"Driving wedges" and "hijacking" Pride: Disrupting narratives of black inclusion in LGBT politics and the Canadian national imaginary

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Abstract

This paper analyzes public debate pertaining to a demonstration by the Toronto chapter of Black Lives Matter (BLMTO) at the city's 2016 Pride parade. The movement's actions, and ultimately the organization itself, have been widely condemned for disrupting the event and calling attention to anti-Black racism within the Toronto Police Service and queer spaces. A critical discourse analysis of mainstream media content reveals the emergence of three major themes repeated across Canadian news outlets in the denouncement of BLMTO. Central to this process is the myth of multiculturalism, which effectively displaces the phenomenon of racism onto previous centuries and other countries. By scrutinizing the parameters of the Canadian national imaginary, this paper reveals the ways in which anti-Black racism has become compounded by the mainstream LGBT movement.

Key words

Black Lives Matter; queer liberalism; multiculturalism; critical discourse analysis

Resumen

Este artículo analiza el debate público acerca de una manifestación de la agrupación de Toronto de Black Lives Matter (BLMTO) en el desfile del Orgullo de 2016. Las acciones de BLMTO y, en última instancia, la propia organización, han recibido fuertes críticas por interrumpir la celebración y por llamar la atención al racismo contra los negros por parte del cuerpo de policía de Toronto y los espacios queer. Un análisis crítico del discurso de contenidos de medios de gran difusión revela la emergencia de

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tres grandes temas que se repiten en los medios canadienses en la denuncia a BLMTO. Un eje central de este proceso es el mito del multiculturalismo, que desplaza el fenómeno del racismo a siglos precedentes y a otros países. Al escrutar los parámetros del imaginario nacional canadiense, este artículo revela las formas en que el racismo contra los negros se ha visto agravado por el movimiento LGBT mayoritario.

Palabras clave

Black Lives Matter; liberalismo queer; multiculturalismo; análisis crítico del discurso

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1. Introduction

On July 3, 2016, the Toronto chapter of Black Lives Matter (BLMTO) briefly interrupted the city's annual LGBT pride parade in order to voice its demands for changes to the conduct of Pride Toronto. The demonstration at the intersection of Yonge and College street, in which members of the 2016 group of honour halted the flow of Pride traffic by staging a sit-in, lasted for a period of approximately 30 minutes until the executive director of Pride Toronto agreed to address the group's concerns. Of the nine demands made by BLMTO for Pride, including an increase in funding for Black and South Asian events and spaces, in addition to the adoption of equitable hiring practices for trans and Indigenous peoples, that which proved to be most contentious was number eight: the "removal of police floats/booths in all Pride marches/parades/community spaces" (Black Lives Matter Toronto 2016). The other eight demands became virtually eclipsed by Canadian mainstream media outlets, raising the following questions: what conversations were suppressed due to the primary focus on police inclusion? What does it mean for the protest to have taken place within a parade that has been contemporarily concerned with the celebration of LGBT rights? How do such rights function in accordance with multiculturalism to uphold the illusion of Canadian social equality?

This paper begins with an overview of contextual content pertaining to the events that preceded the July 3 protest, including a formal apology to LGBT Torontonians on behalf of the city's Chief of police, in addition to a protest by BLMTO at TPS (Toronto Police Service) headquarters. Next, it lays out the methodological framing and employment of research methods used for the mobilization of a critical discourse analysis (CDA) of mainstream media content. This analysis reveals the prevalence of three major themes invoked in the popular condemnation of BLMTO: a demand for police inclusion within future Pride parades, rhetoric of criminal conduct, and an accentuation of positive LGBT/state relations. Through engagement with literature on the limits of liberalism, the exclusion of race from mainstream LGBT activism, the myth of Canadian multiculturalism, and the phenomena of neoliberalism and homonationalism, it is argued that the pervasiveness of anti-Black racism in Canada has become sustained by the discourse of queer equality.

2. Case study background

The 2016 BLMTO/Pride protest presented an opportunity for public discussion on the otherwise dominantly closed topic of the relationship between LGBT and racial equality. While the sit-in was interpreted by many as an affront to Pride and the TPS, for BLMTO, it served as a call to action against anti-Black racism within both institutions. Before addressing media coverage and public reaction to the event, a brief history of Pride and BLMTO provides relevant context for considering the scope of issues at play.

Following years of police regulation of cruising and violence against patrons who frequented businesses in Toronto's Church and Wellesley neighbourhood, the 1981 bathhouse raids served as a catalyst for queer resistance in Canada. While the raids, which targeted all six of the city's gay bathhouses, were neither the first nor the last, they resulted in the arrest of 304 men, thereby constituting one of the country's largest single arrests (Bérubé 2003, 42–44). Soon thereafter, the Toronto Lesbian and Gay Pride Committee emerged in commemoration of the ensuing riots, and in years since, has

organized annual events in the spirit of community-building. In the subsequent decades, concerted efforts have been made by the city and its police force to improve relations with LGBT people, although concerns have continued to be raised about the TPS regarding its targeting of racialized and queer residents, in addition to sex workers. On June 22, 2016, just over a week prior to the Pride parade, Toronto's police Chief issued a formal apology for the 1981 raids. Two days later, at the unveiling of a mural designed to represent the evolution of the relationship between LGBT populations and the TPS, BLMTO protesters disrupted the event, calling for meaningful, institutional change.

Although BLMTO takes its name from a movement that arose in the United States following the deaths of Black Americans at the hands of police officers, its leaders have emphasized the unique systemic racism of the Canadian context.[1] According to one of BLMTO's co-founders, Janaya Khan, the Toronto chapter has had to grapple with the general public sentiment that anti-Black racism in Canada is negligible, especially in contrast to the US, where the issue is considered far more pervasive (Migdal 2016c). Contrary to this narrative, BLMTO has worked to shed light on the deaths of Bony Jean-Pierre, Abdirahman Abdi, Andrew Loku, Alex Wettlaufer, and Jermaine Carby by calling out the conduct of local police services. Their activism is supported by countless experiences of police harassment and abuse, as affirmed by empirical research which reveals that Black people are subjected to carding practices at a rate that is 3.4 times higher than white Torontonians, and that "between 2013 and 2017, a Black person in Toronto was nearly 20 times more likely than a White person to be involved in a fatal shooting by the Toronto Police Service" (Rankin and Winsa 2012, Ontario Human Rights Commission 2018, Khan 2019, Walcott and Abdillahi 2019, 89).[2] Moreover, between 2005 and 2015, federal prisons saw a 69 percent increase in the incarceration of Black people, underscoring the reality that "the prison industrial complex has wreaked havoc on the Black family" (Maynard 2017, 109, Walcott and Abdillahi 2019, 43). Writing from the American context, Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor asks: "is it any wonder that a new movement has taken the name 'Black Lives Matter' as its slogan when it is so clear that, for the police, Black Lives do not matter at all?" (Taylor 2016, 3).

