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Silenced Resilience: Models of Survival in David Chariandy's Brother

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D AVID CHARIANDY'S *BROTHER* (2017) exposes how discrimination interferes with the potential for resilience among marginalized youth, specifically Black male youth in Canadian cities. Although the term "resilience" is linked to agency and survival in Indigenous studies (Stout and Kipling iv) and trauma studies (Cloete and Mlambo 93), in this essay I examine mainstream models of resilience as they relate to neo-liberalism within the infrastructure of government. These normative models of resilience leave little room for fostering community resilience — a collective resilience needed to break down systemic barriers to access to public infrastructure, such as education, law, and health care — thus restricting the socio-economic mobility and inclusion of Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC). As a result, BIPOC youth who do not align with models of mainstream resilience are deemed to be *lacking* resilience and, therefore, considered dispensable. In *Brother*, the intertwined narratives of Francis and Michael — two Black Canadian brothers of Trinidadian and South Asian descent growing up in Scarborough, Ontario — acutely convey the limitations of discourses of productivity dependent on individual narratives of success. Through the characterization of Francis and Michael and their connection to community, Chariandy explores the conflict between community organization and individual socio-economic productivity as it relates to access to public infrastructure and social reform. *Brother* emphasizes the flaws in normative models of resilience that rely on individual success and presents alternative modes of survival rooted in community empowerment.

On 26 February 2012, George Zimmerman shot and killed an unarmed seventeen-year-old Black boy named Trayvon Martin in Florida, for which he was later acquitted (Ware et al. 3). The event brought attention to how historical legacies of anti-Blackness affect racial profiling, problematic understandings of good citizenship, and views of Black youth as inherently violent, thereby increasing the visi-

bility of the #BlackLivesMatter movement. Robyn Maynard elaborates that many contemporary movements for the "dignity of Black life are underway throughout the African diaspora" and often, but not always, use the #BlackLivesMatter hashtag to unify their efforts; anti-Blackness "knows no borders" (*Policing* 15). Within Canada, Blackness is consistently a subject of debate and teeters between invisibility (Walcott 13) and hyper-visibility (Maynard, *Policing* 17). Canadian public institutions, such as the Toronto Police Department and politicians, deny racial profiling and reject "Black claims for social justice" despite past and current evidence of racial profiling, racial violence, and systemic limitations regarding housing, education, and other public infrastructure (Maynard, *Policing* 19; Walcott 13). As a result, Black communities in Canada "live in a heightened anxiety surrounding the possibility of bodily harm in the name of law enforcement" (Maynard, *Policing* 102). Yet, as Rinaldo Walcott explains, the nation consistently fails to acknowledge Black appeals for social justice, and Black Canadians continue to live in "ambiva[lence] . . . in the national imagination" (12). Building upon notions of denying Black claims for social justice, Chariandy's *Brother* illustrates the historical and current presence of anti-Blackness in Canada and its direct impact on youth, the community, and families. His narrative demonstrates how anti-Blackness within public infrastructures seeps into the private lives of Black communities. In this way, Canada's anti-Blackness is an epidemic that grows from the government's reliance on white supremacist structures.

The inherent anti-Blackness embedded in Canadian public systems, such as policing and public education, limits the efforts of Black youth to assert their agency and enact social change. If Black youth do not exhibit the resilience expected of productive citizens, then they are penalized and dismissed. Thus, the expectation of resilience imposed on Francis and Michael at school and in other public settings functions as a neo-liberal device that lets social workers, teachers, and others categorize them as "risky-subjects" according to the terms of "individual productivity [that] continue the agenda of self-management and productive self-sufficiency" (Park et al. 1). Although self-management can be related to socialist understandings of collective efforts in which each individual worker can influence the labour expectations of a given organization, the capitalist discourses that Yoosun Park, Rory Crath, and Donna Jeffery reference prioritize productivity in terms of profit (Prychitko 71). Individuals might think that they are exercising their rights, but the

ultimate decision is at the will of the owners, in this case the Canadian government. Although the government does not necessarily act as the "owner" of its citizens, the parallel between owner and institutional power reflects the realities of neo-liberal governance. Current capitalistic structures create a façade of freedom when, in fact, productivity and upholding the status quo are at the centre of ideal citizenship (Joseph 41). Again, the individual is the centre of productivity rather than community organizations. In contrast, community-based resilience seeks actively to change socio-political environments by working collectively to empower those within the community and make tangible changes to existing social inequities. Informed by Park and colleagues' critique of normative socialized resilience, I examine *Brother* by focusing on how narratives of collective minority resilience destabilize narratives of normative resilience. *Brother* demonstrates how community resilience, by privileging accommodations of mental and physical stresses, is essential in creating changes to infrastructure while suggesting that narratives of normative resilience, by obstructing collective action, perpetuate systemic biases toward marginalized communities.

