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Anti-Black Racism and Labour Market Exclusion: Racial Linguicism Among Skilled Black Francophone African Immigrants in Montreal, Quebec (Canada)

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Abstract

Canadian immigration policies are based on human capital discourses that prioritize the selection of skilled workers to contribute to the Canadian economy. Many African immigrants come from Francophone African countries, hoping to integrate socio-economically, with French language skills being a primary determining factor in their choice of Quebec. However, these skilled Black African immigrants face barriers when attempting to access pre-migration professions or employment commensurate with their qualifications. This paper illustrates how French language skills are erased by bilingualism or English fluency requirements in the Quebec labour market. The findings reveal that racialization and language, particularly the experience of being Black Francophone African immigrant, shape access to the Quebec labour market and affect employment opportunities by directing individuals toward often lower-skilled or unskilled occupations and excluding participants from their pre-migration professions and skilled employment. African immigrants also encountered accent discrimination, among other discriminatory practices, consequently highlighting the intersection of racialization, linguistic identity, and labour market inequality. Theoretical perspectives/conceptualization of anti-Blackness and the Black Radical Tradition were used to observe and analyze how anti-Black racism affects the labour market integration of skilled Black African immigrants. This paper emphasizes the crucial role the Quebec government could play in developing and implementing programs that sensitize employers and encourage them to employ African immigrants.

Keywords: skilled African immigrants; anti-Black racism; linguicism; Black Francophone; racial linguicism; accent discrimination; labour market; labour market integration; labour market exclusion; employment

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1. Introduction

Canada's ageing population and declining birth rates have led the government to implement immigration policies to attract skilled workers from around the world [1–3]. The Federal Skilled Worker Program serves as a key immigration pathway, utilizing a points-based system to evaluate eligibility for permanent residency and to select highly skilled immigrants who are considered more likely to integrate successfully into Canadian society and the workforce [3–5]. During the 20th century, most Black immigrants to Canada originated from the Caribbean. However, by 2016, Black African immigrants outnumbered those from the Caribbean [6–9]. Between 2011 and 2016, the largest proportion of Black immigrants to Canada (40.3%) were admitted through economic immigration programs [7].

The goal of this paper is to contribute to the continuing dialogue on the experiences of skilled African immigrants in Quebec by observing the intersection of anti-Black racism and linguicism and how these aspects shape integration into the skilled labour market and professions reflecting their qualifications. Among the various challenges that Black African immigrants encounter in accessing and participating in Quebec's labour market, this study highlights the influence of racialized prejudice, discrimination, and systemic barriers. The findings emphasize the importance of fostering acceptance and inclusion of Black and immigrant populations in Quebec society, particularly as these groups continue to grow in the province.

1.1. Quebec Immigration Context

Following the socio-political changes of the Quiet Revolution in the 1960s, Quebec has dealt with a low birth rate. In recent years, the government sought to increase immigration to address its low fertility [10]. Quebec, home to a French minority in Canada and North America, pursued control of its immigration process in the 1970s to preserve the French language and its cultural identity. This quest for control led to the Quebec-Canada Accord, which began operating in 1991 and gave Quebec primary control over immigrants arriving in the province. This accord enables Quebec to protect its demographic relevance in Canada and support immigrants' integration while maintaining its unique identity [10,11]. Quebec's control over its immigration also lets it define the region's source countries, which are primarily Francophone; thus, the Quebec government plays a pivotal role in deciding who migrates to the province [10]. African immigrants from countries where French is an official language are among Quebec's top source countries, including Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ivory Coast, and Senegal [12–14].

1.2. Systemic Barriers and Language Discrimination Faced by African Immigrants

Structural and systemic racism significantly influences the labour market experiences of highly skilled African immigrants in Quebec [15–17]. Intersecting factors, including racial bias, linguistic expectations [18], overqualification, and social isolation, negatively affect employment outcomes [16]. Racial discrimination frequently outweighs professional qualifications, thereby intensifying employment barriers and adversely affecting the overall well-being of African immigrants [15,16].

Immigrants in Quebec tend to have higher levels of education compared with immigrants in other provinces, with a greater proportion holding university degrees. However, they also face higher rates of unemployment [19]. Despite the demographic shift, African immigrants, particularly those who have been in Canada for five years or less, encounter greater challenges in the labour market than other immigrant groups [3].

Gauvin and Bilodeau [20] found that possessing a foreign accent and being a member of a visible minority reduces the likelihood of being perceived as a credible expert by individuals belonging to the majority group. Furthermore, significant differences exist in the impact of belonging markers between Ontario and Quebec, with respondents in Quebec placing greater emphasis on auditory markers than those in Ontario [20]. Hanane [21] found that women from French-speaking West Indies backgrounds have higher employment rates in Quebec than women from French-speaking and non-French-speaking Sub-Saharan Africa and non-French-speaking West Indies. Employment outcomes are influenced by factors such as age, age at immigration, number of years residing in Canada, education, language skills, family circumstances, religion, and region of residence [21].

African immigrant intellectuals in Quebec typically regard the French language as integral to their identity and their affiliation with the Francophone community. Although some resistance exists from native-born Quebecers, French shapes African intellectuals'

worldview; it is believed to facilitate integration into Quebec society and is a primary factor in their decision to settle in Quebec [22]. Accent discrimination is not only about language—it reflects deeper racial, cultural, and social biases that influence how Black African immigrants are perceived and included in society [23]. Creese and Kambere [24] stipulate how accent can act as a barrier to jobs, housing, and social belonging. It also reinforces racialized perceptions of who is considered a legitimate member of Canadian society, with African accents labeled as those who do not belong [24]. Within racial capitalist systems, accents serve three primary functions: they regulate migrant labour by directing racialized migrants into lower-paying employment, reinforce colonial power dynamics through practices such as call centre accent training, and function as a marketable skill that obscures the institutional racism restricting migrants' career advancement [25].

2. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study draws on the concepts of anti-Blackness and the Black Radical Tradition (BRT), foregrounding anti-Blackness as an analytical lens for examining how anti-Black racism is embedded in and operates across all dimensions of society. It considers how these structures are established at the macro level and reproduced and reinforced at the micro level. Understanding this issue requires an examination of the main concepts of anti-Blackness and an exploration of how race influences societal functioning and organization, including the labour market. Labour market segmentation theory provides a broader analytical framework for understanding how the labour market is structured, while the concepts of anti-Blackness and the BRT offer a more nuanced lens through which to examine the experiences of skilled Black Francophone African immigrants, situating these experiences within the specificities of Blackness.

