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Anti-black racism and othering: an exploration of the lived experience of black Africans who live in Australia

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ABSTRACT

In this article, I discuss findings of a qualitative research conducted among thirty participants on their lived experiences with anti-black racism and Othering, highlighting the lived reality of being becoming and being positioned as a racialized subject. Building on critical race, post-colonial, everyday racism, and Foucauldian theories, I link my analysis of participants' experiences to Australia's history and the legacy of past racist policies and immigration practices, making the case of black African vulnerability, exclusion, marginalization, and disadvantage. The findings provide empirical lens and frameworks to understand black African immigration and experiences in Australia and contribute to growing scholarship on the diasporic black African experiences. By focusing on black Africans, the article shows how skin color, alongside race, combines to reveal how the participants' experience broadens our understanding of black Africans incorporation, identification, and inclusion in White settler colonial and dominated societies. In order to better improve outcomes for black Africans and transform society, I argue for tackling systemic anti-black racism and Othering practices by pursuing policies and practices that promote racial equity and create a more just and socially inclusive multicultural society, where all benefit and feel a sense of belonging.

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Introduction

People of African descent constitute a highly diverse and rapidly growing population in Australia. Many of them have come to Australia to seek better opportunities, start a new life and give new hope to their dreams and aspirations (Udah, 2019). In this article, I examine the lived experience of Africans, who are racialized as 'black' in the Australian context (excluding Africans racialized as White, Asian, or Arabic). Highlighting the lived reality of being becoming and being positioned as a racialized subject, I argue that Othering and anti-black racism can lead to marginalization, exclusion, and disadvantage. Drawing on findings from a qualitative research conducted among thirty participants of African descent, I position experiential knowledge as central to understanding

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experiences with Othering and anti-black racism. Building on critical race, post-colonial and everyday racism theories and Foucauldian theory on discourses in the reproduction of power, dominance and knowledge, I link my analysis of participants' contemporary experiences to Australia's history and the legacy of past racist policies and immigration practices, making the case of black African vulnerability and disadvantage (Baak, 2019; Gatwiri, 2021; Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021; Majavu, 2020; Showers, 2015).

While Othering and anti-blackness are global, with iterations that manifest in unique ways in local contexts (Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021; Showers, 2015), the findings are important and necessary in the Australian context. The findings provide empirical lens and frameworks to understand black African immigration and experiences in Australia and contribute to growing scholarship on the diasporic black African experiences. By focusing on black Africans, the article shows how skin color, alongside race, viewed as a source of disadvantage, combines to reveal how the participants' experience broadens our understanding of black Africans incorporation, identification, and inclusion in White settler colonial and dominated societies.

In order to better improve outcomes for black Africans and transform society, I argue, like Gilroy (1998), for a major rethinking of strategies to tackle and counter systemic anti-black racism and Othering practices. I begin the article with a brief overview of the Africans in Australia and then, explain what I mean by Othering and anti-black racism, analyzing how they are embedded in systems and structures of everyday life. This is followed by an examination of black African construction and Whiteness in Australia. I will also discuss the research methods used and present the findings of the study. The article concludes with a call to pursue policies and practices that promote racial equity and advance a more just and socially inclusive multicultural society, where all benefit and feel a sense of belonging.

Africans in Australia

Although, a very diverse group, Africans – the migrant and refugee groups – add an important chapter to the history of immigration in Australia. They comprise about 1.7% of Australia's total population – over 430, 000 people identify as African-born – White, Asian, and Arabic African-born population included (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2021). While African immigration was restricted during the White Australia Policy,¹ some people of African descent came to Australia via the First Fleet (for more details, see Pybus, 2006). Under the Special Commonwealth African Assistance Plan in the mid-1960s and early 1970s, a small number of black African students from African countries that form part of the British Commonwealth, came to Australia. Immigration from Africa to Australia reached a peak between 1996 and 2005 with the admission of large numbers of refugees and displaced persons on humanitarian grounds from Central, East and West Africa.

The Sydney 2000 Olympic Games – gave Australia much positive media exposure – has led to a significant and steady increase in arrivals of Africans. These African settlers are strongly concentrated in the Australian capital cities. In terms of distribution by state and territory, the 2021 census indicates that Victoria has the largest number of people of African descent (125,505) followed by New South Wales (116,993), Western Australia (75,603), Queensland (74,329), South Australia (22,974), Australian Capital Territory (7502), Tasmania (4004) and the Northern Territory (3288). In 2021, Melbourne (82,189) was home to the larger number of Australia's sub-Saharan Africans followed by Sydney (60,424). Perth (59,733) came third and was followed by Brisbane (39,353), Adelaide

(15878), Canberra (5516), Hobart (2008) and Darwin (1940). The African population is more likely to increase in the next Census.

Although still a small group, black Africans have become firmly part of Australian society and account for an increasing proportion of its total population. Most recent Africans come legally as temporary or permanent migrants and belong to a plethora of nationalities. While push factors of emigration from Africa include socio-economic, political, and family reunions, the pull factors are Australia's skilled program, education system, economic and job opportunities. However, part of the black African experience in Australia has to do with Othering and systemic anti-black racism.

Othering

Othering is a phenomenon in which some individuals or groups are defined and attributed with negative characteristics. It relies on binary dualistic thinking – 'I' and 'You', 'Us' and 'Them'. Othering process marks and names those perceived to be different from Self – as the Other, seen through negative stereotypes (Fanon, 2008; Said, 1998). Othering practices are made real during discourses and regimes of meaning. Through discursive strategies of Othering, one group or individual is empowered with a positive identity and the Other becomes the subjected deemed lower in essence, dehumanized, denied of voice, and ascribed a subordinate status.