Normative Resilience

It is essential to understand how the term "resilience" can be co-opted easily by hegemonic discourses that prioritize efficiency and economic prosperity. Currently, resilience theory is applied to various fields such as the broader social sciences, Indigenous studies, trauma studies, education, and social work (see Stout and Kipling iv; Van Breda 1; and Zimmerman 1). Although resilience refers to bearing difficulties and striving despite adversity, I view it as "embedded" neo-liberalism when promoted by nation-state governments (Joseph 38). As such, the use of "normative resilience" relates directly to the appropriation of the term by government structures and the forced connection to social capital (41). For example, when resilience theory first began gaining traction in the early 1990s, it was considered "'cutting edge,' heralding a potential paradigm shift in social work thinking" as a means to account for survival and recovery (Van Breda 1). Now those described as "resilient" are often those who "grow" beyond negative stereotypes associated with their race, class, or sexuality and achieve some aspect of economic stability while displaying little mental, physical, and emotional exhaustion. Jonathan Joseph explains how resilience discourses promoted by

governments work to "conceal the continuing reproduction of hierarchical power relations" (41). Park and colleagues clarify that creating normative models of social resilience depends on dominant predetermined ideas of normality (1). These notions of normality categorize at-risk individuals and communities and eventually isolate them (1). Indeed, for lower socio-economic subjects, risk factors such as poverty and inequality are often acknowledged as motivators of resilience rather than systemic dynamics that can skew measurements of resilience (1). Chariandy comments on these dynamics through Francis and Michael's academic streaming[1] and their public image as Black youths within the greater Canadian landscape. Furthermore, mainstream resilience does not account for community interventions that affect individualized narratives of resilience. Markers of resilience, such as caring for siblings and maintaining intergenerational relationships, are relegated to the margins. Instead, as Park and colleagues note, authority figures scrutinize the capacity of the "risky subject" to fulfill expectations of productivity rather than encouraging active change to their social or political environment (1).

Michael, the narrator of *Brother*, his older brother, Francis, and their mother, Ruth, live in Scarborough, a multicultural, lower-socio-economic suburb east of Toronto. Chariandy, through the setting, emphasizes the emotional and physical toll that normative resilience models have on the large population of first- and second-generation racialized immigrants and Black youth living in Scarborough. Because of his constant interactions with different cultures and generations, Francis cultivates a high level of emotional intelligence, allowing him to posit a positive growth mindset that adheres to normative narratives while fostering curiosity and resilience.[2] Michael narrates that "Francis actually liked to learn. He read books, and he was a good observer. And after class was out, there were other institutions to learn from" (14). The emphatic "actually" illustrates how Francis's childhood was shaped by learning and functions to subvert deficit-based narratives imposed on Black youth within the education system. Michael's narration of Francis's reading habits also reinforces Michael's role as witness — a witness who resists Francis's public characterization as negative. In this way, the style of narration and its focus on Francis demonstrate the complexity of his story and its connection to community resilience. The repetition of "he" demonstrates Michael's desire to emphasize Francis's capabilities not only as his brother but also as a member of a community

fighting against systemic barriers faced by Black male youth. In fact, Francis's reading and his engagement with his surroundings demonstrate standard characteristics of active learners who display educational resilience by being, as Tammy Russell explains, "open to learn because they can learn." However, this definition of educational resilience aligns with the normative narratives that Park and colleagues critique directly. Although there is an emphasis on the learner in the classroom, there is no acknowledgement of alternative sites of learning beyond the educational institution. In reality, in *Brother*, Francis has learned from other institutions "after class was out." He is characterized as a learner with potential both inside and outside the classroom. Michael frames Francis's reading of texts as a private activity and emphasizes how, "from the age of seven, Francis could read. He read books, of course, regularly and well into his teens" (16). In Russell's understanding of educational resilience, there is a direct correlation between individual achievements and displays of learning; still, Russell does not consider the different ways that knowledge can be shared. In contrast, Michael's description of Francis demonstrates that learning transcends institutional settings and locates alternative sites of knowledge by depicting Francis's learning through his community surroundings. In sharing Francis's reading habits, Michael's narrative role resists normative learning structures by centring alternative learning displays through Francis's ability to intertwine individual and community learning. Francis learns through his surroundings: "A dozen blocks west of the towers . . . there lay a series of strip malls. There were grocery shops selling spices and herbs under signs in foreign languages and scripts" (Chariandy 14). The strip malls include various "foreign languages and scripts" and illustrate the sensory learning that Francis consistently receives from his community. Through the character of Francis, Chariandy indicates that learning continues beyond institutional settings.

The multicultural streets of Scarborough represent Canada's multicultural framework in which cultural resilience in communities is shaped directly by capitalist discourse and its prioritization of profit. Moving throughout Scarborough, Francis comes to understand that restaurants promising "back home tastes" had an "average expiry date of a year" (Chariandy 14). His reading of restaurant signs signals the tension between capitalism and multiculturalism. Emphasizing the "expiry date" and connecting it to the metaphor of food demonstrate the literal rejection of different cultures by normative Canadian soci-