2.1. Labour Market Segmentation Theory

This study infers from general theoretical concepts of labour market segmentation which explores how labour markets are structured into distinct groups of workers and why these divisions tend to persist over time. Labour market segmentation describes the division of the labour market into distinct segments, each providing workers with varying levels of pay, job security, opportunities for advancement, and employment conditions [26]. Ryan [26] challenges the conventional economic view of labour markets as relatively unified and competitive systems in which individual skills, productivity, and personal choices primarily determine wages and employment opportunities. Instead, he emphasizes that employment inequalities extend beyond differences in individual workers' characteristics, reflecting the influence of employer practices, institutional arrangements and broader social and economic structures. From this perspective, workers do not compete for employment opportunities on equal terms. Their access to wages, job security, career advancement and working conditions is shaped, in part, by their position within particular segments of the labour market [26].

Labour market segmentation theory serves as a comprehensive framework for analyzing the ways in which anti-Black racism perpetuates persistent inequalities in the employment of African immigrants in Quebec. According to this perspective, Black workers are not afforded equal competition for employment opportunities compared to their non-Black peers. Instead, systemic and institutional manifestations of anti-Black racism influence their participation in the labour market. Practices such as discriminatory recruitment, occupational segregation, non-recognition of Black workers' qualifications, disregard for their linguistic competencies, and devaluation of their experiences limit their opportunities and often confine them to lower-paid, precarious, or less secure segments of the labour market. These disparities cannot be attributed primarily to individual circumstances or variations

in skills and productivity; organizational practices, institutional structures, and broader systems of racial inequality often generate and sustain them. Therefore, labour market segmentation theory illustrates how anti-Black racism functions as a structural barrier to equitable employment opportunities and sustains racial disparities in labour market outcomes. Drawing on the theoretical frameworks of anti-Blackness and the Black Radical Tradition (BRT), this study examines how skilled Black African immigrants are racially positioned within Quebec's segmented labour market.

2.2. Concepts and Theories of Anti-Blackness and the Black Radical Tradition

The theoretical concepts of anti-Blackness and the Black Radical Tradition (BRT) serve as the primary analytical lens to examine the experiences of the labour market integration of skilled Black Francophone African immigrants in Quebec. These frameworks help explain how structural forms of anti-Blackness shape access to employment and workplace experiences. It is used to identify how the historical and contemporary devaluation of Blackness is reproduced through labour market institutions, employment practices, immigration and integration policies, and workplace interactions. Drawing on the BRT, the paper therefore uses anti-Blackness not only to identify and explain racial inequalities, but also to challenge the institutional practices and conceptions that reproduce them and to foreground possibilities for Black liberation and transformation.

The Black Radical Tradition (BRT) emerged from Black people's struggles for freedom and resistance to racial oppression, colonization, and capitalism. Rooted in African traditions, resistance, and experiences of oppression, the BRT provides a distinct social, philosophical, and political framework [27]. Scholars including Saidiya Hartman, Sylvia Wynter, Alexander G. Weheliye, and Cedric Robinson have contributed to its development. A central concept within the BRT is the afterlife of slavery, which examines the enduring effects of slavery on Black communities and social structures. Hartman's [28] refers to the "afterlife" of slavery, in which Black people are not fully free post-emancipation, and the structural "hold of slavery" ([29], p. 5) can be used to understand the experiences of skilled Black African immigrants in Quebec. BRT is instrumental in identifying anti-Blackness practices and challenging these conceptions to move towards the liberation of Black people.

Benjamin [30] traces the concept of anti-Black racism (ABR) to Black community activism in Toronto during the 1990s, where it emerged as an "analytical weapon" for naming and challenging police violence and other forms of racial oppression [30]. Scholars argue that anti-Blackness is rooted in the historical dehumanization of Black people through enslavement and continues through the social construction of Blackness as inferior, threatening, violent, intellectually deficient, or out of place [29,31–36]. Unlike other racialized groups, Black people are positioned within a particular Black/non-Black binary in which their humanity itself is historically and socially contested [34,37]. These constructions evolved across historical periods and contributed to the formation of societal institutions, hierarchies, and enduring power relations. Black people were socially and politically constructed as non-human to serve European colonial economic interests, shaping social structures and power relations in the Americas [37–39].

In the Canadian context, anti-Blackness is embedded within institutions, policies, and social practices, often becoming normalized or rendered invisible [40]. Anti-Blackness is rooted in slavery and colonization, and its effects are evident across multiple interconnected domains: employment, housing, education, immigration, criminal justice, media, and cultural institutions [41–46]. These domains intersect and reinforce one another, demonstrating that anti-Blackness operates as a structural and systemic process rather than simply individual prejudice [46].

Mugabo's [47] and Madibbo's [48] theorizations of anti-Blackness are used to show the exclusion of Blackness and linguicism as a lens for observing how Blackness is constructed outside Quebec's national imagery [47,48]. This conceptual framework enhances understanding of how language can serve as a façade to mask anti-Blackness; this is pertinent to analyze since many participants are Francophones who migrated to Quebec, with the French language serving as a primary pull factor.

To navigate the dominant Quebec nationalist agenda, Black individuals in Quebec have often faced a dilemma: either collaborate with prevailing anti-Blackness to secure inclusion within the community or resist and risk being positioned as outsiders [49]. Howard [49] contends that, throughout Quebec's history, initiatives claiming to include all residents have been fundamentally anti-Black. Language is often one of the main markers of identity in the Quebec state, and French-language discourse serves as a pretense for determining who belongs and who is excluded from Quebec. Mugabo [47] emphasizes that Blackness is ontologically not supposed to be part of Quebec and is viewed as out of place in Quebec, no matter what language Black people speak. This framework is utilized to understand how Black African immigrants are viewed as ontologically not supposed to be part of Quebec and are therefore positioned out of place, and how such racialized perceptions shape their access to skilled employment opportunities.

Montreal's Black community shifted demographically in the 1960s, with Francophone Black people becoming the majority. This coincided with the time when Quebec was shifting its "discourse from ethnic to civic nationalism" [47], p. 644. The Quebec government has long framed the French language as the way immigrants could properly integrate into Quebec society. Consequently, Quebec centres language and ethnicity in public spaces and discourse, and this is one of the main strategies that sustain anti-Blackness in Quebec [47]. This promotes the "ethnicization" of Black people who, as Francophones, are called to identify, for example, as Haitian, to claim their Francophone identity over their Blackness and, therefore, separate themselves from the anglophone Black community or African Americans [47], p. 635. In other words, to belong in Quebec requires, through ethnicization, for Black people to overlook their experiences with anti-Blackness in Quebec [47]. Linguicism is used to obscure entrenched anti-Black racism in Quebec society; however, race, rather than language, shapes the city [47]. Mugabo [47] argues that Black people in Montreal experience space and place through a racial lens, and that language and ethnicity politics do not overshadow the influence of race. Using BRT and Anti-Black theoretical frameworks, I examine how Blackness is structurally and systemically constructed in Quebec, and how these pervasive ideologies shape political discourse, policies, and societal practices.