After city funding cuts to Afrofest, the largest African music festival in North America, the death of Wettlaufer, and the Special Investigations Unit (SIU) exoneration of the officers responsible for killing Loku, BLMTO organized a protest outside of TPS headquarters that lasted from March 20 to April 4, 2016 (Onstad 2017). The demonstration, which became defined by demands for a review of the SIU's decision and the presence of officers in hazmat suits destroying a contained fire, eventually

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[1] The movement was founded in 2013 following the acquittal of a man who shot and killed Trayvon Martin, an unarmed 17-year-old Black high school student. Subsequent cases that the movement has spoken out against include the deaths of Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Renisha McBride, Jerame Reid, Korryn Gaines, Tamir Rice, Freddie Gray, Meagan Hockaday, Alton Sterline, and Philando Castile, among many others. For historical context, it should also be noted that "BLM and the Movement for Black Lives embody three to four decades of Black feminist ideas, politics and insights. Their formation, constituted of queer, trans, persons living with disabilities, heterosexual, all-sexuals and on and on – a range of identities invoked as necessary naming and simultaneously incidental to an imagined future – calls to mind a coming together to get work accomplished" (Walcott and Abdillahi 2019, 69).

[2] Robyn Maynard defines carding as the amassment of "personal information, and movement of millions of people using 'contact card' stops from largely non-criminal encounters" by the police for the creation of "a massive 'known to police' database of the citizenry" (Maynard 2017, 89).

resulted in a brief meeting with Ontario's Premier, who acknowledged the presence of systemic racism in Canada. In contrast, police Chief Mike Saunders avoided meeting with demonstrators, and nearly three months later, wrote:

> I have said, again and again, that I will sit down with any person or group who has ideas on better ways to reach out to marginalized communities, on how to work to make the city safer and more inclusive. That offer stands. I am interested in dialogue. What I am not interested in is monologues from those with nothing to offer except abuse and insult. (Saunders, cited in CBC News 2016b)

Despite not naming BLMTO directly, Saunders has continued to avoid meeting with the movement's members. The "abuse and insult" comment appears to reference both the March protest and the movement's demand for the removal of police floats from future Pride parades.

To focus solely on Saunders' reaction, however, would neglect the complete scope of BLMTO's work. While mobilizations have largely focused on addressing institutional racism in city police forces, the movement's goals are much wider. For instance, the vision of BLMTO is "to be a platform upon which black communities across Toronto can actively dismantle all forms of anti-black racism, liberate blackness, support black healing, affirm black existence, and create freedom to love and self-determine" (https://blacklivesmatter.ca/about/). Focusing on issues of racialized violence with the Toronto Police is, therefore, a symbolic first step towards the organization achieving its goals. During the Pride protest, co-founder Alexandria Williams exclaimed: "[W]e are under attack (…). Pride Toronto, we are calling you out! For your anti-blackness, your anti-indigeneity," highlighting the movement's solidarity with Indigenous activists and its concern with racism within queer spaces, particularly during Pride events (Batters 2016). Of specific concern was the continual underfunding and relocation of Blockorama, which has, since 1999, challenged the ascendancy of whiteness in Pride events and in the Church and Wellesley neighbourhood. Blockorama, an all-day dance party, is "a provocative and assertive taking of space in the queer community, but it is also part of the ongoing struggle for space in the public sphere of a multicultural city" (Walcott 2006, 129). As noted by Williams, "folks are forgetting that we haven't all made it to the point of queer liberation. That not all communities who participate in Pride are actually able to be free in that celebration" (Batters 2016). This point conveys the need for Black spaces and raises the issue of police participation in Pride events. Indeed, the presence of uniformed TPS officers marching in the parade functions to dismiss the experiences of violence from queers of colour.[3] While it may be regarded by some as a gesture of goodwill, such a perception relies on the notion of progress compared to the 1981 bathhouse raids but does not take into account the continued assault on some members of the city's queer population. Adding to this concern, Khan noted that the inclusion of police floats was never determined by community consensus and that "it shouldn't have taken 30 plus years for Pride to really consider what would make black communities and racialized communities feel safer in Pride" (Mehta 2016a, Yawar 2016). While Pride ultimately agreed to BLMTO's list of demands, what remains clear from media coverage

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[3] "BLM has been crystal clear that individuals who on other days work as cops can and should attend Pride. But officers in uniform with guns – the same ones who, according to the *Star*'s own reports, have killed 18 black men since 1990 – should not" (Cole 2016).

of the sit-in is that shifting the narrative of racial inclusion in LGBT politics and the Canadian national imaginary poses a considerable challenge.

3. Methodology

This paper employs a CDA of mainstream media content pertaining to BLMTO's demonstration at Pride 2016. According to Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer, CDA is "fundamentally concerned with analyzing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language" (Wodak and Meyer 2001, 2). The primary emphasis on language and its organization by power draws on the work of Michel Foucault. His concept of discourse refers to "a group of statements (…) that govern the different modes of enunciation, the possible distribution of the subjective position, and the system that defines and prescribes them" (Foucault 1972, 115). In other words, discourse denotes semantic meaning and the production of knowledge, thereby shaping the governing of a topic and how it may be dominantly conceptualized (Hall 1997b, 29). Discourse, therefore, is made evident by the weight or absence of particular words and phrases that construct common narratives. One method by which such an analysis may be undertaken is through an examination of media content. Although news coverage is only one of many forms of public discussion, its documentation of journalistic interpretation, comments made by public officials, and reaction from the general public offer a profusion of material for the purposes of a CDA.