Said (1998) and Fanon (2008) explain in their works how racial discourses maintain Othering practices. While Said (1998) argues that the European colonial masters perceived and successfully defined the Orient (colonized non-European people) as the uncivilized, backwards and barbaric Other, Fanon (2008) suggests that, Othering is done by race in racialization – the ascription of ethnic or racial identities. For Fanon (2008), the White gaze, colonial gaze, not only racializes and objectifies blacks as the inferior Other, but also reminds him of his blackness, which is criminalized, dispossessed and dishonored. Through discourses and the production and manipulation of knowledge, the European Self/identity is constructed as superior and the racialized black Other reduced to something emptied of all forms of humanity (Fanon, 2008; Sithole, 2016).

The asymmetry in power relationships is central to Othering discourses. The dominant group make those perceived different, through discourses, to be pathological and morally inferior. Discourses directed at the Other, seen as less worthy of dignity, have consequences on how they are valued, included, and even excluded (Hällgren, 2005). In other words, Othering can reinforce and reproduce positions of domination and marginalization. As a process, Othering goes beyond mere scapegoating and denigration, but explains the fundamental nature of group-based expressions of prejudice and exclusion. It provides a clarifying frame, on a systemic level, which reveals a generalized set of common processes, structures and conditions that propagate and legitimize group-based exclusion, marginality, and persistent inequality (Powell & Menendian, 2016). Othering has the potential to perpetuate anti-black racism (Majavu, 2020; Uday & Singh, 2018).

Anti-black racism

For the purposes of this article, I define racism as a system of advantage or discrimination based on race – that is prejudicial beliefs and stereotypes about a racial group by

individuals, on an interpersonal level, and embedded in organizations, institutions, and systems through policies and practices (Henry & Tator, 2006). While racism, for the most part, is outlawed, the application and use of race in racialization continues to have real impacts on the experience of people, racialized through enslavement and colonization as blacks (Dryden & Nnorom, 2021; Fanon, 2008; Jung, 2019; Sithole, 2016; Uдах, 2021a; Wilderson, 2003).

Coined by Akua Benjamin, anti-black racism is a specific form of racism and racial practice targeted at people of black African descent. It is rooted in the black African history, and experience of enslavement and colonization (Dryden & Nnorom, 2021). Racial slavery and European colonization contributed to shaping ideas of blackness. To justify slavery and European colonization, myths and stereotypes – untrue and biased – about the black Other were used, including the idea that Africans are intellectually and morally inferior, and biologically different or subhuman (Jung, 2019; Wilderson, 2003). While slavery has stopped, one important legacy of slavery is the close connection between blackness and inferiority, and the treatment of blackness as a proxy for criminality (Majavu, 2020; Sithole, 2016; Uдах & Singh, 2018). The legacy of slavery has led to blackness becoming the site of absolute dereliction and generating no categories for respect (Wilderson, 2003). Through slavery and discursive practices, the black subject has emerged as the unthought (Fanon, 2008; Wilderson, 2003). Consequently, through the racist beliefs and anti-black rhetoric, forged during slavery and colonization, the black body, black subject's human being continues to be put permanently in question (Fanon, 2008), leading to skewed life chances, fewer rights, limited access to health and education, incarceration, impoverishment and inequality (Jung, 2019; Uдах, 2021a).

Based largely on skin color, physical and facial features, it highlights the unique nature of systemic racism affecting black Africans, and their resistance to such oppressions (Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021). According to Sexton (2010), anti-black racism is not limited to white on black racism, but also includes the relationship that members of minority groups (non-black and non-whites) have to blacks. Anti-black racism is not only culturally normative. Being both existential and insidious, it is entrenched in the economic systems and embedded in institutions of everyday life, informing policies, laws (local, state, and federal), and practices, and shapes thinking and action (Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021). It is routinely expressed in various particular policies and practices that contribute to racial disparities and reinforce negative beliefs, stereotypes or discrimination towards black Africans. One important feature of anti-black racism is that it is not limited to particular places or time periods. It operates in numerous settings and locations, and through all social and organizational relations that are race relations – involving racial thinking and practices (Essed, 1991; Fanon, 2008). It occurs in workplaces, hospitals, schools, and public places, and through media and political discourse (Baak, 2019; Gatwiri, 2021; Majavu, 2020; Uдах, 2018; Windle, 2008). It is also seen in the different derogatory forms of anti-blackness discourses in popular imagination, media, political and racist acts directed at black Africans that ultimately perpetuate exclusion, marginality, inequality, and disadvantage to the present.

Anti-black racism continues to be a serious problem for many black Africans. As contemporary black population in Australia, they are racialized and devalued based on racial stereotypes of the past (Majavu, 2020). They suffer from, and continue to endure, anti-black racism, fueled by discursive strategies of Othering, and from prejudicial

beliefs and actions of some police, politicians, and private citizens. They bear the brunt of discrimination (Markus, 2016) and are less likely to receive equitable treatment (Udah, 2019). One of the most established forms of anti-black racism and violence in Australia is the treatment of black African youth (Majavu, 2020). They are cast as a problem group in relation to law and order. While street crimes are blamed on their communities, black African youth are constructed as the unwelcome problematic black Other (Majavu, 2020) and structurally positioned in opposition to normality (Windle, 2008). The label 'African gangs' is discursively employed to demonize and criminalize black African youth (Majavu, 2020). In many ways, the 'African gangs' media narrative is part of the social project to improve and civilize Africans. Based on this narrative, the media portrays black Africans as 'a people who deserve to be subjected to police surveillance, racial profiling, harassment, harsh punishments, and where possible, deported back to Africa' (Majavu, 2020, p. 35).

Today, many Africans are impacted by discourses of blackness embedded in racist assumptions about black inferiority, incompetency, disruption, violence, and criminality (Dei, 2013; Sithole, 2016), which negatively impacts on their perception, acceptance, incorporation, and inclusion in White settler colonialism. Hence, it is important to understand the existential reality of anti-black racism on the black African lived experience in Australia. Anti-black racism, resulting from Othering discourses and the construction of black subjects, remains an important dimension of discrimination and black subjection in Australia (Majavu, 2020).