Madibbo [48] argues that race and language work together to shape belonging and privilege in Canada. While White people can benefit from speaking French or English, Black people may still be treated as outsiders regardless of their language skills or multiple identities. Accents can further mark Black people as foreign, even when they speak English or French fluently. Madibbo introduces the term "racialized linguicism" to describe the intersection of racism and linguicism, where perceptions of language and belonging are influenced by race [48], p. 25. Ultimately, language can be used to mask anti-Blackness and exclude Black people from social and economic opportunities, including the labour market. Adopting a Black identity does not confer advantages for Black individuals due to the negative social positioning of Blackness, which "dehumanizes the Black subject. For Black people, multiple identities signal multiple marginalization" [48], p. 24.

Foreign accents serve as additional markers of difference and signify a lack of belonging to Canada for Black individuals. According to Madibbo [48], White individuals who speak English or French with a non-mainstream accent are not similarly affected; their language difference or accent is rendered invisible. In some cases, accents such as British or Australian

may even be perceived positively. In contrast, Black people who speak fluent English or French with a non-mainstream accent are marked as different and are categorized as non-native speakers [48]. Perceptions of racial background are used to determine who is considered an "illegitimate" or native speaker, with English and French being associated with Whiteness [48], p. 25. These concepts of culture and language are often employed to obscure anti-Blackness by presenting these factors as the primary determinants of belonging in Quebec. In this study, language and linguicism are essential in understanding labour market participation of skilled Black Francophone African immigrants.

Black Radical Tradition (BRT) conceptualization highlights how anti-Blackness operates within Western society and provides a framework for challenging these practices and advancing Black liberation. In a nutshell, these theoretical frameworks are essential in depicting how Blackness and anti-Blackness shape skilled Black African immigrants' access to their professions, integration into Quebec's labour market, and workplace experiences.

3. Methodology

This qualitative study presents partial findings from my doctoral thesis. Qualitative research is frequently employed to provide an in-depth description of participants' experiences. This study's primary research question is: "What are the experiences of skilled Black African immigrants' labour market integration in Montreal?" Building on this question, I posed secondary questions such as: (i) What are the challenges to accessing their pre-migration occupation or to their labour market integration? (ii) What role does Black racialization play in skilled Black Africans' access to their pre-migration occupation or to their labour market integration, and their experiences while participating in the labour market? This paper engages with partial findings from the questions mentioned.

I utilized a multiple case study approach to best understand the labour market trajectories of skilled African immigrants who migrated to Quebec as skilled workers. A case study approach involves an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded social phenomenon, such as an institution, process, program, or social system [50]. Rather than aiming for generalizability, case studies emphasize the transferability of knowledge across contexts [50]. The selected cases should be directly related to the central research issue, represent a range of contextual perspectives, and provide opportunities to gain deeper insights into the phenomenon's complexity and context [51].

Case studies are particularly effective for examining multifaceted social phenomena [52]. Following Creswell [53], this study adopts a collective (or multiple) case study design, focusing on a single issue examined through multiple cases to provide a broader understanding of the phenomenon. I adopted a case study approach to analyze complex social dynamics, specifically racism and other factors influencing the integration of Black African immigrants into the Montreal skilled labour market. This study investigated the real-life experiences of skilled immigrants who migrated to Canada with the intention of securing employment in their pre-migration professions. The case study approach is often exploratory and involves significant interaction with research participants, thereby providing a comprehensive depiction of their experiences [50] and informing practice and policy [53].

I examined the challenges that skilled Black African immigrants encounter when integrating into the skilled labour market. My research focused on first-generation Black African immigrants in Montreal who migrated to Canada under the Quebec Skilled Worker program. This main group was divided into three sub-groups, each representing a distinct labour market integration trajectory: (a) individuals who secured employment in their pre-migration occupation, (b) those who obtained skilled employment outside their pre-migration profession, and (c) those who became employed in unskilled labour. This

approach allowed me to gain a nuanced understanding of participants' experiences when trying to access their pre-migration professions and how these experiences influenced their labour market integration.

The term 'skilled' immigrant refers to individuals admitted to Canada under the Quebec Skilled Worker program, which uses a point-based system to assess academic and professional qualifications. Participants were primarily recruited from the greater Montreal area, with immigrants from other regions of Quebec excluded from the sample. Some participants may have lived both within and outside Montreal during their labour market integration process.

A total of 35 people participated in this study and had migrated at least one year prior to the interview and were of working age (21 to 65 years). We excluded individuals who had resided in Quebec for one year or less, as they were likely still acclimating to their new environment, seeking initial employment, or participating in integration or settlement programs, which typically occur within the first weeks or months after arrival. According to a study by Emploi Québec, immigrants who were principal applicants in the economic class category took an average of 6.6 months to secure their first job in Quebec, compared with 3.9 months in Ontario and 5.2 months in British Columbia [54]. Participants were interviewed in English or French, based on their preference. During the time the study took place, there were 6 employed in unskilled employment, 7 participants who had changed profession, and 22 who were working in the pre-migration occupation. This group comprises participants who integrated into their pre-migration profession, which is conceptually defined as their field of expertise or professions they considered closely related to their pre-migration profession. This group had the highest number of participants. This distribution may be attributed to the recruitment process, which occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic and relied on snowball sampling. However, although more participants worked in their pre-migration field or a related field, all held positions below their qualifications, except for two.

Purposive sampling was utilized to recruit Black African immigrants in Canada who migrated through the skilled worker or points-based immigration system. The study excluded individuals from other immigration categories, such as temporary foreign workers, international students, refugees and asylum seekers. Purposive sampling is essential for selecting information-rich cases to enhance understanding of the phenomenon under investigation [50]. This sampling strategy was chosen to identify participants representing the three employment outcomes. Participants were primarily recruited through referrals from African immigrants and social networks, and potential participants were contacted by telephone due to COVID-19 restrictions. The original recruitment plan involved collaboration with African community centres and settlement agencies in Montreal. However, the COVID-19 pandemic restricted access to these organizations due to closures and reduced attendance, rendering this approach ineffective.

