

**EXPLORING SYSTEMIC  
BARRIERS FACING  
PRECARIOUSLY  
EMPLOYED RACIALIZED  
EDMONTONIANS:  
PRELIMINARY FINDINGS**

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Drs. Jennifer Long & Doriane Intungane (Anthropology, Economics & Political Science,  
MacEwan University)

Dr. Hellen Gateri (Social Work, MacEwan University)

Dr. Rita Dhungel (School of Social Work & Human Services, University of Fraser Valley)

# PROJECT OVERVIEW

Our interdisciplinary research team - in collaboration with the City of Edmonton's Community Social Workers - is using mixed methods to explore systemic barriers facing racialized individuals searching for work, accessing social and settlement services, and/or in the workplace.

We define **systemic barriers** as: “patterns of behaviour, policies, or practices that are part of the social or administrative structures of an organization, and which create or perpetuate a position of relative disadvantage for racialized persons” (Agocs 2004, para. 4).

This research began in 2019 and transitioned to online data collection from 2020 – 2022. Our research questions also changed to include queries into the impact of COVID-19 on racialized job seekers and employees in Edmonton.

# KEY TERMINOLOGY

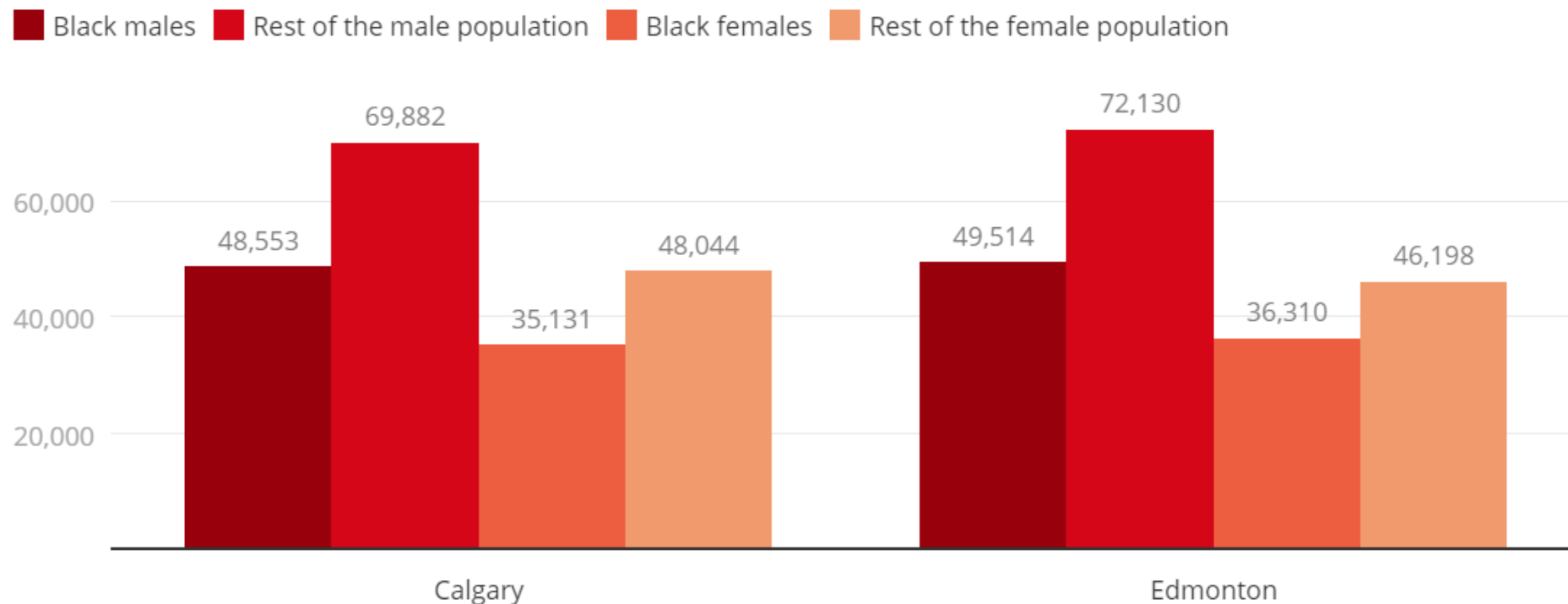
We define a **racialized person** as someone who is identified by others, or identifies themselves, as someone who is non-white living here in Canada. This socially constructed identity is based on characteristics such as skin colour, accent, beliefs and practices, places of origin, and so forth.

**Anti-Black Racism** is defined as “the policies and practices rooted in Canadian institutions such as, education, health care, and justice that mirror and reinforce beliefs, attitudes, prejudice, stereotyping and/or discrimination towards people of Black-African descent” (Black Health Alliance 2018, para.1).

# Black men and women living in Alberta's biggest cities make significantly less money than their non-Black counterparts.

## Median annual wages among population aged 25 to 59 in Alberta's biggest cities, 2016

The wage gap in annual earnings between Black and non-Black earners in Alberta's biggest cities



Source: Statistics Canada (2016), Census of Population.