ety. The cultures survive only if they are useful to the nation-state. Thus, Francis understands the urgency of one restaurant's sign, written with "red marker promising that they'd also serve . . . the mystery of 'Canadian food'" (15). Although there is a constant effort to survive and thrive economically, the frequency with which new businesses are created and the inability of small-business owners to sustain themselves suggest a cycle of overwork. In *Biocultural Creatures: Toward a New Theory of the Human*, Samantha Frost highlights how resilience theory emerges from ecological epistemologies, like the urban environment that Chariandy presents. Frost argues for an "ecological gesture" toward our understanding of the human: "[W]e must compel ourselves, always, to think ecologically, to think of organisms engaging their habitats over time, habitats whose particular and variable conditions" work to "condition and constrain" the possibilities of our lives (84). Thus, focusing on habitats means considering how, beyond the material or biological, they must also account for the social, cultural, and political. Similarly, Chariandy portrays the setting of Scarborough as a "kind of organism" constantly adapting to environmental and social changes; it is "robust" and continually "organizes and reconstitutes itself" (Rush 39). Indeed, Francis's persistence and the businesses' desire to emulate "back home tastes" show their collective efforts to survive within the physical environment. The "strip malls" bring together various "foreign languages," yet these forms of community resilience are stifled by neo-liberal capitalist systems. Each restaurant's short lifespan develops Francis's learned correlation between "death" and community businesses and the livelihoods of the Scarborough community. His observations result in the subconscious internalization of feelings of unbelonging within Canadian frameworks, especially in relation to socio-economic stability. Although the constant creation of restaurants demonstrates active attempts by ethnic entrepreneurs to prosper within Scarborough, the systemic barriers to wealth prevent long-term economic stability for the city's marginalized members and affect their social, cultural, and political prosperity. Yet, in Michael's remembering of Francis's engagement with Scarborough, there is also a thread of survival and hope. In his acknowledgement of the community's efforts to survive, Michael honours its efforts with respect and begins his journey toward sharing knowledge.

Through affective response methods, Francis demonstrates emotional intelligence and a deep sense of community empowerment that

grounds *his* understanding of resilience. His ability to read social cues in the Scarborough community and his mother's emotions accentuates his ability to adapt to his environment. Michael narrates that "[Francis] could also read the many signs and gestures around us. He could read the faces of the neighbourhood youth hanging around outside 7-Eleven and know when to offer a nod or else a sly joke or else just to keep moving and not just then attempt to meet a bruised pair of eyes" (Chariandy 17). Francis displays highly developed skills of observation and adaptation, apparent through his ability to read the various signs and gestures around him. Just by seeing faces, he can understand the neighbourhood's nuances and the emotional exhaustion that his community faces. Within this passage, Chariandy's use of parallel structure also emphasizes Francis's observational skills while alluding to his ability to reflect. The use of "could" at the beginning of both sentences centres Francis and asserts his adaptability while creating a sense of possibility within the community. By including Michael's role as the storyteller of Francis's life, Chariandy creates a sense of collective resilience that transcends Francis and extends to others in similar positions. Like Francis, many of the community members have the potential to strive, yet systemic barriers of policing, education, and economic opportunity continually halt their development and instead create "bruised pair[s] of eyes." Moreover, Francis demonstrates his community solidarity by repeatedly showing his peers respect through his embodied knowledge of which gestures to use to convey his recognition of them. He cycles between "sly jokes," a "nod," and walking past community members depending on the scenario. In this way, Francis always preserves the dignity of his fellow community members and fosters a supportive environment that honours relationality. Michael's observations of Francis's respect for fellow community members subtly allude to how violence and compassion emerge simultaneously in Scarborough communities and how these tensions affect their youth. Consistent with Francis's observations, Park and colleagues critique individual models of resilience that exclude the significance of communities. Western models of resilience prioritize individuals who display attributes of resilience that enable them to function as model citizens despite recurrent systematic discrimination, exclusion, and oppression (10). Although Francis's learning experiences initially are positive, and though Francis is deemed capable, his constant interactions with his community foreshadow a sense of *desire* to resist

the individualized narratives of resilience that function as neo-liberal tools.

Exceptionalism, in terms of hard work and devotion, academics, and/ or economic success, characterizes successfully individualized resilience in Black and racialized immigrants. Sherene Razack explains that "the ideal [Canadian] citizen is an individual without any sort of group-based identity" (23-24). Consequently, first-generation immigrants regularly adopt narratives of normative resilience because they feel like guests in their host country and must act as model and thankful citizens. First-generation immigrants think that, because they have come to a more "developed" country, they must adhere to the laws and expectations of productivity in order to survive by themselves and to ensure the future prosperity of their families. Those who function successfully within the current capitalist system and maintain Canada's Western hegemony are rewarded for their devotion, despite any challenge that they face, and they are dubbed resilient. Indeed, there is a call for assimilation with a foundational element that focuses on national unity and a homo-geneous body that adheres to a "white supremacist agenda" (Razack 23). Chariandy represents this perception of individualized resilience through Francis's relationship with Ruth (referred to as "Mother" in the majority of the text), a first-generation Black Trinidadian immigrant who embodies this resilience through her endless work ethic.