For data collection, the study used a qualitative approach; in-depth, semi-structured interviews were the main data collection method. A semi-structured interview guide allowed participants to fully explain their experiences without being restricted to closed-ended questions [55]. Three slightly different interview guides were developed for participants based on their employment outcomes: those working in their pre-migration profession, other skilled employment, or unskilled employment. All interviews were conducted virtually (video and/or audio); no face-to-face interviews were conducted to respect public safety regulations and follow the COVID-19 research guidelines from the McGill University Research Ethics Board and the Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans, REB file number 374-0219. Individuals who agreed to participate were put in contact with the researcher and received the consent form via email. Interview dates

and times were then arranged with the participants. Participants' identities were protected by using pseudonyms and excluding identifying information from interview transcripts and the thesis. Pseudonyms were either participant-selected or researcher-assigned when no name preference was expressed. Each interview lasted approximately 60–120 min.

Secondary data included document and policy reviews of integration programs and immigrant services from Ministry of Immigration, Francisation and Integration (MIFI) and Emploi Québec websites and those of settlement organizations, which provide support and resources to immigrants. Additional secondary data came from information collected from media and grey literature (including radio, television, and newspaper segments/articles). Documents and reports related to the Quebec Skilled Worker Program and immigrant integration were analyzed to provide relevant contextual background.

Bloomberg & Volpe [50] emphasize the importance of memoing. Memoing was employed throughout the research process to systematically record observations, emerging ideas, recurring themes, and analytical insights. Following each interview, standardized memos documented participant information, mood, setting, and initial themes. Interviews were manually transcribed using Wreally, and data analysis followed Creswell's [53] case study coding approach, progressing from open coding of transcripts to focused coding in NVivo. Additional memos and annotations captured connections among participants, relevant literature, and emerging interpretations. Thematic analysis facilitated the identification of key patterns and themes.

Data analysis was guided by theories of anti-Blackness, which provided the conceptual framework for examining how race and racialization influenced skilled Black African immigrants' access to their pre-migration professions and their broader labour-market integration. This theory-driven approach helped identify patterns and strengthen the consistency and credibility of the analysis. Creswell [53] suggests coding templates for multiple or collective case studies to obtain an in-depth portrait of each case. This was achieved by first carrying out open coding of the data on the transcripts. Each case was analyzed individually to identify key experiences and recurring themes, followed by the development of tentative assertions. A cross-case analysis then compared similarities and differences across the three groups, allowing the researcher to identify common patterns and case-specific experiences. Themes and assertions were systematically documented using worksheets, and cross-case synthesis was used to develop broader naturalistic generalizations from the participants' experiences.

Member checking, standardized interview procedures, comprehensive documentation, and an audit trail established trustworthiness and rigour [50,51]. Triangulation is an important component of research and involves drawing on multiple sources of data to enhance the depth and credibility of the research findings [50,52,53]. Credibility was enhanced by triangulating data sources, including interviews, participant follow-ups, policy and organizational documents, as well as media and grey literature. Thick description and the inclusion of both common and discrepant findings facilitated transferability and supported a balanced interpretation. The interview guide was iteratively refined as new themes emerged, and participants' direct words and narratives were preserved to anchor the findings in their lived experiences.

4. Findings

Most participants were Francophones (30 Francophones and five Anglophones) and migrated to Quebec because it is a French-speaking province. French speaking immigrants in this study came from Cameroon, Ivory Coast, Benin, Mali and Niger. Most stated that Quebec was advertised to them as a French-speaking province, and pre-migration interviews (for those interviewed) were conducted in French. French literacy also increased

your points in the Quebec skilled worker selection process. However, many participants were disappointed that once in Quebec, they were expected to be bilingual (French and English) to integrate into their professions, which was the case, particularly in banking, accounting, customer service and computer science. Participants experienced anti-Black racism, which extended to perceptions of their speech, discrimination based on the manner in which they spoke French and English, and accent discrimination.

4.1. Deception of Quebec Being a French Immigration

Participants chose Quebec because their French proficiency led them to expect easier integration. However, many were surprised to discover that employers often required English or bilingual skills upon arrival. This language barrier was perceived as a significant obstacle to securing employment in their pre-migration professions. Hilary's experience illustrates this challenge: despite her professional background as a customer service agent and advisor in Ivory Coast, she was repeatedly rejected from bank positions because of her limited English proficiency. She is currently employed as an orderly in a hospital. Hilary was pushed to change professions altogether; she described it as follows:

> Africans come here [Quebec] more because of the language because Ontario and others are English-speaking regions. So, when you come from our French-speaking regions where it is more French there...Sometimes people go to other regions, but people first come here to Quebec because of the language. But now, when you are looking for a job, you are asked if you are bilingual, which also affects us. (5 May 2020)

Overall, Hilary's experience, among other participants, shows how unanticipated English-language requirements can contribute to change in occupational trajectories and hinder the integration of French-speaking participants into pre-migration professions in Quebec.

4.2. Discriminatory English Requirements by Employers

The findings indicated that participants perceived employer bilingual requests as discriminatory, viewing them as an additional barrier preventing them from accessing their professions or the skilled labour market. Participants reported being held to a different standard than non-English-speaking Quebecers. They believed that, during interviews, employers cited a lack of English fluency as a justification for not hiring them. Participants attributed these practices to racism, asserting that skilled Black African immigrants were required to demonstrate English fluency in a predominantly French-speaking province to secure employment. Participants invoked Bill 101's protection of French as the language of work, noting that lack of English proficiency should not, in principle, be grounds for employment rejection. However, they perceived a disconnect between these legal protections and their lived experiences, reporting that English proficiency nevertheless influenced employers' hiring decisions.