African construction and whiteness

An adequate understanding of the African experience in Australia will require a brief discussion on the local specificity of African construction, and the normalization of Whiteness in Queensland and Australia. With a population of over five million people (ABS, 2021), Queensland is Australia's third most populated and most geographically diverse state. As a state, Queensland achieved self-government in December 1859 after separating from the colony of New South Wales. In the late 1800s, Queensland was a large underpopulated colony. While the influx of successive waves of migrants and refugees has changed Queensland's demographic, like other Australian states and territories, Queensland has a history of racist migration policies and practices linked to the White Australia policy era (for more details, see Forrest & Dunn, 2006; Udah, 2021b).

In terms of race relations, Queensland has a reputation of being Australia's most conservative state and was once called 'the Deep North' in reference to the 'Deep South' of the United States (Lewis, 2012). This appellation, the Deep North, speaks of a place where rednecks ran the parliament and the press, blacks died of beatings and the police thought themselves to be above the law (Knight, 2007). A sad chapter in Queensland and Australia's history is the treatment of First Nations people, South Sea Islanders and Chinese immigrants. Their treatment was the closest Australia and Queensland got to formal apartheid.

The First Nations people – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders – were defined by racial discourses, subjected and confined to marginal spaces (Banivanua-Mar & Edmonds, 2010). Racial slurs and anti-blackness practices were directed at them. Before 1967, they were not formally counted in the Australian census. In other words, they

were positioned as socially dead, less valued, denied of humanity, and ineligible for full citizenship right, voice, and representation within the polity. Ultimately, they were pushed to the edge of economic, cultural, political, and social extinction. While the Chinese were feared, accused of immorality, and considered as undermining fair go principles (Mence et al., 2015), the South Sea Islanders, recruited to work in Queensland's sugar cane fields, were treated terribly as racially inferior. Being perceived as inferior, the South Sea Islanders were segregated from mainstream society, exploited as cheap labor and discarded when no longer needed (Banivanua-Mar, 2012).

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, Queensland and Australia's population growth based mainly on 'white' settlers. In response to the aspirations for an all-white Australia, including the fear and antagonism felt towards cheap colored labor, the White Australia policy – a racist policy – was introduced. The policy favored white immigration and provided the legal means to restrict, and remove, colored immigration. Forrest and Dunn (2006) describe the policy as a blunt *form of sociobiology* in which some 'races' were deemed different, inferior, and should be kept apart. The preference of white immigration reflected a desire to secure a white Australia and build an overwhelmingly white population.

With the abolition of the White Australia policy, attitudes toward immigrants have changed, ranging from generally tolerant to generally intolerant (Markus, 2016). While racist and non-racist attitudes still coexist (Forrest & Dunn, 2006), the sociobiological form of racism or old racism, seen during the White Australia policy era, is by no means a popular ideology in Australia. As Forrest and Dunn (2006, p. 169) explain, 'The key ideological bases of racism, and exclusive nationalism now draw from so-called "new racism" or "cultural racism", based on the perceived incompatibility and 'insurmountability of cultural differences.' While old racism was based on the belief in the inherent superiority of one race over others – the inferior race, the new ideology of racism is expressed primarily, though not exclusively, on the grounds of social cohesion and national unity (Forrest & Dunn, 2006).

Despite support for multicultural policies, Australia is still a predominantly white society, where Whiteness is normalized and institutionalized (Hage, 2012; Henry-Waring, 2008). Whiteness is understood, here, as a category of power, domination, and privilege (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; UDAH, 2021b). It produces unequal power distribution along racial lines, putting whites at an advantage (McIntosh, 1998; Yassine & Tseris, 2022). It operates as an unseen or invisible package of unearned assets that whites cash in every day, but at the same time, remain oblivious to the advantages that they gain from it (McIntosh, 1998). As Frankenberg (1993, pp. 236–237) explains, Whiteness 'signals the production and reproduction of dominance rather than subordination, normativity rather than marginality, and privilege rather than disadvantage.' According to Frankenberg (1993), Whiteness has three linked dimensions: (a) a location of structural advantage, of race privilege; (b) a 'standpoint', a place from which white people look at themselves, at others, and at society; and (c) a set of cultural practices that are usually unmarked and unnamed.

As an effect of racialization, Whiteness is 'real', material and lived in Australia. It is a defining feature of Australian identity and makes race privilege relevant (Hage, 2012). Being founded on, and firmly grounded in, White Australia, the existing meta-discourses of Otherness in Australia still give primacy to Whiteness at the direct expense of ethnically

and racially marked minority people (Henry-Waring, 2008). According to Henry-Waring (2008, p. 7), at the heart of these meta-discourses of Otherness, 'lay a set of pervasive ideologies that valorize Whiteness as the norm, from which Others are constructed, defined, scrutinized and controlled.' These meta-discourses act as hegemonic carriers of power and ideology within which ideas about difference and diversity are created and refuse to be dismantled. They shape attitudes, beliefs and actions and uphold the systems of privilege and/or disadvantage that have characterized the Australian society for a very long time (Hage, 2012; Henry-Waring, 2008).

While differentially disadvantaging non-white people, Whiteness creates the social conditions of unearned privileges – access to resources and power – offered to whites (Zufferey, 2012). As an unmarked norm and standard (Tascón, 2008), Whiteness is maintained in a manner that perpetuates marginalization and social exclusion of racially and ethnically marked people (Olcoñ et al., 2020). Like other racialized societies, the Australian media still valorize white bodies as natural, normal, and standard, and embody the plague of criminality, deviancy, violence, and corruption in the black body (Udah, 2018). Whiteness, therefore, is an important concept for understanding the persistence of power, dominance, and privilege, including Othering practices and anti-black racism in Australia (Hage, 2012; Majavu, 2020; Tascón and Ife, 2019).