Indeed, Francis's understanding of his mother and the obstacles that she faces as a racialized single immigrant mother furthers his social adaptability. From a young age, Francis exhibits an ability to "read [their] mother" (Chariandy 17). He "recogniz[es] her pride, but also the routes and tolls of her labour" (17). He knows that his mother works to ensure that their family is financially secure and demonstrates his respect for her through his actions. Not wanting to infantilize or demean his mother, Francis remains reserved yet caring in his treatment of her: "He knew that for work as a cleaner, and sometimes a nanny, she not only had tough hours but also long journeys, [and] compli-cated rides along bus routes to faraway office buildings and malls and homes" (17). Francis is aware not only of the physical exertion expected at his mother's jobs but also of the distances that his mother must travel to find employers who need her services. Mother must look beyond Scarborough toward higher socio-economic areas in order to sustain her household. By creating a list of the locations that Mother visits, Chariandy highlights her almost robotic movements as she seeks and

maintains employment. In this way, he introduces tensions of resilience between different generations of immigrants because current neo-liberal models of resilience are not sustainable.

While Mother labours for survival within a capitalistic model, Francis observes the limitations of the model and the physical fatigue that contributes to his family's narrative of survival. Sunera Thobani explains the inherent connection between immigrant narratives of success and resilience in *Exalted Subjects: Studies in the Making of Race and Nation in Canada*. Thobani details how immigrants become fixated on "their own inclusion and access to citizenship" because they perceive Canada as a land of opportunity for future generations (16). Similarly, Mother is stuck in a cycle of overwork because she focuses on ensuring opportunities for her sons. Chariandy continues to explain how Mother endures "long waits at odd hours at stops and stations, sometimes in the rain or thick heat of the afternoon, sometimes in the cold and dark of winter. . . . [T]here is a specific moment during the trip back home from work when a mother's body threatens to give out" (17). Again, by using repetition, Chariandy demonstrates the monotony of Mother's actions and how her cycle of labour dehumanizes her. Despite her exhaustion, she does not complain and travels long distances along fragmented bus routes. Such routes increase the mental and physical exhaustion of people, like Mother, who must take transit and deprive them of time, creating ripple effects across their community in terms of health and care for their families. Like many other first-generation immigrant mothers, Mother is bound to a cycle of imposed productivity in which there is little scope for resistance or learning until socio-economic security is achieved. For Mother, journey checkpoints amplify narratives of overwork, such as "[a] specific site in the bus loop at Kennedy station when exhaustion closes in and the limbs feel like meat, and it takes every last strength from a mother to make the two additional bus transfers home" (17). Despite access to the region's system of public transportation — another public infrastructure — Mother's perpetual exhaustion and absence from the home demonstrate the barriers of access to employment, education, and social services, specifically for those in lower socio-economic brackets (Ley and Smith 47). Even to endure this frustrating system of transit is a marker of resilience. The repetition of "a mother" in Chariandy's text demonstrates the commonality of narratives of overwork among the mothers of Scarborough. Immigrant labour as expendable is apparent through Mother's exhausted "limbs" feeling

"like meat"; the constant overwork dehumanizes Mother. Chariandy reinforces this cyclical capitalism through his use of "closes in" in relation to her exhaustion and how she, as an immigrant mother, is confined to a narrative of overwork in a failed attempt to achieve stability for her children. Thus, Mother's labour exposes Francis to immigrant resilience and functions to represent Mother as a productive "Canadian" — one who does not resist these circumstances but contributes to the capitalist cycle for survival.

Initially, Francis inherits the normative models of resilience that align with his mother's actions. He shows compassion for her survival through work and begins to mimic her perseverance. As Michael narrates, "When Francis was still not quite a teen, and Mother returned home in a state, he would go to work. He would casually offer her a cool, damp cloth for her head. . . . He was careful never to overdo his concern, and so wound her pride, or otherwise break any of the household rules she had established to help us through lean times" (17). From a young age, Francis maintains the standards of his household through his actions. Despite the survivalist methods of productivity that he must perform and endure within public spheres, he works to ensure that his family is emotionally cared for within the private space of their home. Realizing the correlation between his mother's overwork and her well-being, he prioritizes labours of respectful compassion for his mother. Francis provides physical relief, such as a "cool, damp cloth for her head," and he sees this as his own "work." Alongside physically caring for her, he maintains a delicate balance of compassion and reservation to ensure that his mother still feels empowered in their private sphere, and he is careful not to "wound her pride." Michael's narration of this scene draws a parallel between Mother's work and Francis's work while demonstrating an intergenerational understanding of kinship within immigrant families and the larger Scarborough community. In connecting the various narratives — the community, his mother's, and Francis's — Michael strengthens his role as the diegetic narrator who fosters collective resilience through storytelling. Both Michael and Francis know that, outside the house, no one cares for their mother; therefore, the onus is on them. Thus, Francis takes great care to ensure that their mother feels agency within their home and adheres to the "household rules" that ensure their economic survival. In an attempt to offset Mother's vocations of care outside the home as a nanny and cleaner, Francis uses private spaces to ease his mother's responsibility

of being the sole caretaker by silently sharing the labour of running a household, and Michael unites both of their efforts.