This is not to suggest, however, that media institutions operate neutrally in terms of comprehensively representing a balance of perspectives; Foucault's work on power speaks to the impossibility of escaping regulation. Regardless of intent, one must consider the myriad of factors that may impact news content, including the dynamics of editorial boards, access to and willingness of interviewees, journalistic style, and broader ideological structures. Moreover, Stuart Hall contends that although power functions to fix particular meanings to texts, public interpretation will vary depending on individual experiences (Hall 1997b, 4). Because representation is itself always a political act, a media analysis can never perfectly represent society at large; however, a CDA of mainstream news may provide a piece of the puzzle. Teun van Dijk maintains that mainstream news acts as "the main form of public discourse that provides the general outline of social, political, cultural, and economic models of societal events, as well as the pervasively dominant knowledges and attitude structures that make such models intelligible," which may be analyzed in order to contemplate the connections between reporting and public sentiments.[4] This requires a consideration of multiple articles to identify the presence of thematic repetition, which may influence the degree to which ideas appear reasonable and become more widely circulated (Gaines 2001, 27). Further to this point, the invocation of stereotypes requires notable observation, as they draw on common public perception "of what is held to be 'natural' or 'normal,' how they create and sustain a common sense of the proper limits of what is accepted as legitimate and right" (Pickering 2001, xiv; also see Hall *et al.* 2013). Analyzing the prominence of such ideas

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[4] Although it is worth considering whether this has changed since the publication of van Dijk's work in 1990, certainly newspapers and news websites remain a significant force in the operation of public discourse (van Dijk 1990, 182, Caldas-Coulthard 2002, 273).

also necessitates that attention is paid to the prioritization of some voices over others, which, according to the following articles, involves a greater circulation of pro-police narratives than statements made by BLMTO supporters. To this end, news sources do not necessarily acknowledge the significance of who can speak or what one is saying, but rather, they participate in the construction of discourse through authorizing which voices are deemed worthy of listening to (Spivak 1988).

This CDA begins with an evaluation of research methods and then proceeds to unpack the breadth of media content selected for analysis. The final section connects three major themes identified in news statements to literature concerning LGBT activism and identity politics, the limits of liberalism, and racial exclusions within the framework of Canadian multiculturalism. A reading across media and academic texts reveals the ways in which anti-Blackness has been sustained by narratives of equality and national belonging, as displayed by the 2016 BLMTO/Pride demonstration.

4. Method

Media content was primarily collected through research within the Canadian Major Dailies archive, and secondarily through the Google News database, using the following key search terms within article titles: "Black Lives Matter", "BLM", "Pride", and "Toronto". The former platform was used for the purpose of analyzing mainstream newspapers in Canada, consisting of *The Globe and Mail*, *Toronto Star*, *National Post*, *The Chronicle Herald*, *Sudbury Star*, and *Winnipeg Free Press*, whereas the latter produced results from popular online news sources: *CBC News*, *CTV News*, and *Toronto Sun*.[5] Searches were limited to articles published in the month of July 2016 in order to focus on the peak of mainstream media discussions of BLMTO and Pride Toronto, in addition to capturing immediate national reactions to the event. Further to this point, only Canadian news sources were considered. Results that were excluded from this analysis were either substantively focused on pride celebrations outside of Toronto, on other concerns related to the Black Lives Matter movement, or on media coverage of separate issues. Additionally, due to this paper's focus on national narratives pertaining to the event, only mainstream media sources were considered, resulting in the omission of less-widespread outlets, such as *Vice News*, *NOW Magazine*, and *Xtra* for data collection and analysis. Ultimately, 35 articles were selected, comprising of 13 opinion pieces, such as op-eds and letters to the editor, and 22 stories classified as news. Both styles were collected in order to include a variety of perspectives beyond what may have otherwise been omitted from journalistic decisions about interviews, quotes, or stylistic approaches.[6] Regarding the limited range of search terms, databases, and articles, this paper does not claim to provide an exhaustive analysis of all news coverage; instead, the

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[5] The Google News search also produced one relevant article each from *The Globe and Mail* and *Toronto Star* that were not identified in the Canadian Major Dailies search.

[6] It is important to note the weight of decision-making that is carried by newspaper editorial boards in terms of selecting and modifying published content. Additionally, it is important to highlight that of the 13 opinion pieces, six were written by individual members of the general public. Two such articles were comprised of a collection of public reactions.

intended purpose is to offer a snapshot of public debate as contained within dominant media.[7]

The content was thematically coded to identify the overall approaches and specific recurring arguments from journalists and Canadian residents. In total, the authors of eight opinion-based articles and two news stories explicitly condemned the actions of BLMTO.[8] Conversely, five opinion pieces directly supported the movement,[9] while the remaining 20 articles provided news reports of the controversy. In the case of the latter, arguments from both sides of the debate were represented, with the exception of two articles that did not reference comments supporting the legitimacy of BLMTO (Ward 2016, CBC News 2016b). Overall, ten articles provided virtually no engagement with a defence of BLMTO, in contrast to 32 that represented anti-BLMTO sentiments. In the case of opinion-based articles, the positions of the authors were overtly stated; however, tracing the intentions and perspectives of the journalists would be a precarious undertaking given the absence of stated personal views, the prominent journalistic aspiration of impartial reporting (a contested achievable endeavour), and the challenge of being fully aware of one's own biases. Consequently, in order to provide a critical discourse analysis, this paper is not concerned with attempting to unmask the standpoints of journalists; rather, it engages with the power relations underpinning the language and arguments used in the widespread castigation of BLMTO. With that in mind, when searching for the prevalence of specific language throughout the selected material, such as references to "hijacking," articles with explicitly pro-BLMTO stances were not considered,[10] as the term was used to refute accusations of hijacking, rather than supporting such a narrative, as was the case through repetition in summary-based and overtly negative articles. While most of the content collected for analysis exhibits, to some degree, both favourable and oppositional reactions, on average, a considerably higher degree of emphasis was placed on showcasing anti-BLMTO viewpoints, which was the case both overall and in terms of the majority of articles.[11] Although it is important not to dismiss the representation of support for BLMTO, the saturation of negative media coverage warrants particular consideration.

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[7] The author acknowledges the selective decision-making process in the determination of search criteria and the collection of media content, as impacted by database parameters and disciplinary background. Further, references to BLMTO were made completely through access to online material and personal observation of the 2016 Pride parade in Toronto. As a queer-identified white author, the absence of lived experience related to anti-Black racism should be regarded as a limitation of perspective that may have otherwise enriched the scope of this analysis.