While the immigrant population of modern Australia has become highly diversified with a yearly increase in arrivals of migrants and refugees of diverse backgrounds, the discursive construction of identity has, and continues, to follow binary divides and a history of colonization, settlement and nation building that has considered as ethnics members of minority groups. In public discourses, Indigenous Australians, Arab Australians, Asian Australians, Muslim Australians, African Australians are conventionally positioned as the 'Other' to the Anglo-Celtic Australian 'Self' in the space of objectified Otherness (Udah & Singh, 2019). For Forrest and Dunn (2006, p. 167), this reflects an Anglo (or Anglo-Celtic) view on nationalism – 'a hallmark of the "new racism" – an assimilationist or ethnocultural view of Australian society which is different from the "civic nation" ideal envisaged by multiculturalism.' In effect, Whiteness has created unequal power relations that perpetuates everyday racial thinking in both popular and academic discourses (Tascón, 2008). It still plays a part in determining inclusion and exclusion of racialized groups (Hage, 2012), and access to certain resources, in Australia (Udah, 2021b).

Theoretical and conceptual framework

The article builds on critical race, post-colonial and everyday racism theories and Foucauldian theory. The basic tenets of Critical Race Theory (CRT) indicates that: (a) racism is ordinary, natural, every day and pervasive; (b) race is socially constructed; and (c) racism advances Whiteness and white privilege (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Dryden & Nnorom, 2021; Kolivoski et al., 2014). For many CR theorists, Whiteness is the absent center against which others (non-whites) are positioned and perceived as inferior, marginal, undesirable, uncivilized and deviant. With foundations in challenging racism that advances white privilege and contributes to racial disparities and disadvantage (Crenshaw, 2011), CRT scholars call for listening, recognizing, and valuing the voices of racialized and marginalized people (Crenshaw, 2011; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Frankenberg, 1993; Yassine & Tseris, 2022).

In the Australian context, black Africans find themselves in a racist society, which militates against their black body. Given their distinctiveness as black ethnics, they face the insidious effects of racism (Majavu, 2020; Mapedzahama & Kwansah-Aidoo, 2017; Windle, 2008). Following CRT, I argue that the African visible ethnic characteristics are salient in their experience in Australia. Their ethnicity plays vital role in their construction, incorporation, identification, and disadvantage (Udah & Singh, 2018). Therefore, countering racism and Whiteness will help reduce racial inequity and improve outcomes for black Africans in Australia. I recognize race – a social category used to define, differentiate and classify people for millennia – as central to the lived experiences of racialized subjects. Thus, placing the relationship between race and skin color at the center of my analysis, I account for specific forms of racism directed at black Africans in Australia. I argue that race and racialized preferences based on ethnic characteristics and other markers of social differences are core-organizing mechanisms of the socio-political and cultural structure in Australia, leading to differential outcomes and access to power and resources.

Michel Foucault's (1970, 1972, 1977) theory on the role of discourses is also important in understanding the black African experience in Australia. Discourses are historically constructed regimes of knowledge, which include common-sense assumptions and taken-for-granted ideas, belief systems and myths that groups of people share and through which they understand each other (Mama, 1995). Discourses position people – based on their knowledge, forms of subjectivity and power relations – socially, culturally, and politically in relation to each other (Weedon, 1997). For Foucault (1977), discourses play significant role in the reproduction of power, dominance, and inequality. Using Foucauldian ideas about power, knowledge, and discursive practices, I argue that power as knowledge forms the basis of anti-blackness discourses, which shape ideas and actions towards black Africans in the Australian society. I situate the black African subjection, identification and experience within structural and discursive practices that define and construct them as different (Udah & Singh, 2019) and passive objects to be governed, moved, or removed according to a white national will (Hage, 2012). Thus, the effects of knowledge and power in social relations at the level of discursive practices in black Africans' everyday life cannot be analyzed only in the present. As Foucault (1972) explains, power and history create a tangled knot of shifting meanings and definitions over periods. In the Foucauldian way of thinking, I argue, therefore, that present everyday experiences of Othering and anti-black racism produce, and reinforce old racism of denigration, dehumanization, and discrimination in early Australian nationalists' discourses.

In addition, Philomena Essed's (1991) notion of everyday racism, like much of Foucauldian discourse analysis, is employed to qualify the implications of centralizing experiential knowledge in understanding and identifying converging forms of everyday Othering and anti-black racism directed at black Africans. Everyday racism identifies, as theoretically relevant and meaningful, the lived experiences with racism. As a process, everyday racism is routinely created, and reinforced, through everyday racial acts and practices. Within Essed's (1991) conceptualization, everyday racism does not exist as a single event but as a complex of cumulative racist and discursive practices that are systemic, recurrent, repetitive and familiar in everyday life and become part of what is seen as 'normal' by the dominant group. Everyday racism is manifested in everyday attitudes (prejudice) and actions (discrimination). It is also manifested in smaller everyday derogatory slurs, ethnic jokes, ridicule, patronizing behaviors, including assumptions of lack of competence

and bigger everyday violations of the civil rights and dignity of people (Essed, 1991). Though often subtle, everyday racism can have damaging effects over time on people who are subjected to it.

Using post-colonial theory, I analyze the effects of Othering and anti-black racism in the life of black Africans in contemporary Australia. Post-colonial theory helps to recognize and respond to the impact of slavery, colonization and discursive practices in contemporary society. As colonial subjects, the legacy of colonization continues to affect the social, economic, and political life and wellbeing of black Africans in Australia (Majavu, 2020; Udah, 2019). Employing a post-colonial lens, therefore, I deconstruct how black Africans are defined, and cast in the inferior role through imperial language (Fanon, 2008). I argue that the alterity of black Africans in colonial discourses constitutes a discursive reality. Hence, I recognize the structural and discursive inequalities that shape their lives and maintain that Othering and anti-black racism directed at black Africans function as a mirror to stabilize the actor's inverted self-image (Sencindiver et al., 2012).