Despite Francis's understanding of normative narratives of resilience, his progression toward resistance becomes apparent through his interactions with school and criminal justice systems. Academically streamed below his ability, Francis, despite his obvious intelligence, experiences systemic discrimination. Michael mentions that, "Like me, Francis had years ago been streamed out of an academic program into a basic one. He stayed cool about the whole thing. His new-found disinterest in school perfectly countered its apparent disinterest in him" (24). The streaming of young Black males out of academic programs emphasizes the recurrent systematic biases that Francis and his brother face. Directly connecting his experience with that of Francis, Michael emphasizes how they receive the same exclusionary treatment from school. Whereas Francis can stay "cool," Michael does not disclose his reaction to the streaming, and his recollection of the event shows empathy for Francis by highlighting the neglect of the education system. According to Cathryn Teasley and Alana Butler, by streaming marginalized youth out of academic programs, student success rates drastically decrease, perpetuating cycles of poverty (188). Furthermore, his "new-found disinterest" demonstrates how Francis recognizes the multi-faceted dynamics of systemic discrimination against Black youth; he attempts to survive by accepting that he does not belong within educational institutions. For self-preservation, he internalizes narratives of unbelonging.

Moreover, the school system's treatment of Michael and Francis correlates with the excessive surveillance of racialized communities across Canada and throughout Canadian education systems. Although Black students tend to prefer "cooperative cultural learning environments," Canadian schools fail to accommodate this approach, and instead teachers lower expectations and maintain harsh disciplinary tactics (Cokley 2019). Even at school, Michael and Francis must create their own spaces in the colonial institute named after "Sir Alexander Campbell, a Father of Confederation" (Chariandy 14). Their resistance is necessary for survival: "we the students . . . had our own confederations, our own schoolyard territories and alliances, our own trade agreements and anthems. . . . You could hear us whenever there were general assemblies in the auditorium, our collective voices overwhelming whatever politely seated ceremony we were supposed to be attending" (14). The racialized students are aware of their unbelonging within Canadian public infra-

structure from a young age. Instead of resisting individually, they work together collectively to "overwhelm" teachers' expectations and create alternative communities of survival. The students establish their "own" methods of resistance and assert their agency within their community. Michael's use of collective pronouns such as *we* and *our* also emphasizes how Michael, through narrating, tells the story not only of Francis but also of himself and the community. Thus, Francis's story acts not only as a vehicle to comprehend the realities of anti-Blackness but also as a way for communities to identify how collective action is necessary for hope and potential change. In a news report in 2015 highlighting the experiences of Black youth in the Greater Toronto Area, Sharon Douglas, a mother and an advocate in the Peel Region, stated that "Black families moved into Mississauga for what they hoped would be a better life and to get away from racism and violence, and I was really disheartened that our youth feel devalued and unwelcome" (qtd. in Brown 2015). Her remarks highlight the awareness in marginalized communities of the discrimination that their children face in Canadian education systems and their internalization of not belonging within public infrastructure. Instead of the school adapting to the various knowledge systems and epistemologies that the multicultural students bring, it punishes this collaboration and resistance. Michael and Francis serve "long sentences in classrooms beneath the chemical hum of white fluorescent lights, in part out of fear of [their] mother, who warned [them] upon the pain of something worse than death, not to squander '[their] only chance'" (Chariandy 15). Their school setting mimics the surveillance of the prison, thus alluding to the school-to-prison pipeline. According to Wanda Thomas Bernard and Holly Smith, Canada's public school system and its disciplinary policies lead minority students (particularly young Black Canadian males) "away from educational success, and towards incarceration" (152).³ The Canadian education system disregards the educational potential of Michael and Francis and labels them as "at risk," essentially stripping them of their potential within Canada's framework of normative resilience.

Indeed, during his final year of high school, Francis is consequently "expelled with threats to call the police" after telling a teacher to "fuck off" (Chariandy 24). The institution's response to his lashing out exemplifies the school system's inability to account for minority youth. His immediate expulsion and the school's "threats to call the police" highlight the education system's villainization of Francis and, more broadly, of Black male stu-

dents. Rather than responding to his actions by considering his experiences of discrimination, the authorities criminalize Francis. This event during his final year of high school highlights a pattern whereby criminally profiling racialized youth, with or without police involvement, has a detrimental impact on their futures. Furthermore, his criminalization demonstrates a colonial tradition of refusing to recognize racialized youth as children. Robin Maynard explains that, in the eyes of white society and state institutions, Black children are not conceived of as children at all; rather, they are considered "[d]angerous [and] beyond their age" ("Canadian"). His identity as a Black male youth from a lower socio-economic background immediately categorizes Francis as a potentially violent risk in the school environment rather than as a child in need of culturally informed pedagogies.

The unjust treatment that Francis receives at school acts as the catalyst for his rejection of models of normative resilience that prioritize individualized success. Because of the school's immediate association of violence and risk when Francis displays acts of frustration, his treatment as an "other" within the public sphere becomes strikingly apparent. John Calmore explains the impact of cultural racism and stereotypes in defining racialized experiences: "Dominant society relies heavily on cultural racism and stereotypes to bias both its interpretation and [its] evaluation of the subordinated group. Cultural bias sets standards for performances in terms of the tendencies, skills or attributes of white America. . . . Poor performance by the members of these groups is translated into inferior capacity that represents general group traits" (2219). His streaming forces Francis to find his own methods of cultivating resilience because his success is always positioned in comparison to traits of whiteness. If Francis does not embody the white attributes dictated by the public sphere, then he is deemed unworthy of any success.