[8] One of the opinion pieces contained 27 public reactions to the sit-in, of which only one respondent wrote favourably of BLMTO in terms of both its politics and the sit-in. For this reason, the article was labelled as condemning BLMTO; *Disruption at Pride Backfires* (Toronto Star 2016a).

[9] One of the editorials contained seven public reactions to the event, of which five respondents wrote favourably about BLMTO. One of those five simultaneously expressed positive sentiments towards the police, which was anomalous among the 35 articles. The other two responses focused primarily on criticizing a separate opinion piece by Desmond Cole, rather than critiquing BLMTO outright (Toronto Star 2016b).

[10] This was the case in Winnipeg Free Press 2016, Cole 2016.

[11] For instance, as noted in the above footnotes, while one *Toronto Star* article showcased 26 out of 27 public reactions in opposition to BLMTO or its actions, a secondary publication contained a mere five out of seven positive responses. Moreover, many articles contained a significant summary of why people have condemned BLMTO, while offering a comparatively shorter set of statements from BLMTO supporters. For example, see Gillis and Pagliaro 2016.

The most commonly referenced defense of BLMTO consisted of statements from its co-founders, especially Khan. Effectively, their arguments regarding structural oppression, police violence, and racial exclusion within Pride Toronto and queer spaces, are representative of BLMTO overall. Additional commentary was provided by co-founders Williams and Rodney Diverlus, committee member LeRoi Newbold, Black queer diaspora scholar Rinaldo Walcott, and others, including activists, academics, journalists, and residents of Ontario. In contrast, the range of arguments made against BLMTO was more expansively represented, drawing on criticisms from police officers, the Mayor of Toronto, journalists, LGBT and Black residents, and other members of the general public. While a handful of articles contain comments that attempt to downplay Black racism and displace it as an American issue, the most prevalent arguments were centered on police inclusion in the city's Pride parade, the notion that BLMTO "hijacked" Pride, and claims of positive relations between LGBT Canadians and the state. Although these streams of thought may have been separately mobilized to disparage BLMTO, the employment of a critical discourse analysis reveals their intertwinement and contribution to dominant narratives of multiculturalism, liberalism, and racial equality.

5. Media analysis

Despite BLMTO's call to action to critically consider relations between the TPS and Black and queer residents, news articles about the 2016 sit-in were dominated by the representation of the idea that the police would be unfairly excluded from Pride. In particular, this narrative was supported by the amplification of police voices, including: Chuck Krangle, an openly gay TPS Constable and former soldier; Mike McCormack, president of the Toronto Police Association labour union; and Mike Saunders. Krangle's standpoint, which was circulated across media outlets, emphasized his experiences of working alongside gay-friendly colleagues and attending his first Pride parade in 2016, "only to be excluded from the next" (Yawar 2016, Blatchford 2016, Gillis 2016, Gillis and Pagliaro 2016, Reynolds 2016, CTV News.ca Staff 2016a). According to Krangle, "police officers are significantly represented in the LGBTQ community and it would be unacceptable to alienate and discriminate against them and those who support them" (Yawar 2016, CTV News.ca Staff 2016a). The utility of this story is that it animates discussions of police as victims of exclusion, thereby shifting the narrative away from the victimization of Black and queer bodies at the hands of the state, and more specifically, by TPS officers. Moreover, McCormack added to this framing, arguing that the Pride executive director's initial agreement to BLMTO's list of demands constituted "a slap in the face" to the TPS at large, causing officers to "feel thrown under the bus, as it were, or betrayed by the organizers".[12] McCormack's immediate frustration appears to be with Pride Toronto; however, his assertion that "Black Lives Matters [*sic*] drives wedges, they don't build bridges. I would say they are very, very effective at alienating policing and driving wedges in communities" exhibits his contempt for the movement as a whole (Migdal 2016c; also see CBC News 2016b). Saunders echoed this point in a letter to the TPS, writing that "attacks" from BLMTO attempt to "drive a wedge between the TPS and the LGBTQ communities" (Saunders, cited in CBC News 2016b). In order to

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[12] Although Mathieu Chantelois agreed to BLMTO's nine demands on July 3, he later rescinded his commitment, citing a willingness to do whatever was necessary to end the sit-in (Batters 2016, Blatchford 2016, Hong and Edwards 2016, Gillis and Pagliaro 2016, Reynolds 2016).

demonstrate cohesive resistance to such "inaccurate, irresponsible and inflammatory" actions, Saunders stressed the outpour of public support for the TPS, drawing attention to the point that "members of the LGBT communities tell us they appreciate and understand how much better our relationship is, how they, indeed, feel served and protected by you and how strongly they feel the TPS must continue to work closely with LGBT communities" (Saunders, cited in CBC News 2016b). This statement, combined with accusations of driving wedges, denotes an imagined separation between the city's queer and Black populations, thus obfuscating the reality that one can simultaneously hold both identities and support BLMTO. Furthermore, it offers no indication that policing practices require revaluation; rather, it applauds TPS conduct and calls for business as usual. Saunders did assert that he remains willing to "sit down with any person or group who has ideas on better ways to reach out to marginalized communities," yet in the next sentence, he offers a caveat: "what I am not interested in is monologues from those with nothing to offer except abuse and insult" (Saunders, cited in CBC News 2016b). Despite the fact that Saunders did not explicitly name BLMTO, the letter was published by *CBC News* five days after the July 3 sit-in.[13] Additionally, Saunders had previously refused to meet with the movement's leaders months earlier, correspondingly indicating an unwillingness for meaningful engagement. Perhaps unsurprisingly, especially given the leadership roles of Saunders and McCormack, in conjunction with Krangle's influence, none of the analyzed media content contained support for BLMTO from members of the TPS.