Research design and methodology

This article reports on a qualitative study conducted to examine the lived experience of black Africans living in South East Queensland (SEQ), Australia. Participants ($n = 30$) consisted of African (10 females and 20 males) adults, between the ages of 22 and 67 years. Of these participants, 17 came as refugees through Australia's humanitarian program and 13 came as temporary migrants (six arrived on student visa and seven on skilled migration visa). Purposeful sampling was used to select participants who had lived for more than three years in Australia. Participation was voluntary. Informed consent was obtained from participants who were assured of privacy and confidentiality. Participants were diverse in terms of their culture, religion, values, languages, heritage and national backgrounds.

Qualitative data were collected through individual face-to-face semi-structured interviews. The interviews allowed for an in-depth examination of participants' lived experience and gave an opportunity to gain a rich understanding of participants' views, perspectives and perceptions (Patton, 2015). The interviews were conducted in the English language and lasted for not more than one hour during which participants' responses were probed while encouraging them to provide more details and clarification. The use of a semi-structured interview schedule provided some structure and allowed participants to narrate their experiences in a relatively free and detailed way. The interview questions covered issues around participants' settlement experiences, personal and socioeconomic conditions, life satisfaction and well-being, employment and sense of belonging. The interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent.

Thematic analysis was used to analyze interview data – to identify, interpret, and report common thematic elements across the participants' transcribed interview data (Creswell & Cresswell, 2018). The transcribed interview data were coded using NVivo. During the coding, keywords and metaphors were searched to support analysis and produce a concise matrix of key emerging themes. This article one of the core themes that emerges, the theme of anti-black racism and Othering. While Othering and anti-blackness are global, with iterations that manifest in unique ways in local contexts, the findings are important and necessary in the Australian context. Some direct quotations and excerpts

from some participants' accounts are used to report the findings and make the case of the uniqueness and specificity of the Australian case.

Findings – participants' experiences with othering and anti-black racism

Participants' excerpts shed insights into the black African experience in Australia. Many participants talk about their race and experiences with anti-black racism at institutional and interpersonal levels. For several participants, being black is a problematic racial marker. About 28 participants said their ethnicity put them in a position of disadvantage. For these participants, they are subjected to racial discrimination because of their race and skin color/blackness. These participants worry about being judged and unfairly treated. For example, describing his experience of being black, Damian says:

There are opportunities you miss because you are not given access to it usually because of your color. You are not seen as capable of doing it ... For you to be accepted, you have to prove it ... You really have to do twice as much to be seen as half as good ...

Damian's quote above reveals something about being black in Australia, where racialization continues to shape his life. For being black, Damian navigates some interpersonal and structural challenges to be accepted. He emigrated from Ghana to Australia in 2008. Damian thinks that he is not accepted by default in the Australian society because of his race and visible ethnic characteristics. According to Damian:

The color of your skin is definitely a factor. It does put you at an immediate disadvantage. You really have to do twice as much to be seen as half as good. It is definitely an impression or perception of the society that you don't have anything to offer and cuts across everything – right through government departments, right through other companies, right through even with the police authorities and other security authorities. You are immediately seen as being in the wrong ...

Damian believes that his skin color/blackness puts him at disadvantage, due to stereotypes and popularly held negative views of black Africans. For this reason, Damian suggests that he must work twice harder to be recognized, accepted, and given opportunity.

Like Damian, some participants feel their skin color/blackness is inferiorized and despised. For these participants, their blackness shapes the degree to which people value them, determining their inclusion and access to certain resources. For this reason, the participants say it is a constant struggle to survive as a black person because people still racialize and stigmatize them. For example, Kevin, one of the participants, remarks:

What they think of us is completely what we are not. You know when you have people think of you as inferior; people think of you as incapable before you even speak, that is a challenge in itself. You have to try to prove otherwise

Kevin was born in South Sudan. He spent most of his teenage years in Uganda. In 2005, he migrated to Australia on humanitarian grounds. At the time of this study, Kevin was a university student. Kevin says it is common for people to treat him differently and underestimate his skills because of his race and skin color/blackness. To counter his experiences

with differential treatment and underestimation, Kevin, like Damian, believes in working twice as harder. According to Kevin:

For me, black man in this country means struggle, continue to struggle ... As an African, to realize my dream here, I believe I should work twice as hard. We are disadvantaged in a certain way ...

Three points can be highlighted from Kevin's data extract above. First, Kevin recognizes the everyday pressures, consciously or unconsciously, to work twice as harder in order to be valued. Second, Kevin understands that he would face many challenges as an African. He is also consciously aware of the ways in which race shapes, marginalizes and disadvantages him. Kevin describes his life in Australia as one of stereotypes, marginalization, and disadvantage. According to Kevin:

When you are seen as a black man there is a certain expectation of who you are ... you know; very less people here believe that we as African people have the potential to be higher achievers ... It could be because of what is portrayed of us in the media. Nothing good is really said about us ... We are always thought of as under achievers rather than people who have the potential to achieve and be successful.

Kevin believes that people seen his skin color only in terms of their inferiorized black identity without giving any thought to his capacities as an individual. For Kevin, the preference will always go to a white Australian when it comes to getting skilled upper-level office jobs. Expressing his frustrations about his experiences with anti-black racism, Kevin says:

For African peoples here, it is quite difficult. The expectation of an African is to be in a factory or in the farms. That is where we are mostly accepted. If you want to go and work in a meat factory, you will get it. You can have master's degrees, I know of engineers who are sitting at home. If you leave your degree and look for jobs in the factories, you have a better chance of getting it.