Mother's dismay at his no longer being in the education system, which she perceives as a tool for breaking cycles of poverty, creates tension with Francis: "'Your one and only chance!' . . . Mother repeated over and over again" (Chariandy 24). Her fixation on formal education as her son's "one and only chance" demonstrates her disappointment and hurt. For many diasporic and racialized minorities, education is one of the few means to move beyond the lower socio-economic status that they have inherited. Economist Raj Chetty uses large data sets to track the correlation between education and social mobility in Canada and the United States. He notes that there is a 13.5% chance that children will move beyond their parents' social strata through education in

Canada (see Abramson). This slight chance of upward socio-economic mobility is a key motivator for many diasporic parents as they look to future generations to fulfill their dreams of success.

Mother is distraught at Francis's decision to drop out of school. Her repetition of "Your one and only chance!" demonstrates the hyper-reliance among racialized minorities on education as a means of social stability. Furthermore, her anger demonstrates a loss of control within her household since Francis does not adhere to the same model of resilience that Mother does — a model that she believes is critical for their collective success. However, what Mother might not realize is that Francis rejects normative models of resilience because the education system has failed him. Maynard furthers this point by adding that "The way that Black children and youth are treated — and the way that their suffering is largely ignored or unseen — makes clear that anti-Blackness determines their experiences within the education system and beyond [it]" ("Canadian"). Although Mother is disappointed in Francis, the reality of the education system and how it treats him illustrate the anti-Black racism that he faces. Michael, through his position as the observer and narrator of the argument, thus conveys the generational tensions of resilience and highlights the role of family within community narratives while bringing the reader into the narrative as a witness. As evident in this scene, Francis cannot employ normative models of resilience without having to overcompensate drastically.

He briefly mimics his mother's resilience through vocation because he is unaware of tangible alternatives. Michael continues that "Francis never went back to school. He got a series of temporary jobs. . . . He worked hard to prove he wasn't frittering his life away" (Chariandy 24). Despite his awareness that the education system has already labelled him as a violent criminal, Francis attempts to prove that there is potential and perhaps success beyond Canadian educational models. He embraces Mother's model of resilience and tries to work through a series of jobs toward productive ends. He attempts to exist within the same capitalist cycles that exhaust his mother to create a sense of normative resilience. As Park and colleagues suggest, the goal of narratives of normative resilience is to persuade risky/resilient subjects to adopt capitalist models of repetition that create false senses of "'personal agency' that [act as a] mirage that serves to occlude the regulatory function of the discourse" (15). Francis attempts to use a "series of temporary jobs" to create a

sense of "personal agency" but becomes aware of the limitations of this method through community connections.

Alternative Models of Resilience and Resistance

When Francis embarks on proving himself within narratives of normative resilience, he soon finds that his resilience is intertwined with resistance. Following his expulsion from school, he finds a job and, like his mother, comes home "looking almost as worn out" (Chariandy 24). Unlike his mother, however, "Francis was [soon] spending his spare time at Desirea's, a barbershop filled with boys apparently possessing records" (24). In contrast to his mother, Francis navigates overwork and exhaustion by cultivating community support. His interactions with youth at the barbershop illustrate how community models can act as alternatives. By prioritizing working as a collective to support one another, community models of resilience create sustainable community change in terms of accessibility and infrastructure development. Simultaneously, community models of resilience also prioritize intergenerational connections by creating a network of shared and expanding knowledge structures (Magis 401). As is evident in his observations of his mother, Francis witnesses models of resilience that centre on individual success and survival, whereas from his interactions with community members, he witnesses models of resilience that act as networks of agency in which people work toward empowering one another. Nevertheless, his mother's focus on the group's apparent criminal history effectively feeds into the discourse of criminalization imposed on racialized and Black youth. Mother responds negatively to his involvement: "'You are my *son*!' she yelled. 'You will never be a *criminal*'" (Chariandy 25). She fixates on the idea that Francis must defy prominent narratives criminalizing Black male youth in Scarborough, demonstrating her fear of cyclical socioeconomic conditions. Mother does not want the experiences of her son to be defined by the area where they live and perhaps, as a means of fostering her own resilience, does not wish to acknowledge the mistreatment that her sons face. Michael describes Mother's emphasis on "son" and "criminal" as "briefly stepping out of the Queen's English and into the music of her Trinidadian accent. Cri-mi-*nal*" (25). When Francis responds to Mother's outburst with laughter, Michael assumes that he finds the shift in accent humorous, which further complicates generational understandings of resilience. For Michael and his mother,