Condemnation rooted in a defence of the police was also sustained by Toronto's Mayor, John Tory, opinion columnists Margaret Wente and Christine Blatchford, and Ontario residents. Tory's commentary on the matter was characterized by his "serious concerns" over the potential of police exclusion (Gillis and Pagliaro 2016). In a media-released statement to Saunders, Tory wrote that he values the way in which LGBT officers show their support for Pride through active participation, while also noting the TPS' role in keeping events "happy and safe" (Warnica 2016). Regardless of the intentions of Tory in writing the letter, or of the journalist who published the article, the release of the statements into the public domain generated the possibility of various interpretations (van Dijk 1990, Hall 1997a). To better understand the implications of Tory's remarks, one must consider their relation to the collection of mainstream media content circulating around the same period of time. In Blatchford's take on the protest, she reiterated Krangle's story to demonstrate the alleged weakness of Pride in "bow[ing] to [the] prejudice" of BLMTO (Blatchford 2016). As suggested by the article's title and stance, demanding the removal of police floats from the Pride parade embodies an injustice greater than TPS violence against Black and queer-identified people. On a related note, Wente equated queer liberation itself with the presence of police floats at Pride, claiming "participation in the parade is a welcome symbol of solidarity and inclusion – and also an important message to the public that gay people exist in every walk of life" (Wente 2016). Here, it is apparent that the solidarity with queer populations is necessarily separate from concerns for anti-black racism, as Wente writes that the politics of BLMTO can be boiled down to an act of "pretending that Toronto is just another racist hellhole" (Wente 2016). Comments from the public on the controversy referred to the removal of

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[13] For more context, the letter was disseminated following a police shooting in the United States.

police floats as "taking a step backwards," "alien[ating] black people from our police force (…) [by] making police out to be the enemy," and "fighting discrimination with discrimination" (Gillis 2016, Toronto Star 2016a, Jamieson 2016). One person wrote: "I'm appalled at how someone in that position could fall prey to such bullying and could condone such blatant disrespect for the people who serve and protect us. Yes, black lives matter, all lives matter, and our police services matter!" (Toronto Star 2016a).[14] This overarching insistence on the inclusion of the TPS necessitates a rejection of the threat that is posed to those who BLMTO aims to protect. The common thread that runs through all of these accounts is the rejection of anti-Black systemic oppression coupled with the imagined separation of Blackness and queerness.

Tied to the narrative of the purported injustice of police exclusion is the assertion that the 2016 sit-in was tantamount to criminal behaviour, leading to descriptions of BLMTO as guilty of "hijacking," "extortion," "blackmail," and holding Pride "hostage" by putting a "gun [to its] head".[15] This use of this language has a dual function: first, it supports an association between Blackness and crime that lends legitimacy to TPS inclusion, and secondly, it demonstrates a presumed irrelevance of racial politics to Pride. According to Blatchford and *Toronto Sun* columnist Sue-Anne Levy, the sit-in posed a threat to the health of parade participants who "were left to stand in the blazing heat," putting them at risk of fainting (Blatchford 2016, Levy 2016). The invocation of "hostage" – "a rag-tag group of protesters who call themselves 'Black Lives Matter' [held] our annual Pride parade hostage," "BLM didn't garner much support for the cause from those in attendance or watching with this kind of disruptive behaviour and then holding the parade hostage for a signature," "to hold a parade hostage while they demanded that there be no more Toronto police providing security at the event, no more police floats in the parade or that Pride hires more of their members, struck me as downright self-serving" – denotes all of those in the flow of the parade's traffic, while signifying "the actions of a criminal body [and] not one seeking just social change" (Silverman 2016, Toronto Star 2016a, Levy 2016). Such "tactics of extortion," – enabled by a "cowed" director who, "when faced with blackmail," "caved" to BLMTO's demands in "a sad example of opportunism and capitulation" – were part and parcel of the ostensible hijacking that took place (Blatchford 2016, Toronto Star 2016a, Wente 2016, Kay 2016). The violent, metaphorical retelling of the event, in which Pride temporarily agreed to adopt BLMTO's demands at gunpoint, positions the movement's leaders as "black militants [who] prefer the rigid and paranoiac Marxist oppressed-oppressor narrative that sanctions a general condemnation of whites" (Kay 2016).[16] This perspective alludes to the takeover of an unrelated and public event for the sole purpose of promoting a deluded agenda. In line with this perspective were calls for BLMTO to concern itself with an issue deemed more palpably Black-related: "black kids who are gunned down by other black kids," "the epidemic of violence of black youth upon rival (black) gang members, with innocent bystanders getting killed," "the number of black

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[14] For analysis of the problematics of "all lives matter," which is not addressed here, see: Yancy and Butler 2015.

[15] Cumulatively, these terms were used 22 times across six articles, of which five were explicitly anti-BLMTO.

[16] "Imagine a world where a blackmailer can't count on the blackmailee to stick to his word given when the metaphorical gun was at his head" (Blatchford 2016); "As for Pride's signing a document accepting their demands, it's hard to say no when you have a gun to your head" (Toronto Star 2016a).

youths killing black youths in our city," and "gun violence and killings in the predominantly black neighbourhoods, where black lives matter" (Wente 2016, Silverman 2016, Toronto Star 2016a).

To consider the ramifications of such comments, Sara Ahmed's notion of "problematic proximities" offers a critical conceptualization of the way in which language operates that "lets us draw associations between two bad things, while claiming we're not racist" (Ahmed 2011, 126). The repetitive pairing of "Black" with words such as "hijack," "taking hostages," "holding a gun to someone's head," "gangs," and "killings" fuses a discursive connection between such concepts, informing common perception, and resulting in a seemingly naturalized reality. Given the prevalence of anti-Black racism in Canada, narratives of criminality "stick" to Blackness, and by extension to BLMTO, in a way that shapes discourses of Blackness differently from whiteness (see Ahmed 2004, 122).[17] Consistent with the works of Carmen Rosa Caldas-Coulthard and Teun van Dijk, this construction plays into a dichotomizing narrative of "the outsider (…) versus positive self-representation" (van Dijk 1999, 146–47, Caldas-Coulthard 2002, 287). This approach, typical of racist discourse, is strengthened by the use of metaphor, hyperbole, and de-emphasis of merit, which may be achieved through "being vague or indirect about [one's] racism, and detailed and precise about Their crimes or misbehavior" (van Dijk 1999, 147). The us/them divide can be observed in media coverage of victim-reversal, in which those who were held "hostage" and "bullied" by BLMTO were casualties of a "movement [which] does nothing but judge people by the colour of skin, and in their view, individual character is meaningless: to be white is to be racist and to be black is to be a victim" (van Dijk 1999, 151, Wente 2016, Kay 2016). This framing relies on the positioning of BLMTO as the true problem, and in three cases, as the actual perpetrator of racism; "Black Lives Matter Toronto claims to be an anti-racist group but faced accusations of racism when co-founder Yusra Khogali Tweeted in February, 'Plz Allah give me strength to not cuss/kill these men and white folks out here today. Plz plz plz'," "BLM should resist embracing the values it hates," and "If Martin Luther King Jr. were here to comment on the Pride incident, he would be appalled at BLM's inversion of his dream" (CTV News.ca Staff 2016a, Toronto Star 2016a, Kay 2016). Other rejections of BLMTO were premised on the dismissal of systemic racism, often through what van Dijk terms a "disclaimer (…) [of] apparent empathy," in which a commentator acknowledges some form of discrimination, immediately followed by invalidation; "these are issues worth discussing. But we're not Ferguson, or anything like it. By pretending that Toronto is just another racist hellhole where police routinely gun down black kids, the Black Lives Matter folks do not create a useful forum for discussion," and "it's true that African Americans face many unique hardships (…). Yet, according to the latest Pew poll on views of race and inequality, 'roughly half (51 per cent) (of black Americans) say their race hasn't made a difference in their overall success'" (van Dijk 1999, 150–51, Wente 2016, Kay 2016). Upon consideration of the repetitive claims that BLMTO engaged in criminal behaviour, antithetical to the principle of equality, the us/them separation becomes compounded by the notion that "BLM has absolutely