Participants also connected these experiences to racial discrimination, arguing that English requirements could function as a justification for excluding Black African immigrants from skilled employment. Andre's experience as an experienced accountant illustrates this perception: despite his extensive managerial and banking experience across Africa, he was reportedly rejected because of his English proficiency, which he considered unrelated to his ability to perform accounting work, emphasizing that accounting is grounded in universal numerical principles. Andre explains:

> Regarding English,... but English doesn't close all doors...Perhaps sometimes in interviews, companies ask for English to exclude you. So that's also part of it. (11 May 2020)

Linguistic discrimination was manifested not only through English-language requirements but also through subjective evaluations of participants' English proficiency, based on how they spoke English. These assessments signalled foreignness to employers and contributed to the exclusion of qualified Black African participants from employment, thereby reinforcing broader barriers to their professional integration. Victor's case illustrates this: he described encountering discrimination related to English proficiency during an interview at an institution dedicated to combating discrimination. Although he successfully completed both written and oral pre-interview assessments in English and French, he was ultimately denied employment due to a perceived lack of English fluency. Victor perceived this as linguistic discrimination, particularly given that Quebec is officially a French-speaking province. He expressed:

> Yes, yes, bilingualism. Once I went to an institution that was supposed to fight against discrimination, where they made me do an interview in English, and then they asked me where I learned my English. I found it a bit absurd because this question should not be asked in an interview because it is discrimination based on ethnic origin. They are requesting where you are trained and where you did your English training, implying you were not trained here. It was a centre to fight against discrimination, and they asked me such questions... Now you go for an interview, and the interview is in English and French. So, they fail you because of English in a state which is supposed to be French-speaking! (14 June 2020)

4.3. Bilingualism as a Barrier Across Employment Levels

Strict English and bilingual requirements limited skilled Black African immigrants' access to jobs matching their qualifications. Despite professional experience, further education, and credential updates, participants faced repeated rejection, language testing, and pressure to accept unskilled work. Persistent rejection by employers because of language requirements pushed many participants to accept unskilled and low-skilled employment, including placement agencies channelling some participants into unskilled work. This shows that different actors' practices in Quebec participate in constraining professional integration and lead African immigrants to employment below their qualifications. Robert explains his experience:

> He offered me general work, but in my field they usually required English training before offering me anything. When I asked for a placement agency that could help me with my needs, I was directed to one. I registered, and they said I had good training, but they wanted someone who could express themselves perfectly in English. When they asked me about my English level, I said intermediate, and they told me I needed to speak perfect and fluent English before applying. (8 May 2020)

This was particularly evident in professions such as banking, accounting, customer service, and computer science, where participants were often requested by employers to demonstrate bilingual proficiency in French and English to access employment in their fields. In contrast, participants in care-related occupations, such as orderlies and nursing assistants, appeared to face fewer English-language or bilingual requirements. Although some employers in these fields inquired about bilingual proficiency, it generally did not prevent participants from securing employment or entering the healthcare sector.

The findings indicate that English and bilingualism requirements extended beyond skilled professions and became a barrier to accessing unskilled and low-skilled employment, thereby broadening the labour-market challenges faced by participants. Even positions such as call-centre work in Montreal could require bilingual proficiency, limiting employment opportunities for participants who were primarily French-speaking. Ahmed's experience illustrates this broader constraint. Although he sought to re-enter his profession as a statistician, his lack of bilingual proficiency also restricted his access to lower-skilled employment. This suggests that language requirements functioned as a labour-market barrier across occupational levels, rather than solely as a criterion for professional employment. Ahmed stated:

> Here is another problem, people are told to speak French to come, but if you arrive in Quebec, to find work at a good level, you must be bilingual. Even if you work in a store, you will be asked to be bilingual... So, you cannot make people come over, emphasizing French, and even with that...you cannot find work. That, too, is deceptive. They do not tell you that if you do not know English, you will not get a job. They do not tell you that if you do not speak English, you will do factory jobs. During all the time that this process lasts, one could have been informed. Even to work at a call centre you must speak English, at least in Montreal... (6 June 2020)

Participants also perceived a gap between pre-migration expectations and post-migration realities. They reported that the language demands of the Quebec labour market were not adequately communicated during the immigration process, leaving them unprepared for the extent to which English proficiency could affect employment. Overall, the findings suggest that bilingualism operated as a significant form of labour-market gatekeeping, constraining participants' employment options regardless of their academic qualifications or occupational level.

4.4. Accent Discrimination

A foreign accent signalled that someone was not born in Quebec, while employers perceived an African accent as particularly undesirable. Participants attributed their difficulties in securing employment to the perception that their accents did not conform to mainstream linguistic norms.

Accent policing functioned as a form of linguistic discrimination, with employers implicitly privileging American or mainstream Quebec French accents as markers of employability. Jean repeatedly experienced employment denials due to accent discrimination, particularly in commercial sales, where employers preferred candidates with an American accent. Although he took English courses to improve his proficiency, his accent remained a barrier, and he felt it could not be changed. Employers characterized his speech as having "an international accent," a term he did not understand. He noted that such questions were common in positions where employers requested fluent English, especially in commercial sales. The label "an international accent" reflects a vague and potentially exclusionary standard that positions linguistic difference as a professional deficiency. Jean explains:

> I was only told that I have a high level; I do not know why they say you have a high level for a job that you are looking for; I do not know if it is racism... I was not told that I am Black or I am White; I was told that I have a high level and that I have an accent that is not American or I don't know what, that is all I was told... (When asked if he was not told that he did not have a French accent). I was told that I have an international accent, I do not know what an international accent is! (17 May 2020)

Jean's experience highlights the intersection of overqualification and accent discrimination being a barrier to him accessing his field.

Participants expressed how anti-Black racism permeated all aspects of their identity, including their use of French and English. Although African immigrants possess diverse accents depending on their country and region of origin, among employers in Quebec, all accents associated with Black Africans are treated as monolithic and serve as indicators of Blackness and are not wanted. Participants described accent discrimination as a racialized barrier to employment, with African accents often perceived as undesirable or difficult to understand. Blaise referred to prejudice based on "fluidity of one's expression," while Manka felt that being Black and having "a heavy African accent" rather than a "pure, smooth Canadian tone" disadvantaged her.

Overall, participants' experiences suggest that accent served as a marker of Blackness and foreignness and contributed to employment discrimination beyond actual language proficiency. Jean described his experience:

> In some cases. When you speak English, people understand, but they say you don't speak with an American accent. I said I can't change my tone. At one point, English became a problem because people would say you don't speak English fluently. They'd say you have an accent, it's all up and down. (17 May 2020)

Participants' accounts suggest their accents being mocked constituted a subtle but meaningful form of workplace discrimination. Antoine's experience at Dollarama illustrates how linguistic difference, particularly an "African accent", became a basis for mockery by colleagues. Although he was hesitant to explicitly characterize these interactions as discriminatory, his decision to identify the incident when discussing experiences of workplace racism indicates that he perceived the comments as derogatory and exclusionary. This ambivalence is analytically significant, as it demonstrates how racialized workplace experiences may be normalized or difficult to name as discrimination, particularly when they occur through seemingly informal interactions or humour. Accent-based mockery can therefore be understood as a form of linguistic racialization, through which speech patterns become markers of difference and contribute to the social marginalization of racialized immigrant workers. Antoine described:

> On the contrary, they were impressed to meet someone who speaks with an African accent and all that amused them. It is a form of racism, but I did not feel it like racism. (28 April 2020)