who responds by striking Francis across the face, his laughter seems to be patronizing. However, it can also be read as his recognition of Mother's code-switching. Such code-switching becomes a learned tool within colonial settings, showing belonging and later resistance. Mary Louise Pratt discusses linguistic shifts by referencing the idea of contact zones, "social spaces where cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths" ("Arts" 34). These contact zones are often "synonymous with 'colonial frontiers' . . . as European bourgeoisies assert their dominance through civility which include[s] shifts in language" (Pratt, *Imperial Eyes* 7). Pratt's concept of inter-locking contact zones defines the interactions between colonized and colonizer and allows for actions of resistance such as code-switching — the movement between different languages and cultural systems. The switch between accents illustrates how Mother was forced, as a col-onial subject, to adopt dominant forms of language to function within white supremacist society and the subsequent internalization of racial and cultural inferiority. However, her ability to switch between accents also alludes to the ability to fight against "monolingual dominant cul-tures" (Pratt, *Imperial Eyes* 177). Michael's narration of this interaction between Francis and Mother demonstrates the potential for intergenera-tional resistance. Thus, Francis's laughter becomes a site of resistance, not necessarily against his mother but against the individual frameworks of resilience and narratives of immigrant survival that function within colonial discourses. His laughter signifies his desire for and pursuit of alternative forms of resilience. Maynard emphasizes the criminalization of Black youth and how it is operationalized through police surveil-lance, brutality, and the criminalization of students (*Policing* 7). While Mother attempts to function within interlocking contact zones, Francis recognizes the disproportionate criminalization of Black youth and its connection to the criminal records held by the boys at Desirea's barber-shop, and he seeks to disrupt the government structures that perpetuate violence against marginalized voices.

Models of alternative resilience that centre community solidarity and growth become his new means of survival as Francis establishes a relationship with his new-found community at the barbershop. Through his interactions with his peers, he begins to define resilience through community resilience that resists current neo-liberal discourses by cen-tring desire. Michael recalls that, "In Desirea's, you postured, but you

also played. You showed up every one of your dictated roles and fates"
(Chariandy 101). Recognizing the various cultural identities, Michael
distinguishes the group from their first-generation immigrant parents:
"They worked shit jobs, struggled with rent, were chronically tired and
often pushed just as chronically tired notions about identity and respect-
ability. But in Desirea's, different styles of kinships were possible. You
found new language, you caught the gestures, you kept the meanings
close as skin" (101). Chariandy's inclusion of various ethnic backgrounds
exemplifies the concentration of diversity in Scarborough and the unifi-
cation of youth because of the social and institutional mistreatment that
they experience in Canadian society. As a site of resistance, the barber-
shop offers a reprieve from models of normative resilience that many
of the youth witness within familial and economic contexts. For Black
communities, barbershops have "functioned as sanctuaries" and can act
as a "home away from home" (Hlongwane 181). Building upon alterna-
tive economies, and quoting Chariandy (99), Gugu D. Hlongwane
explains that Desirea's "'different economy' associates exchange with
friendship and brotherhood, as opposed to dominant economic para-
digms that privilege the exchange of commodities" (172). Moreover,
the name Desirea is a version of the French name Desirée (Desire) and
can be read literally as a collective space of hopes and dreams for the
youth. Sharing experience and knowledge and creating art at Desirea's
demonstrate how the youth resist being defined solely by struggle and
instead prioritize agency through creative expression.

Together at Desirea's, the racialized youth identify the detrimental
aspects of resilience, including its direct correlation with chronic fatigue
and overwork, in order to work toward alternative futures. As Park and
colleagues explain, "models of normative resilience, although they might
identify a locus of risk, are at complete odds with proactive action that
empower[s] communities" (15). Conversely, through the establishment
of new "kinship" and their own "language" (Chariandy 101), the youth
connect and begin, subconsciously, to manifest community resistance
thinking. Unlike the models of normative resilience that their parents
perform, the youth are aware of intersectional effects that affect them
and how adhering to neo-liberal individualism counters true resistance.

Francis's aversion to individual-based resilience is affirmed through
the intimacy of his relationships at Desirea's, demonstrated particularly
in his relationship with Jelly. His desire for an alternative model of
resilience aligns with Eve Tuck (Unangax̂) and C. Ree's understand-

ing of desire as "a refusal to trade in damage" and as "a recognition of suffering, the costs of settler colonialism and capitalism" (647). Tuck and Ree's conceptualization of desire thwarts damage-centred narratives by recognizing the multifarious forms of movement and agency that marginalized communities face because of colonial violence. Jelly and Francis embody a positive masculine relationship that engages various marginalized male youth and, through music, cultivates a productive desire that centres community. In his music, Jelly works "seamlessly [to layer] . . . [s]oul, rocksteady, even calypso and Congolese rhumba" (Chariandy 126). The simultaneous layering of music and culture represents the blending of cultural experiences and alternative sites of learning that the group at Desirea's attempt to share with a broader audience. Jelly's incorporation of various genres and histories acts as a tool for "cultural recovery" and healing (Hlongwane 185, 187). Katherine McKittrick and Alexander Weheliye describe music in Black culture as a means of physiologically and neurobiologically navigating racist worlds (20). McKittrick elaborates how "music and its waveforms . . . affirm . . . modes of being that refuse antiblackness just as they restructure our existing system of knowledge" (81). Consistent with McKittrick's description of music as a means of navigation, Jelly's production of music in the barbershop situates it as a site of congregation for marginalized youth, a space where the threat of systemic racism and violence does not limit their expressive capacities. Jelly includes waveforms to convey their collective resistance and their ability to restructure systems of knowledge. He works with his peers, such as Francis, who "pass [him] records when needed" (Chariandy 127). By combining their different cultures and histories and prioritizing collaborative creation, Jelly and the Desirea boys challenge individual resilience by collectively resisting and empowering themselves through music.