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[17] Ali Greey attributes the association between BLMTO and "hijacking" to broader narratives of terrorism (Greey 2018, 667; see also Maynard 2017, 86).

nothing to do with the gay, lesbian, transgender community" (Jamieson 2016).[18] The perception of hijacking re-presents itself here, as the semantics of the term draw on the understanding of taking control of another's possession, prompting Khan to respond: "I can't co-opt what is mine" (Thompson 2016). As the central focus of media coverage would suggest, however, Pride belongs to the imaginary of "the LGBT community," and not to BLMTO – a separation that pits queerness against Blackness (Hong and Edwards 2016).

In addition to the calls for police inclusion and accusations of criminal conduct, media degradation of BLMTO was also premised on the emphasis of positive relations between the Canadian state and LGBT citizens. Such comments were supported by reference to social and legal achievements, emboldened by the fact that 2016 marked the first year that a Prime Minister chose to march in any pride parade across the country (Andrew-gee 2016, Jamieson 2016). As one attendee noted, "it just shows how far society has come," prompting a *Globe and Mail* journalist to elaborate that "Mr. Trudeau has become something of a gay icon" (Andrew-gee 2016). Even more predominantly cited, however, was the idea of improved relations between law enforcement and queer residents of Toronto. McCormack stated that the TPS has "been supporting this parade for years, long before politicians and other people," thus rendering BLMTO's demands "stupid" (Thompson 2016, Yawar 2016). This perspective was repeated across news outlets by police officers, Tory, journalists, and members of the public, garnering coverage in both opinion-based and summary-oriented articles: "people around the world have long remarked about the police participation in the Pride parade as a statement on our acceptance of LGBT rights and we should not allow BLM to place its own agenda ahead of all the good accomplished thus far," "many accuse BLMTO of undermining recent progress made between the LGBT community and Toronto police, including a historic apology offered by Police Chief Mark Saunders last month for a string of raids made on gay bathhouses in 1981," "there are still homophobic police, but the relationship between us has improved dramatically," "the gay movement came out of a situation of abuse and discrimination by the police to reach a position of respect and equality in the eyes of economic and political bodies," "the TPS has made enormous strides in recent years to enhance and develop our relationship with those communities," "police leadership and officers have 'come a long way' on relationships with the LGBTQ2S community and that that community has embraced police 'to some extent'," and "Mr. Tory reiterated (…) the 'positive evolution' between Toronto police and the city's LGBTQ community" (Jamieson 2016, Urback 2016, Toronto Star 2016a, CBC News 2016b, Gillis and Pagliaro 2016, Gollom 2016, Migdal 2016a, 2016b). Although it is not uncommon for Pride celebrations to provide moments of reflection for the degrees of achievement that have been reached over the decades, the positioning of this narrative alongside debates about BLMTO's legitimacy functions to preclude largescale conversations about aspirations for racial inclusion within mainstream LGBT politics. Indeed, part of the backlash against BLMTO appears to be sustained by the sentiment that "there are clearly people in this city who want to drive a wedge between the TPS and the LGBT communities" (CBC News 2016b). Here, the separation of "people in this city" from the bond between the state – in this instance, front-line officers – and "LGBT communities" situates Blackness

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[18] Khan and other BLMTO members have also faced accusations of lying about their queer identities (Mehta 2016b).

as separate from queerness; note that Saunders' statement does not describe a fraction within "LGBT communities," but instead, employs "people in this city" as a stand-in for BLMTO. This framing, as will be explored in greater detail in the following section, can be traced to a wider welcoming of some queers into the realm of authentic national belonging, rooted in whiteness.

Throughout the 35 media articles used for this analysis, three central themes underpinning the backlash against BLMTO may be observed: demands for police inclusion in the Pride parade, accusations of hijacking and criminal behaviour, and emphasis on strengthening ties between the TPS and queer residents. In total, at least one theme is clearly present in the summaries, quotes, or opinions of 28 articles. Of the remaining seven, four were opinion pieces that explicitly and exclusively defended BLMTO, while three were summary-based articles that primarily featured the voices of Khan and Diverlus (Mehta 2016a, 2016b, Harvey-Sanchez 2016, Winnipeg Free Press 2016, Cole 2016, CTV News.ca Staff 2016b, CBC News 2016a). Despite the representation of arguments in favour of BLMTO, overwhelmingly, media coverage was dominated by narratives of condemnation. In effect, although three separate themes were widely circulated, a consideration of how they mutually informed one another reveals the presence of anti-Black racism within discussions of equality, marked by the welcoming of some queers into the fold of the national imaginary. BLMTO's resistance appeared to be understood as not only an affront to Pride, but to the Canadian nation-state as a whole. Critical engagement with the transcendence of liberalism reveals the ways in which these positions dominated mainstream media coverage of the BLMTO/Pride protest.