The experiences of participants indicate that accent-based and racialized discrimination was not only manifested during interactions with colleagues or clients; it was also reinforced by institutional responses. Supervisors frequently minimized discriminatory incidents by advising Black employees not to take clients' comments personally, rather than recognizing or addressing the racialized aspects of these encounters. The experiences of Yvonne and Manka illustrate the intersection of Blackness and linguistic legitimacy, as clients questioned their belonging in Quebec despite their fluency in French and, in some instances, explicitly told them to return to their countries. Such responses transferred the responsibility for addressing discrimination onto employees, suggesting that institutional inaction may normalize racialized treatment and further marginalize Black immigrant workers. Manka explained:

> A lot of us got insulted over the phone based on our race, we were told to go back to our countries. But you never saw the company try to reach out. Somebody, I remember one agent made so much noise about it, but I do not know how that ended. But I do not think they ended up suing the customer because he was racist. But she made noise about it and we were expecting you know some action to be

> taking, but it ended some how, God alone knows how. But yeah, even being on the phone people were out rightly racists to us. From the tone of your voice they could tell, from your accent they can tell you are from Africa. Oh yeah, they get you well insulted. (25 April 2021)

Participants reported that accent discrimination directly affected their access to employment. Participants' accounts demonstrate that language and accent functioned as racialized markers through which participants' belonging, competence, and employability were assessed. Ahmed and Jean perceived their foreign accents as contributing to employer rejection. Ahmed was explicitly told during an interview that his accent influenced the hiring decision, illustrating how speech became a basis for evaluating employability. Collectively, the findings suggest that accent discrimination operated at both interpersonal and institutional levels, reinforcing racialized exclusion and limiting the professional integration of Black immigrant participants despite their linguistic abilities and qualifications. Ahmed recounts:

> When I asked why I was not selected, at the beginning the gentleman I spoke with was of French origin. I know he did not pay attention to what he…, he said Sir you have an accent. But who does not have an accent? Quebecers when they go to France, they [the French] make fun of their accents. All of us have accents. If you speak French as an English speaker…, everybody has an accent. If you tell me that I do not have your accent, do not ask us to come. I cannot change my accent…He (the recruiter) can say that, but the director cannot say that because it is blatant. Soon after they told me that they found someone else for the job. (6 June 2020)

In summary, accent discrimination served as a barrier to skilled employment for certain participants, who were expected to adopt mainstream White Quebec or White Canadian accents. Additionally, some employers utilized accent discrimination to reinforce anti-Black racism, thereby excluding Black Africans from positions that matched their qualifications.

To conclude, for many Francophone participants, limited English proficiency represented a significant barrier to securing employment commensurate with their pre-migration qualifications. This seemed particularly contradictory, as French-language proficiency was central to their decision to immigrate to Quebec through a Francophone-oriented skilled immigration pathway. Participants interpreted these experiences not only as linguistic barriers but also as forms of discrimination. Such experiences reinforced their marginalization as skilled Black African immigrants. As a result, rigid language requirements, linguicism and accent discrimination intersected with broader patterns of anti-Black racism, further constraining participants' ability to achieve professional integration reflecting their education, training, and prior experience.

5. Discussion

This study's findings offer a nuanced understanding of the language discrepancies skilled Black African immigrants encounter in Quebec's labour market as they try to access employment at levels commensurate with their pre-migration qualifications and professions. Through participants' experiences, this study challenged the discourse that barriers skilled African immigrants encounter in integrating into pre-migration professions stem from a supposed lack of skills, including language skills. This study contributes to the growing body of literature in Quebec documenting and advocating for social change by foregrounding the perspectives and lived experiences of Black participants seeking to integrate their pre-migration professions and secure employment commensurate with their qualifications. The study argues that the labour market challenges, including language incongruities, faced by participants are attributable not only to their status as racialized immigrants in Canada,

but also to the specificities of their experiences shaped by anti-Blackness. This section engages with how the findings relate to existing literature and theoretical frameworks while examining their broader implications.

5.1. Labour Market Exclusion of Skilled Black African Immigrants Through Racial Linguicism

The findings indicate a tension between the Quebec Skilled Worker Program's focus on French-language integration and the actual linguistic realities of African immigrants in Quebec's labour market. Although the program prioritizes French-language proficiency, many participants reported that proficiency in French alone was insufficient for successful labour market integration. Employers increasingly required bilingualism or English proficiency, even for lower-skilled positions. In line with Toure [56] and Namululi et al. [57], their African immigrant participants noted that bilingualism was often required for administrative and customer service roles, even when English did not appear necessary for job performance. Several study participants perceived these requirements as discriminatory, particularly when bilingualism seemed to serve more as a screening tool than as a legitimate occupational necessity. The findings of this study position bilingualism as a form of linguistic capital and potential exclusion of those considered as outsiders or Other from the skilled labour market.

The experiences of Black African participants being channelled into unskilled and lower-skilled employment because of employers' linguistic gatekeeping align with Ryan's [26] conceptualization of labour market segmentation theory. The author denotes that the labour market is divided into distinct groups and segments that give workers different levels of earnings, levels of job security, opportunities for career advancement, and working conditions. Piore [58] and Ryan [26] argue that industrial economies generate a continuing demand for migrant workers because the labour market is divided into two segments: a primary sector, characterized by higher wages, greater job security, and opportunities for advancement, and a secondary sector, characterized by low wages, poor working conditions, and insecure employment. Since native-born workers are often reluctant to accept secondary-sector jobs, at least in the long term, employers rely on migrant labour to fill these positions. This demand is not simply a temporary response to labour shortages but a structural feature of industrial economies, reflecting how work and employment opportunities are organized [26,58].

Therefore, labour market inequality stems not necessarily from individual skills or choices but from the broader economic and social structures within receiving countries [26,58]. Consequently, the participants' experiences challenge the assumption that individual French proficiency alone provides an adequate linguistic foundation for skilled African immigrants' integration into Quebec's labour market. Instead, they reveal how structural discrimination and employers' requirements for bilingualism or English fluency can undermine the recognition of immigrants' qualifications and skills, relegating them to secondary labour market positions.

Furthermore, the findings reveal a gap between Quebec's French-language policy and Black African immigrants' labour market experiences. Despite Bill 101's (Charter of the French Language) [59] protection of French as the language of work and its restriction on requiring languages other than French unless objectively justified by job duties [59], participants reported being excluded from skilled employment because of insufficient English proficiency. Bill 101 was enacted during the Silent Revolution in Quebec to counteract the dominance of the English language and to safeguard French culture and language. French was established as the language of the workplace, business, immigrant integration, and immigrant children's schooling [60]. Despite the policy's emphasis on French as the primary language of immigrant integration, French-speaking participants identified limited bilin-

gual proficiency as a barrier to labour market integration. This contradiction underscores the disparity between the policy objective of promoting French for immigrant integration and the labour market reality, where employer demands for bilingualism disadvantage individuals proficient in French but lacking English-language skills.