Kevin's account shows how skin color/blackness is salient in several participants' experience. In addition to talking about their race and experiences with Othering and anti-black racism, many participants believe that skin color/blackness continues to marginalize them. Not surprisingly, for some participants, their skin color/blackness is a handicap and comes with many labels and disadvantages. According to Sandra, one of the female participants:

If you are black among the Australians, you are either presumed as a worthless something. Being black in Australia comes with title – a heavy title. You will do your hardest to get educated but there is always an obstacle ... will you be respected? For you to be in an office, there is a tag on it. To be in an office, it is like you have won the lotto.

For Sandra, people are more likely to stereotype and underestimate her because of her skin color/blackness. While Sandra recognizes the discriminatory challenges associated with being black, she believes that she must maintain a higher bar expected of her to fit in and keep a job. Regardless of educational status and performance, Sandra believes that skin color/blackness will make black Africans to be constantly under surveillance. For Sandra, it is like winning a lotto for a black African to achieve career goals. Like Sandra, several participants believe also that people are more likely to view them with suspicion, doubt their skills and pick up on any of their mistakes, which can be damaging to their

health, and career performance. For these participants, they think that people perceived them as less competent and discriminated against them. Recalling his experience with Othering, Ricky, from Nigeria, says:

When I was doing my Australian Medical Council (AMC) exam, my boss [supervisor] then was saying that she has found that blacks are not so good doctors, and that it will be hard for me to pass the exam ... Of course, I was annoyed with her.

Ricky immigrated to Australia in 2000 for further studies. Ricky's data highlight some of the negative assumptions, resulting from Othering and specific to anti-blackness discourses and stereotypes about black Africans held by some people in society. While Othering is often covert, it may involve unconscious assumptions, which can categorize, denigrate, objectify, and ultimately marginalize the racialized 'Other'. Despite his boss/supervisor's derogatory comment, Ricky was never discouraged. Amid his objectification, he remained motivated, persevered, and excelled in the final exam. According to Ricky:

To show her that I am good, I did the exam six months earlier before I graduated. I was due to take the exam in November, but I did it in March of that year and passed it ...

Ricky's experience suggests that existing racial colonial discourses and practices could have influenced how his boss/supervisor stereotypes and constructs him. Not surprisingly, several participants say that people made negative assumptions about them. For example, according to one participant, Morris:

Here in my university, the lecturer asked me why I chose a counselling course. I told her that I want to help people. She said, which people? I replied everybody. She said it is going to be difficult for me to work with Australians. I asked her why? She said it is because of where I come from, the culture, the way I speak. She did not think that I could work with white Australians ...

Morris came from Sudan to Australia in 2004 after spending five years as a refugee in Cairo, Egypt. There are few things to highlight from Morris' account above. First, it indicates the assumptions and racially insensitive views made about his capacity for professional practice. In addition, it shows the convergent racism that he encounters daily. As Whiteness is the standard against which all others are measured, Morris' lecturer has preconceived notions of what he can and cannot do. Thus, Morris' presence in a counselling degree program challenged, in raced and gendered ways, the lecturer's constructed understanding of a counselor. Though Morris' accent, skin color and culture might present some barriers, yet, laying much emphasis on these visible ethnic traits is to communicate a dismissive attitude, which can be potentially destructive to one's mental health and aspirations.

While discouraging, the lecturer's comment indicates also, how common it can be for people to express racist or racially insensitive views about Morris' capability to excel in certain professional roles. Through discursive practices, the participants feel that they are constructed as incompetent – an inferiority in contrast to whites. For many participants, this construction is burdensome. As Margaret, a participant from Zimbabwe, explains, *In the work environment, someone might think you don't know much because of where you have come from or because of your color.* Another participant, Thomas, adds: *That's something generally you find. They are still putting people in boxes. Like if you are black without knowing you, they just categorize you as inferior ...*

To (mis)categorize individuals or groups is a fundamental error that some people make. This error in judgement can promote anti-black racism. The error makes it highly functional to deny those being categorized dignity, voice, and valuable opportunities for service, employment, and professional advancement. Describing their experiences with anti-black racism, the participants say that people underestimated them because of their skin color/blackness. For example, Barbara states:

Even when you are successful and you are good at things, some will try to underestimate you because for some people, it is not okay for a black person to know more than them ...

Another participant, Jason, says, *Sometimes they eye [sic] you as if you do not know what you are doing.* For another participant, Aaron, the idea that blacks cannot perform is *just the same stereotypes. It comes from media. It is a distorted perception. It is a business perception. They look down on Africans.* For Barbara, anti-black racism is a real, serious, and insidious problem, making life hard for her:

I just want to say, it is a real issue. It is an issue that some people want to deny and some people are not open about it because of the fear of them being discriminated against based even on that.

To survive clearly, for many participants, means that their experiences of Othering and anti-black racism are brought into question, and it is essential to understand their lived experience and identify ways to addressing their marginalization. Despite the diversity of participants in terms of age, national origin, religion, education and socioeconomic status and differences in immigration trajectories, many participants identify anti-black racism, fueled by Othering, as a significant challenge, which they must confront daily.

Discussion

This article sets out to explore and discuss the lived experiences with Othering and anti-black racism amongst black Africans in Australia. The findings presented in this article hold significance for our understanding of black Africans' experiences and incorporation in Australia. In examining participants' experiences, I see the complex ways in which racialized Othering and anti-black racism continue to shape their lives. I have used some data excerpts from participants to make sense of the complexity and influence of race and skin color /blackness in the context of their everyday lives. Participants' accounts draw attention to racialized Othering and to some discriminatory forces (systemic, cultural, and institutional) that can marginalize, exclude and devalue black Africans in Australia. While Australians are a relatively friendly and tolerant people (Forrest & Dunn, 2006), I argue that race and skin color/blackness are salient in the black African experiences in Australia. The participants show that the negative constructions and stereotypes about their skin color affected their experiences. Participants' accounts have raised a number of issues. For the sake of brevity, it is important to focus on some key points for discussion.