6. Discursive operations of liberalism

On the whole, the backlash against BLMTO demonstrated a diffuse undermining of the movement's assertion of anti-Black racism's prevalence in Canada. This was accomplished through the positioning of police officers, especially those who are queer, as virtuous victims, worthy of public sympathy, juxtaposed to the "clenched-fist belligerence we now associate with BLM" (Kay 2016). The ostensible impossibility of systemic racism was further reiterated by the institutional and societal achievements of the mainstream LGBT movement. A scrutinization of liberalism, however, reveals the construction of the state as an impartial force in the safeguarding of equality rights and the effective exclusion of race. While the selected news articles do not directly reference liberalism, they nonetheless buttress the myth of racelessness that it upholds. This is not to suggest that race is a neglected topic of discussion, but to indicate the manner in which racism is overlooked and dismissed. This speaks to the commonly held degree of faith that is placed in the Canadian liberal democratic state for the resolution of inequality, which extends to queerphobia as well as racism. Indeed, under liberalism, racism is regarded as insignificant in one's pursuit of equality, as the state is understood to be a "neutral arbiter and protector of the weak, rather than as implicated in the very oppression that it is hoped it will eradicate" (Smart 1989, 140, Fineman 2011, 53–62). This conceptualization has laid the groundwork for the emergence of multiculturalism, neoliberalism, and homonationalism, each of which functions to cement notions of freedom and equality that eschew the reality of systemic racism.

The process through which the notion of colourblindness has been sustained within the greater context of Canada and LGBT activism requires a consideration of the principles of universal rights and individualism inherent in liberalism. According to David Goldberg, these work to produce an idealized conception of equality that erases rather than considers social difference, thus constructing race as a "morally irrelevant category" (Goldberg 1993, 6). When citizens buy into the ideology of liberalism wholesale, it is presumed that through the law, discrimination will not only be eliminated in terms of how the state interacts with citizens, but also in terms of how citizens interact with one another. In private situations where issues of discrimination persist, such as cases in which an employee is wrongfully terminated as a result of the employer's deeply held racist beliefs, the solution, as Dean Spade points out, is imagined to be more legal protections provided by the liberal state (Spade 2011, 82). Resultantly, persisting issues of discrimination are addressed in one of two ways, neither of which can account for systemic issues: through the denial that discrimination has taken place or through the individualization of instances of discrimination. While the former position may prove difficult to support in the face of clear-cut instances of discrimination, the latter is supported through the development and enforcement of anti-discrimination laws, which maintains the illusory effectiveness of liberalism by appearing to eradicate discrimination on a case-by-case basis. Spade claims that this liberal "solution" "individualizes racism. It says that racism is about bad individuals who intentionally make discriminatory choices and must be punished. In this (mis)understanding, structural or systemic racism is rendered invisible" (Spade 2011, 84). Further to this point, equal status under the law may carry little significance when discrimination is being perpetrated by the state itself, such as in cases of carding, police violence, the child welfare system's disproportionate handling of cases involving Black and Indigenous families, and racial segregation in Canadian schools (Maynard 2017, 10). The operation of "modern state racism," distinct from overtly racist policies of previous decades, becomes more easily disregarded under the guise of liberal equality rights (Maynard 2017, 10; also see Backhouse 1999). This can be observed in media comments which dismiss the legitimacy of the BLM movement, including the standpoint that "any questions they can't answer, they rationalize under the pretence of 'institutional racism', which is never really defined" (Kay 2016). Statements like these are grounded by a concurrent failure to meaningfully consider the movement's purpose and the liberal state's capacity for oppression.

As Constance Backhouse explains, even attempts to brush off racism as a vestige of the past function to normalize racism and contribute to a failure of considering its lasting impacts (Backhouse 1999, 10). For example, discussions of African slavery are commonly associated with the US due to the historical significance of the Civil War and Canada's role in acting as a safe haven for slaves seeking refuge (Backhouse 1999, 14, Cooper 2007, 24, Maynard 2017, 4). When slavery is spoken of in the Canadian context, it is almost always described of as brief and as comparatively less severe than the US. Absent from this framing is the fact that the enslavement of African and Indigenous peoples lasted for nearly 200 years in present-day Canada. Robyn Maynard writes that "it is the practice of slavery that set the stage for the subsequent centuries of dehumanization of Black life across Canada. Social amnesia about slavery, as is common in Canada, makes it impossible to understand anti-Black policing in its current epoch" (Maynard 2017, 19).

This amnesia seems to have foreclosed the broad history of racism in Canada, as documented by the criminalization of Indigenous cultural practices, discriminatory laws against Chinese migrants, the creation of the residential school system, and widespread racial segregation. Following World War II, Backhouse maintains that "it became unfashionable to be characterized as racist," which resulted in the gradual abandonment of overtly discriminatory laws and policies, and set the stage for the federal government's official adoption of multiculturalism, which continues to uphold the myth of racelessness (Backhouse 1999, 152, 274, Walcott and Abdillahi 2019, 83).[19]

At the intersection of queer and racial identity politics, David Eng addresses the role that liberalism plays in the prevention of a politics of intersectionality. Eng employs the term "queer liberalism" to emphasize the common assumption that all sexual minorities are protected by anti-discrimination laws and that the civil rights movement has achieved the same for people of colour (Eng 2010, 3). This belief, accentuated by a politics of colourblindness, fails to grasp the depth of structural inequality and liberalism's remedial capabilities (Brown 1995, 27, Brower 2011). The separation of blackness from queerness, as typified by media accusations of driving wedges and hijacking, operates in tandem with queer liberalism, rooted in the LGBT activist work of the 1980s. When queer mobilizations shifted towards placing faith in the legal system for the resolution of structural inequalities, it created a "quest for inclusion in and recognition by dominant [state] institutions rather than questioning and challenging the fundamental inequalities promoted by those institutions" (Mezey 2003, 38, Spade 2011, 60, Gentile and Kinsman 2015, 141). The realization of these aspirations became dominated by "the new, emerging, white, queer middle class [who] reaped the benefits (…) [and] came to represent the 'community' since they could speak the same language as the professional, bureaucratic elite" (Gentile and Kinsman 2015, 141). Consequently, the movement "produced a model of leadership based on educational privilege and a model of change centering elite strategies and law reform [that] facilitated the abandonment of social justice struggles that concern[ed] the most vulnerable queer and trans people" (Spade 2011, 65). Effectively, the movement became dominated by lobbying the Canadian state for the creation of anti-discrimination laws and, eventually, the legalization of same-sex marriage (Smith 1989, Ferguson 2005, 61). These issues are often framed as the central legal concerns for queer people, yet, as Spade argues, this prioritization "ignores how race, class, ability, indigeneity, and immigration status determine access to those benefits and reduces the gay rights agenda to a project of restoring race, class, ability and immigration status to the most privileged gays and lesbians" (Spade 2011, 62). This both constructs an imagined uniformity of queer concerns and identity, and relegates the issues of queer people of colour; indeed, "not only are black subjects already queer relative to normative ideals of the person, but black queers also often seem *a queer too far* for much of queer studies and gay and lesbian popular culture and politics" (Allen 2012, 222). Statements such as "it's gay pride, not black pride" and "BLM has absolutely nothing to do with the gay, lesbian, transgender community" evince this narrative.