In conceptualizing labour market segmentation, Ryan [26] questions the traditional economic view that labour markets function as relatively integrated and competitive systems, in which workers' wages and employment prospects are largely determined by their skills, productivity, and personal choices. These participant experiences suggest that linguistic discrimination may persist despite formal protections, as participants perceived they were held to different linguistic standards. This is particularly significant given that research, including Beauregard et al. [11] and Wood & Fetzer [10], notes that Quebec's preference for Francophone immigration aims to address labour and demographic needs and preserve its French identity. However, rather than translating into equitable labour market integration, French proficiency appeared insufficient to secure employment, as participants encountered English requirements even within their professional fields. The findings therefore highlight a tension between Quebec's francization objectives and the continued labour market value of English, with language requirements potentially intersecting with racialized forms of exclusion. In line with BRT, I draw on Robinson's [27] conceptualization of racial capitalism. The author contends that capitalism and racism are co-constructed. For capitalism to thrive, there has to be a construction of racial hierarchies to exploit the racialized populations [27]; in this context, people of African descent.

The finding resonates with Mugabo's [47] theorization of the ethnicization of Blackness in Quebec, particularly in Montreal, where French functions as an imagined basis of national solidarity but does not shield Black immigrants from racialization. Although French is positioned as the primary pathway to immigrant integration, Francophone identity does not protect Black people from discrimination or exclusion [27]. Participants similarly described how their Francophone status offered limited protection from racialized exclusion and subjugation by White Francophone employers who tried to restrict their access to their professions and skilled employment.

Madibbo [48] also theorizes that whiteness confers advantages by facilitating access to resources and recognition allocated to white Canadians and, in some cases, to White minorities such as Francophones. In contrast, Black individuals who identify with multiple identities, including being Francophone, do not receive comparable privileges or material benefits. Adopting multiple identities disadvantages Black individuals, as they are marked as 'other' and excluded from resources intentionally designed to marginalize them [48], "without troubling liberal discourses of equality" [24], p. 566. Consequently, study participants were not expected to pursue highly skilled employment or to work in positions commensurate with their qualifications, as such roles are typically reserved for White Quebecers.

5.2. Accent-Based Discrimination and the Racialized Devaluation of Black African Immigrants' Skills, Qualifications, and Humanity

Participants who spoke French and English with accents from their countries of origin were perceived as different and identified as non-native to Quebec. Employers, colleagues, and clients regarded their various African accents, which signified their Black African heritage, as undesirable. Consequently, these individuals faced unjust job rejections in their professions or skilled employment due to accent discrimination. Ramjattan [25] contends accent discrimination functions as a mechanism of labour control, relegating racialized migrants to low-paying employment. According to Ramjattan [25], within racial capitalist systems, accents serve three primary functions: regulating migrant labour by directing

racialized migrants into lower-wage employment, reinforcing colonial power structures through practices such as call centre accent training, and operating as a marketable skill that obscures the institutional racism restricting migrants' career advancement. Gauvin and Bilodeau [20] found that individuals with foreign accents and those belonging to visible minority groups are less likely to be perceived as credible experts by members of the majority group. These studies illustrate racialized immigrants' experiences with linguicism.

Several participants also experienced mockery for their African accents, with depictions of racial linguicism associated with their Blackness. Although one participant was initially reluctant to attribute this mockery to anti-Black racism, they recognized the connection when specifically asked about experiences of racism in the workplace. A study that depicts linguicism laced with anti-Black racism and the dehumization of Black people is Vigouroux [61] study of speech perceptions of Africans in France. Vigouroux [61] shows how historical French linguistic ideologies and nineteenth-century mass culture transformed a particular grammatical form, "y'a bon," (there's good) into a racialized marker used to portray Africans as linguistically incompetent and incapable of speaking the sophisticated French language, and regarding African languages and the people as primitive [61].

Accent Discrimination as a Construct of Non-Belonging and the Dehumanization of Black Skilled African Immigrants

The racial linguicism and dehumanization of Black immigrants' speech is in line with Wynter's [36,38,39] conceptualization of people of African descent being constructed as less than human. This exposes them to a specific racism rooted in anti-Blackness. Black people were socially and politically constituted as not human to advance European colonial economic interests, contributing to the formation of social structures and power relations throughout the Americas [37,39,40]. Within the Quebec context, the dehumanization of Black African participants contributes to the erasure of skilled African immigrants' linguistic abilities and frames them as incompetent in the French language. This process also undermines their intellectual and professional qualifications, ultimately relegating them to unskilled and undesirable labour markets.

Madibbo [48] conceptualizes this form of racism intersecting with language as racial linguicism and emphasizes that White individuals who speak English or French with non-mainstream accents do not encounter discrimination. Their accents or linguistic differences are often rendered invisible or, in some cases, regarded as desirable, such as Irish and Australian accents. In contrast, Black individuals who do not speak with mainstream accents are marked as different, become hypervisible, and are perceived as non-native speakers of the language [28]. This aligns with Gueye [22], who argues that many Francophone African intellectuals in Quebec feel excluded from the Francophone community despite being French-speaking. The author argues that cultural origin and ancestry, rather than language alone, determine who is recognized as Francophone, often leading them to being labelled as "allophones". In this research, the language proficiency of fluent study participants, French-speaking skilled African immigrants, is erased and used as a form of exclusion from the skilled labour market.

Francophone participants were often expected to speak English, a second language for some, with a North American accent. For instance, some participants repeatedly faced employment discrimination because of their accents, particularly when seeking positions in their fields where employers requested a North American accent. Similarly, Pustka et al. [62] studied perceptions of various French accents across Francophone countries, in which participants rated accents by perceived attractiveness, unattractiveness, and ridiculousness. The Quebec sample rated African accents as among the ugliest and most ridiculous when compared to Quebec, Acadian Canadian, Belgian, and French (Parisian) accents. Together,

these findings indicate that language discrimination is not simply about communication ability but reflects broader processes of racialization, belonging, and the privileging of dominant linguistic norms.