Looking at Australia as an exemplar of White settler colonialism, the legacy of past racist policies and discursive practices have implications for participants' contemporary experiences. As the experiences of participants demonstrate, settlement in Australia entails ongoing struggles with anti-blackness discourses embedded in colonial histories and Australian nation building (Hage, 2012). For many participants, the discursive

strategies of Othering and anti-black racism blight their lives, leave them disillusioned, and frustrated. In addition to talking about their experiences with Othering and anti-black racism, participants believe that their skin color/blackness puts them in a position of disadvantage. Irrespective of their skills, knowledge and educational qualifications, the discursive constructions of their black identity, which include the notions of inferiority, incapability and incompetence, work to construct their lived reality of being, becoming and positioned as a racialized subject, leading to their marginalization, exclusion, and disadvantage. Thus, the participants' accounts highlight their marginal position and place as racialized subjects. Consistent with existing studies (Majavu, 2020; Mapedzahama & Kwansah-Aidoo, 2017; Small, 2018; UDAH & Singh, 2018), the findings suggest that Othering and anti-black racism can negatively affect all facets of the lives of black Africans in Australia. As participants' data reveal, prevailing anti-blackness narratives and discourses that associate blackness with inferiority undermine their aspirations, denying them opportunities to thrive in Australia. Thus, it is essential to engage and acknowledge the more insidious everyday anti-black racism and Othering practices that persist in Australia today. Anti-black racism and Othering must come to an end for black Africans' incorporation and acceptance to be fully actualized in Australia.

Skin color/blackness serves as an ethnic marker of difference among black Africans in Australia. Past racist ideas and present discursive practices portrayed blacks as inferiors (Small, 2018; UDAH, 2018). According to Essed (1991, p. 232), when 'whites began to relate color to intelligence in the eighteenth century, Blackness began to mean mental inferiority.' As participants' data indicate, people communicated, both overtly and covertly, the idea of black inferiority in their interactions with them. For many participants, the effect of being racialized is the basis of the biopower that governs (Foucault, 1970) and subjects them (Sithole, 2016), affecting their well-being (Majavu, 2020; UDAH, 2019). Thus, participants' experiences evoke the imperative to articulate and understand the social conditions and ways in which racialized Othering and anti-black racism are linked to historically variable forms of racial oppression. It is more likely that deficit racialized discourses and social constructs – that define black Africans in terms of assumed inferiority and incapability – confine them to the realm of the unknowing, unknowledgeable Other as well as render them suspects – as those who are not competent to perform as efficient and productive citizens (Mapedzahama et al., 2012).

Anti-black racism is one of the critical complexities of racial oppression in Australia (Majavu, 2020). Given the racialized constructions of blackness, anti-black racism needs to be part of the understanding of the black African experience in Australia. It is systemic, pervasive, and productive (Feagin, 2013) and continues to plague the African black body (Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021; Sithole, 2016). As participants' data indicate, it involves, and can be seen in, discursive everyday practices and strategies of Othering. It appears in practices that support specific forms of discrimination against black Africans – through unwitting prejudice, gestures, conversations, stereotypes, and seemingly subtle covert acts, namely, those social cognitions and social acts, processes that are recurrent and familiar in everyday life and become part of what is seen as normal (Essed, 1991). As participants' accounts make clear, processes of Othering operating through everyday racism have a powerful influence on employment and settlement outcomes. Thus, black Africans must be free from subjection and processes of racialization that inferiorize and empty them of their humanity (Sithole, 2016).

Consistent with research by Majavu (2020); Gatwiri (2021); Baak (2019) and Mapedzahama and Kwansah-Aidoo (2017), anti-black racism continues to impact on the lives and outcomes of black Africans in Australia. As participants accounts indicate, they are underestimated and constructed as inferiors. They are not by default accepted as members of society (Udah, 2018). This is not just a matter of participants being marginalized and excluded from economic opportunities but the fact that Whiteness presumes blackness, conceptually, as its archetypal Other (in terms of the social Darwinian/biopolitical imaginary that informed past racial typologies and ideologies of denigration and dehumanization). In fact, modern Australian society is still based on racial domination, involving the normalization of Whiteness and the marginalization of racially and ethnically marked people like the subjects of this study. The racial discrimination experienced by participants suggests that anti-black racism continues to be pervasive, systemic, and productive in Australia and negatively affect black Africans (Feagin, 2013; Markus, 2016). As their blackness embodies that which is inferiorized and feared, they are problematized (Majavu, 2020; Mapedzahama & Kwansah-Aidoo, 2017; Windle, 2008). In fact, participants' peculiar experiences suggest that anti-black racism must be understood within the context of anti-blackness in society (Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021). Of course, part of what it means to conceive human beings as agents is to conceive them as empowered members by their access to resources of one kind or another. So tackling anti-blackness is about challenging the place and position of black Africans as the problematic Other, denied of humanity and thus, inferior. Participants' accounts indicate that they constitute one of the disadvantaged groups. As a social group, blackness shapes how they are seen and included (Udah, 2019). If black Africans are to achieve their full potential in Australia, it is important examine and understand how they are negatively impacted by systemic anti-black racism and anti-blackness discourses, and how these practices are perpetuated (Majavu, 2020).

In many ways, the legacy of, and continuing, deficit anti-blackness racist discourses created during colonization and white Australia continue to revive, reinforce, and perpetuate racial inequality (Jung, 2019; Majavu, 2020; Wilderson, 2003). While current Australian immigration program allows immigration of people from diverse backgrounds, the normalization of Whiteness still upholds anti-black racist practices and the systems of inequality that have characterized the black African experience for a very long time (Baak, 2019; Gatwiri, 2021; Majavu, 2020; Mapedzahama & Kwansah-Aidoo, 2017; Udah, 2019). Thus, the participants' experience with Othering and anti-black racism suggest that systemic anti-black racism embedded within society can perpetuate racial inequality, exclusion and disadvantage even without overt racism (Kolivoski et al., 2014).