# RESEARCH APPROACH

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Theoretical Lens: **Intersectional Theory** - Kaushik & Walsh (2018)

Data collection: virtual and in-person **focus groups** with racialized individuals living in Edmonton

- Focus groups populated by **community connectors** identified by community partner (City of Edmonton's Community Social Workers) and supported.
- Seven focus groups held from 2021 – 2022 with 34 participants
  - Data in this presentation: 6 focus groups and 28 participants

# BLACK INTERSECTING EXPERIENCES

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## RACIAL & ETHNIC INTERSECTION

When you are looking for a job, there are stereotypes related to your skin color. When you say you have certain degrees, **people think you are lying because of the images** we see in Africa of children under straw huts or working and writing on the floor.

~ Black, Francophone, female participant

## RACIAL & RELIGIOUS INTERSECTION

**Sometimes religion plays a factor** in that, for example as a Muslim we have five daily obligatory prayers, they (management) dislike that and they laid some Muslim workers off, limiting those people who share the same background.

~Black, Muslim, participant

## RACIAL & LINGUISTIC INTERSECTION

Even when you apply for a position, they often have their people already blaming you for your accent. **But who doesn't have an accent?** The Canadian has an accent. Even the French in Marseille, in Lille, don't pronounce everything the same way.

~ Black, Francophone, female participant

# CANADA'S COLOUR BLIND APPROACH

I can also say that I was the only African in this school, which is why I was often frustrated. The reception and atmosphere were not livable. I noticed that they were just waiting for the end because the project is renewable every year, **so nobody had informed me at the end.** Nobody had made me understand that my project would not be renewed anymore.

~ Black, Francophone, female participant

# COVID EXPERIENCES

- The term, **“because of COVID”** is often used as an excuse for everything. You could be employed for a company for 30 years, yet the company will keep the most recent employee ~ Black, Muslim participant #1
- In general, **we have less jobs available to us due to COVID**, and we are at the workplace **people fear us** because they think that we are spreading the virus even though **we are just as scared** to get as they are. ~ Black, Muslim participant #2
- We have a lot of our brothers and sisters who are in precarious jobs in order to pay the bills. Yet, **people found themselves without work from one day to the next**. Jobs have been reduced for those with 2 or 3 positions. (COVID) made things worse. ~ Black, Francophone, female participant





**EMPLOYMENT  
SERVICE  
PROVIDERS**

# EMPLOYMENT SERVICE PROVIDERS

- Understand the mechanisms used by employment agencies in providing support to visible minority to integrate into the labour market in Edmonton - Alberta.
- Ask for recommendation for the strategies or policies to ensure a diverse workplace in Canadian companies and institutions.

# **EMPLOYMENT SERVICE PROVIDERS**

- Nine employment service providers and research institutions with a focus on research on anti-racism and anti-oppression operating in Edmonton.
- Targeted, universal, or mixed or service centres.

# STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS RACISM IN THE WORKPLACE

Three employment service providers had specific programs or strategies focusing on employers:

- Educational program providing anti-racism training to companies and support their efforts to design programs tailored to the company's specific context.
- Open conversations with employers about hiring racialized job seekers.

# **STRATEGIES TO HELP RACIALIZED JOB SEEKERS**

- Teaching the Canadian workplace culture.
- Sharing information with racialized immigrants.
- Initiating mentorship programs, networking events, and providing language lessons.

# **POLICY DISCUSSION RACIALIZED**

- Policies can be ineffective if the hiring teams are just following policies without understanding why they follow certain requirements.
- Advocacy and raising awareness will be helpful to ensure equitable and diverse workplace everywhere.
- Keeping Canadian companies accountable through audits counting for diversity and inclusion of the workforce.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

- More funding toward Francophone integration programs
- Amend, educate White Canadians, and ‘actually implement’ policies in place (e.g., religious accommodation)
- Shadowing and mentorship programs for immigrants who have lived longer in Canada.
- More social integration programs with Canadians
- More funding to community organizations

# MIXED METHODS RESEARCH

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Review of literature on racialized experiences of employment, looking for work, social services in Edmonton, Alberta & Canada

## INTERVIEWS WITH SERVICE PROVIDERS

Little municipal level data available regarding racialized employment. Interviews with local integration and settlement service providers

## FOCUS GROUPS WITH RACIALIZED COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Focus groups held with racialized community members – facilitated through community connectors

## ONLINE SURVEY

Online survey of Edmontonians and Albertans regarding experiences of employment (looking for work, or training) reflecting on 2020 – 2023 period.

## DESIGN SPRINTS

Disseminate key findings to community members – community members provide sense making and recommendations for future practice



# SUMMARY

- Racialized participants experienced exclusion based on stereotypes rooted in anti-Black racism
- White Canadians were unwilling to discuss issues facing Black employees, which belies a cultural convention around colour-blind racism in Canada.
- The pandemic deepened the inequality found in Edmonton workplaces and schools – as most respondents felt that COVID was used as an excuse to exclude Black, Muslim, and non-native English speakers
- Our research with service providers showcases that many did not have specific programs that addressed racialized experiences in the workplace.

# OUR RESEARCH TEAM



**JENNIFER LONG**

Anthropology, MacEwan  
University

[longj34@macewan.ca](mailto:longj34@macewan.ca)



**DORIANE INTUNGANE**

Economics, MacEwan  
University

[intunganed@macewan.ca](mailto:intunganed@macewan.ca)



**HELLEN GATERI**

Social Work, MacEwan  
University

[gaterih@macewan.ca](mailto:gaterih@macewan.ca)



**RITA DHUNGEL**

Social Work, University of the  
Fraser Valley,

[rita.dhungel@ufv.ca](mailto:rita.dhungel@ufv.ca)

**THANK YOU**

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