Participants described having their accents mocked or characterized as "international accents," experiences they did not always initially recognize as racist. Drawing on Coen-Sanchez's [63] conceptualization of polite racism in his study, he describes how racial bias is concealed beneath institutional norms of civility and inclusion. Operating at both interpersonal and structural levels, polite racism manifests through microaggressions, subtle forms of othering, and seemingly neutral institutional practices that reproduce racialized assumptions about belonging, success, and legitimacy. Often unconscious and socially sanctioned, these forms of discrimination are difficult to identify and challenge, particularly in Canada, where racism may be masked by smiles and welcoming gestures, rendering Blackness simultaneously hypervisible and invisible [63]. Participants' experiences of polite racism make it difficult to initially identify and challenge racial discrimination, with significant implications for their labour market outcomes.

Similarly, Creese [64] and Creese and Kambere [24] found that Black African immigrants in Canada are often excluded from positions or promotions involving direct client contact, as employers or supervisors often claim their accents would be incomprehensible to clients. In the same line, Acheme [23] shows that Black African immigrants' accented speech is often racialized, leading to assumptions about their intelligence, competence, and belonging. These experiences reflect broader intersecting systems of race, language, and power, underscoring the need to recognize their complex identities and contributions beyond accent or immigrant status. Ramjattan [25] contends that presenting accent as a skill that can be acquired or purchased to enhance employability diverts attention from the institutional racism that impedes immigrants' employment opportunities.

This research indicates that accent discrimination serves as a mechanism to exclude individuals from the skilled labour market and their professions by dismissing their credentials under the mask of non-bilingualism or foreign accents. African immigrants in Canada may face barriers to professional employment, promotions, post-secondary advancement, and housing due to Black racialization and their accents [4,24,65]. This study is among the few in Quebec to examine both implicit and explicit forms of racialized linguicism and racism, foregrounding the specificity of anti-Blackness through the theoretical lenses of the Black Radical Tradition and anti-Blackness scholarship.

6. Limitations

This study is limited to Black African immigrants admitted through Quebec's Skilled Worker Program. It excludes immigrants of other African racial or ethnic backgrounds, including those of White, Arab, or Asian descent, as well as individuals who entered Quebec through alternative immigration pathways, such as international student programs, asylum claims, or refugee programs. This scope reflects the study's anti-Blackness theoretical framework and its focus on highly skilled immigrants assessed through Quebec's points-based selection system. This focus is particularly relevant given evidence that Black African immigrants experience comparatively low employment and high underemployment rates in Canada despite their very high qualifications (Statistics Canada [7]; Yssaad & Field, 2018 [3]; Houle [14]). One limitation of this study is that interviews were conducted via audio and video conferencing due to COVID-19 restrictions and McGill Research Ethics Board requirements, which limited the researcher's ability to observe participants' body language and other non-verbal cues.

Regarding sample size, more participants fell under Case 1, meaning they integrated into their pre-migration field, though often at lower levels. This distribution may not

represent the general population, as African immigrants may not predominantly integrate into their pre-migration field or related professions. Instead, this pattern likely reflects the recruitment method, since more participants were recruited through snowball sampling.

7. Conclusions and Policy Implications

The study underscores the need to apply anti-discrimination laws more consistently and enforce them more effectively, as participants encountered different forms of discrimination. In this context, these challenges included linguistic discrimination and on-the-ground challenges in accessing employment opportunities. Bill 101, which aims to protect the French language in Quebec, should be applied consistently to all French-speaking individuals, including members of Black communities. If limited English proficiency is not considered a barrier for other Quebec workers, the same standard should apply equally to all employees and jobseekers. I argue that transformative policy reforms are essential to improving Black immigrants' labour market integration and advancing a more equitable future.

Given the emphasis placed on French proficiency as a key immigration criterion in Quebec, as well as the points awarded for French-language skills under its points-based selection system, it is important to examine why these competencies appear to lose their perceived value once skilled African immigrants arrive in the province. Prospective immigrants should receive a realistic, transparent account of Quebec's labour market, including the challenges they may face in securing employment commensurate with their qualifications and professional experience, particularly if they are not bilingual or proficient in English. Such transparency would help prospective immigrants make informed migration decisions and set realistic expectations about their employment prospects and professional integration in Quebec.

Black immigrants should not be subjected to employment discrimination based on linguistic characteristics that do not impede effective communication, such as their accents. Accent-based discrimination raises important concerns about equity and inclusion in the labour market, particularly when employers conflate accent variations with deficiencies in language competence, professional ability, or communicative effectiveness. As Derwing et al. [66] and Munro [67] emphasize, successful communication requires not only speakers' willingness and ability to communicate but also listeners' capacity to accommodate and understand diverse accents. Their research stresses the importance of moving beyond unrealistic expectations that immigrants should assimilate linguistically by adopting dominant or mainstream accents to be considered competent communicators. Rather, communication should be understood as a reciprocal process in which both speakers and listeners share responsibility for achieving mutual understanding. Employers who treat conformity to dominant accent norms as an implicit requirement for employability run the risk of reproducing systemic barriers that disproportionately disadvantage racialized immigrants, including skilled Black African immigrants. Promoting greater awareness of accent diversity among employers, recruiters, and colleagues is therefore essential to encouraging inclusive workplaces, reducing discriminatory hiring practices, and making sure that linguistic diversity does not become a proxy for racial exclusion in the labour market.

Addressing these inequities requires targeted interventions to reduce barriers to equitable employment. Potential interventions include initiatives that encourage employers to recruit and retain Black workers, recognition of internationally acquired credentials and experience, acknowledgement of Black immigrants' contributions to the labour market, and ensuring access to employment that matches their qualifications and professional expertise. Employers could receive mandatory EDI training to address biases and stereotypes about Black workers and promote equitable hiring practices. Inclusive workplaces that value Black employees' skills and perspectives benefit from greater innovation and overall effectiveness.

Public awareness campaigns and positive media representation are also needed to combat anti-Black racism and highlight the economic benefits of Black inclusion in Quebec's labour market, similar to those used to promote the French language.

The findings underscore structural barriers to Black African immigrants' labour market integration in Quebec, often masked by markers such as linguistic differences and non-native/foreign accents. In light of these findings, it is essential for the Quebec government to recognize and address systemic anti-Black racism and discrimination, and to implement effective measures to reduce labour market inequities. Premier François Legault's denial of systemic racism, including his statement that it primarily relates to Black people in the United States, has been criticized as dismissive and as hindering meaningful progress [68]. Eid et al. [69] further argue that the Quebec government often minimizes discrimination by treating it as isolated incidents rather than recognizing systemic patterns. Stronger application and enforcement of anti-discrimination laws are needed, particularly to address barriers faced by people of Black African descent.

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