Based on participants' accounts, anti-black racism and Othering practices appear to be the basis for the various forms of marginalization and disadvantage that they experienced. In line with existing studies, I argue that anti-black racism affects black Africans in Australia (Mapedzahama & Kwansah-Aidoo, 2017). The negative media portrayals of black Africans (for example that they are problematic, uncivilized, dangerous, aggressive, troublesome, crime prone and so forth) demonstrate consistently the use of Whiteness to demonize and grossly misrepresent them, making them the focus of heightened prejudice and antipathy (Mapedzahama & Kwansah-Aidoo, 2017). In fact, the continued negative media narratives and stereotypes about the black body reveals the persistence of anti-black racism that continues to disadvantage black Africans. It is important, therefore,

to examine and understand how anti-blackness and anti-black racism reside within media as well as ideologies of Whiteness, and fear of the black body (Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021). Though subtler and sometimes less direct, negative media portrayals and representations can promote anti-black racism and profoundly affect the ability of black Africans to achieve life goals in Australia.

While black Africans are not inferior by nature, participants' accounts also call for more theorizing and research on the idea and impact of working twice as hard. While choosing to work twice harder is good, it can take a toll on people that is felt mentally, socially and economically (Tesema, 2019). As Tesema (2019) explains, the lived reality of the twice-harder mentality is one of burnout and exhaustion. This is because the twice-harder mentality can put a lot of stress on people, leading to anxiety and depression. Therefore, there is a need for an unwavering commitment not only to tolerate difference, but also to facilitate empathy and ensure that everyone is provided with equal opportunity and the necessary conditions to achieve or realize their potentials. This calls for building a society based on justice, inclusion and belonging.

Belonging, here, is more than being included in existing societal structures. As Powell and Menendian (2016 as cited in Grant-Thomas, 2016) explains,

Belonging means more than just being seen. Belonging entails having a meaningful voice and the opportunity to participate in the design of social and cultural structures. Belonging means having the right to contribute to, and make demands on, society and political institutions.

When systems and structures reinforce inequality and exclusion, belonging cannot take root and bloom. Thus, addressing anti-black racism requires major rethinking of strategies and commitment to meaningful sustained change. This entails that government, institutions, community agencies and individuals should prioritize actions to eliminate anti-blackness discourses, and work to create a society where there is belonging. Ultimately, to build a society where all people feel a sense of belonging, there is a need to widen our circle of human concern and bring the most marginalized outgroups into the center of our concern through higher-order love (Powell & Menendian, 2016). As Uдах (2019, p. 15) explains:

Things can be completely different if we step outside of our old attitudes and practices, recognize the uniqueness of each person, avoid stereotyping and leave behind assumptions based on a person's race, ethnicity, language, or religion, and transform our conceptions of Self and Other. When we see each other as individuals, as part of us, we uphold all the things we have in common rather than what divides us.

Hence, there is a need to humanize the other and work together to end anti-black racism in all its forms. Anti-blackness discourses cannot deliver the kind of cultural change needed to build and commit to a more integrated, just, and racially inclusive society. Therefore, from a policy perspective, the participants' experiences have important implications for initiatives and attempts aimed at challenging Whiteness and the power and privilege that accompanies it to address Othering and anti-black racism directed at black African communities. To counter and tackle anti-back racism, it is necessary to identify policies and practices that perpetuate racial disadvantage and change them. Hence, there is a need to pursue policies and practices that promote racial equity and advance equal opportunity for all. For this reason, it is important to review and strengthen existing

multicultural policies and practices by understanding, identifying, acknowledging and validating the ways institutional and structural anti-black racism and Othering practices shape the lived experience of black Africans in Australia.

Dismantling anti-black racism is an important project for racial equality. Australian society is still entangled with the colonial past and the neo-colonial present that continue to perpetuate anti-blackness discourses. Given the problem-centred constructions of blackness, it is important to acknowledge that race and skin color are confluences for discrimination, resulting in exclusion, marginalization and poor outcomes of black Africans (Majavu, 2020). As such, it is important to acknowledge the impacts of the historical legacies of white Australia, slavery and colonization on the contemporary racialization of black Africans and shift conversation from normalizing Whiteness to helping them feel accepted and a sense of belonging.

Conclusion

The black African diaspora in Australia is steadily growing. In this article, I have explored anti-black racism and Othering in Australia. I argue for creating a more inclusive society where all people benefit and feel a sense of belonging. While the problem of Othering and anti-black racism is certainly not limited to Australia nor to particular times or projects, participants' experiences suggest that anti-black racism and Othering can have real impact on the health, social, economic, physical and psychological wellbeing of black Africans. The discursive constructions of black Africans in everyday language and social relations work to construct their lived reality of being, becoming and positioned as a racialized subject, leading to marginalization, exclusion and disadvantage. This article has implications for policy and practice. It hopes to broaden discussion on the effects of anti-black racism and Othering on the life conditions of black Africans in Australia and beyond. It is the expectation that this article renews public interest and conversation on how anti-black racism and Othering practices can limit opportunities and push racialized subjects to the margins of the society.

Note

1. The White Australia policy (from 1901 to 1973) was designed to secure a white Australia. Its implementation was explicitly exclusionary, discriminatory and racist. With its introduction, ethnically and racially marked people were not encouraged to settle but could only enter on a temporary basis under a strict permit. The removal of race as a factor for immigration to Australia in 1973, by the Whitlam Labor government, led to the eradication of the policy, allowing for African immigration to Australia (for more details, see Uдах & Singh, 2018).

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