Realities of Anti-Blackness

Although the Desirea boys display their desire for collective resistance at a music competition, their success is still governed by white surveillance and hegemony. Despite Jelly's strong performance in the competition, the judge sarcastically responds, "Yeah, kid. Sure. We'll definitely contact you" (Chariandy 128). Here the label "kid" functions to infantilize the Desirea crew and devalue their art. Whereas the Canadian school system treated Francis and other Black youth as adult criminals, the

shift to infantilization as adults illustrates the manifold ways in which access and success in racialized communities are conditioned and constrained by white supremacy. Michael narrates that "The white bouncers laughed. Jelly touched Francis's shoulder, but Francis shrugged his hand away. Jelly touched him again, this time gently on his arm. . . . Francis's eyes started to tear up. He swallowed" (130). Moreover, when Francis attempts to advocate for Jelly, his frustration is read as criminal behaviour by the competition's white bouncers. Michael states that the bouncers kicked "Francis in the stomach, face, [and stood] on his fingers," before walking back to the competition. They left Francis on the ground, "curled away from me" (131). The graphic brutality establishes the reality of violent, racialized discrimination. Francis's posture "curled away" juxtaposes the bouncers' mobility within the space and symbolizes the loss of individual and community agency to the white power hierarchies that dictate the future for both Francis and his community.

Ultimately, Francis's experience of racial discrimination culminates in his death at Desirea's. Returning there from the competition, Francis says, "We were the children of the help, without futures. We were, none of us, what our parents wanted us to be. . . . We were nobodies" (156). Although the barbershop and Jelly's music symbolize resistance and cultivate desire, Francis eventually recognizes the futility of their attempts. He ultimately identifies himself and the boys as "nobodies," internalizing the dismissal and dehumanization that he experiences. Michael recalls that, when the police arrived at Desirea's, "[Jelly] held my brother's face and rested his forehead on his. They were still touching when the cops showed up. . . . I don't even remember hearing the shot. My brother just fell" (159). Despite Francis's preceding remarks that "We're all just dreaming. . . . Nobody's listening. There's no way forward," when the police arrive Francis continues to advocate for his community: "You're going to tell me what I've done" (159). Yet the mere act of exercising "a right to know why" further criminalizes Francis and results in his murder. Saidiya Hartman poignantly explains that the subjugation of Black people is deeply embedded within Western perceptions of "bodily boundaries and racial self-certainty," and thus subjection is the basis of both Western "individuation and collective security" (206). Despite the perseverance of community solidarity evident in Jelly's physical proximity and the intimate kinship among the Desirea boys before Francis dies, the anti-Blackness embedded in Canadian institutions impedes the fulfillment of community resilience and solidarity.

Francis's progression through models of normative resilience and his eventual death illustrate the rigidity of current conceptions of resilience. Although normative resilience encourages perseverance, it does so only to adhere to individualized neo-liberal discourses that uphold capitalism and to colonial discourses. Because Francis recognizes the limitations of resilience in public infrastructure, he works with the Desirea boys to find a place of belonging, and alternative models of resilience form subconsciously. These models, rooted in community empowerment, work to change the biases that perpetuate cycles of poverty, overwork, and violence and thus function as forms of resistance. However, because the desires of the youth for belonging disrupt neo-liberal discourses, normalized society criminalizes and violently prevents the youth from continuing the alternative models that empower their communities. The Scarborough youth, hoping to restructure political systems, are therefore direct threats to neo-liberal discourses. However, Michael's narration of Francis's story further demonstrates a continued tension between normative resilience and community resilience. Michael inherits Francis's desire for resistance. Tuck and Ree argue that desire, "in its making and remaking, bounds into the past as it stretches into the future. It is productive, it makes itself, and in making itself, it makes reality" (648). Francis's death certainly exposes the power of white supremacy in the face of community resilience and resistance, but more importantly Michael's subsequent narration and remembering of Francis's life invites us to recognize the potential and productivity of community-based resilience enacted by racialized youth, even in the face of continued white supremacy.

Notes

[1] In Canadian schools, streaming means placing high school students into groups defined by their perceived academic abilities. For example, those who achieve higher averages are often placed in groups with people in similar ranges; meanwhile, those with lower grades might be placed in locally developed or college-level courses. Streams include advanced placement, academic, college/applied, and locally developed courses.

[2] A growth mindset rewards students who overcome challenges and develop grit within learning environments (Hochanadel and Finamore 48).

[3] Foucault's foundational work on surveillance and discipline also explores these notions through the panopticon, the notion of all-seeing.

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