in the city, through a simple yet grounding head nod. Coming together to share food, music, dance, stories. Speaking to thirteen wonderful Black people – going on adventures with them, and seeing the city through their eyes – has been, in and of itself, Black Joy that will stay with me long after this thesis has gathered dust at the back of my bookshelf.

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Appendix

1. What makes this place special to you (if at location)/is there a place in the city that's special to you (if elsewhere)?

    1.1. Why/how does this place relate to your self-identity?
    1.2. What are some of the things that you'd do here/there?
    1.3. Was the interaction with other people around you particularly important here/there?
    1.4. Would you say there was a community aspect to the place?

2. Is being in spaces in which other Black/Afro people are present important to you?

    2.1. Was being around other Black/Afro people something you had growing up (at school/in your local suburb/community)?
    2.2. Did you grow up around a lot of White people?
    2.3. How did it feel to be in Black/Afro spaces when you were younger?
    2.4. Were these your people (Somali, if taking to a Somalian) or Afro/Black peoples more generally?
    2.5. Would you say that distinction is important?

3. Do you feel a connection to Afro/Black people generally, or more specifically people from your background?

    3.1. What are some similarities and some differences?
    3.2. Has this space shaped how you think about your connection (or lack thereof) to different Afro/Black peoples?

4. Where have you felt the most comfortable in your life as a Black/Afro person in Melbourne?

    4.1. Do you see race as having an impact on where you feel the most comfortable?
    4.2. Do you think that race determines where you feel comfortable in the Melbourne (restaurant, street, club etc.)?

5. Do you feel your race restricts the kinds of spaces you can enter comfortably? How? Why?

    5.1. Is this something you felt a lot growing up?
    5.2. Do you feel like being you is normal when walk through different parts of the city/ do you feel uncomfortable?
    5.3. Are there spaces where you feel especially uncomfortable?
    5.4. Can you briefly describe a situation or space in which this has happened to you?
    5.5. What strategies to do use to make yourself fit in or feel more comfortable?

6. Where in the city specifically do you feel the most (dis)comfort? List out by suburb.

7. Do you think about the idea of being Australian and how you fit into that identity?

    7.1. Is it possible for a Black/Afro person to fully be Australian?
    7.2. How does this impact your everyday experiences in the city?
    7.3. Is this/that a space where these issues feel less prominent, or in fact, not problems at all?
    7.4. Do you feel as though you could belong here/there and to this part of Melbourne more generally, rather than to Australia itself.

8. You're a Black Afro/African person living on stolen Black Aboriginal land, what thoughts come to mind when you think of this conundrum?

    8.1. Do you feel a connection with other people considered Black, such as Aboriginal people or Melanesian Islanders?

9. Do you think Black/Afro spaces are important in Melbourne? Why?

    9.1. Would you like to see more in the future?
    9.2. What might these look like in an everyday context to you?

10. Final thoughts or anything you want to add?