Furthermore, this conceptualization has been demonstrated by the way in which social and legal arguments for LGBT equality have relied on the equation of queerphobia with racism. Rather than meaningfully engaging with the intersections of systems of

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[19] For American-specific content, see Taylor 2016, 54.

oppression, the racial analogy "authorizes a political rhetoric of colorblindness that refuses to recognize the ways in which race, gender, sexuality, class, and nation continue to be articulated and constituted in relation to one another in the ongoing struggles for equality and social belonging" (Bérubé 2001, 241–45, Eng 2010, x). The invocation of the American civil rights movement upholds the notion that racism exists primarily outside of Canada, and more to the point, beyond the world's most multicultural city (Lenon 2011, 361, Dryden 2015, 119). As a result, the commonplace "deployment of this analogy productively constructs sexuality and race as separately occurring conditions, with gay bodies then understood as white and black bodies understood as heterosexual. To construct a lesbian and gay subject alongside a black subject is to produce (and declare) a white gay subjectivity" (Dryden 2015, 119). LGBT rights and demands for racial justice thus become regarded as parallel phenomena, independent of one another, but ultimately the same. Borrowing from the civil rights movement, especially for the purposes of building on legal precedent, has therefore been regarded as strategically beneficial for mounting claims of marriage equality; however, BLMTO's 2016 attempt to demonstrate common ground among Black and queer people was met with accusations of hypocrisy. This reveals both the privilege of predominantly white LGBT activists and the delegitimization of public discussions pertaining to systemic oppression that occur outside the courtroom. Moreover, it speaks to the degree of faith that is placed in the state and the TPS for protecting equality rights, as demonstrated by the legalization of same-sex marriage and police participation in Pride, thereby rendering accusations of anti-Blackness "ridiculous" (CTV News.ca Staff 2016a).

Central to this liberal framing of Canada as a haven for equality rights is the myth of multiculturalism, which "has been used to signify a multiplicity of socio-cultural presences, as a cornucopia of differences of all sorts that mark the Canadian social space" (Bannerji 2000, 35). Similar to the ways in which liberalism presents itself as a solution to social inequalities, conviction of Canada's image of diversity, which is reliant upon multiculturalism, contributes to the illusion of racial and cultural inclusion, which allows white Canadians to take pride in their benevolence while effectively doing little to counteract racial inequality (Bannerji 2000). Himani Bannerji contends that white supremacy in Canada is tied to the settler colonization, as "the invention of racial categories – the 'racialization' of peoples – was essential to establishing the interests in land and labor that founded the [state]" (Backhouse 1999, 5, Spade 2011, 26). From Canada's early inception as a European colony, whiteness has been key to the appropriation of Indigenous territories, the enslavement of Black and Indigenous peoples, and the maintenance of colonial sovereignty. Relatedly, Sunera Thobani asserts that the Canadian legal system *is* a regime of racial power," sustained by histories of racist policies and narratives of bilingualism and biculturalism that uphold the British and French as the nation's authentic subjects, and masked by multicultural rhetoric (Backhouse 1999, Thobani 2007, 51, 118, 145, 154, Coulthard 2007). This process of white racial domination is a key characteristic of Canadian national subjectivity, which occurs not only at the state level, but also within political mobilizations and daily interpersonal interactions.[20] Bannerji maintains that the notions of acceptance and diversity that are bound up in the ideological framing of multiculturalism are merely illusions for a brand

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[20] Thobani (2007, 24) draws on Foucault's theorization of subjecthood.

of racial and cultural tolerance that maintain whiteness as being essential to the understanding of truly belonging to the Canadian nation (Bannerji 2000). The legitimate national subject is then effectively placed in opposition to non-white populations and migrants, whose very existence is required for contrasting identity formation (Kyambi 2004, 20, Passavant 2004, 138). Under this dynamic, stemming from the 1970s, "white subjects were constituted as tolerant and respectful of difference and diversity, while non-white people were instead constructed as perpetually and irremediably monocultural, in need of being taught the virtues of tolerance and cosmopolitanism under white supervision," which cements the authentic membership of well-behaved white citizens to the state.[21] Bannerji contends that while people of any race can obtain official citizenship, the question of authentic belonging is predicated upon whiteness, thus resulting in the construction of people of colour as those who possess official membership but who can never be *truly* Canadian (Bannerji 2000, 64). The assumption of whiteness that underlies the discourse of Canadian identity is repeated by David Sealy, who argues that "it's impossible to be both Black and Canadian at the same time, since Canada is imaged either as a place without Black people, or where the few Blacks there are well-behaved, even apolitical" (Sealy 2000, 98). Indeed, multiculturalism's

> language of diversity is a coping mechanism for dealing with an actually conflicting heterogeneity, seeking to incorporate it into an ideological binary which is predicated upon the existence of a homogenous nation, that is, a Canadian cultural self with its multiple and different others. These multiple other cultural presences in Canada, interpreted as a threat to national culture which called for a coping, and therefore an incorporating and interpretive mechanism, produced the situation summed up as the challenge of multiculturalism. This has compelled administrative, political and ideological innovations which will help to maintain the status quo. This is where the discourse of diversity has been of crucial importance because this new language of ruling and administration protects ideologies and practices already in place. It is postulated upon pluralist premises of a liberal democratic state, which Canada aspires to be. (Bannerji 2000, 37–38)

The success of this ideological nationalist project requires, at a foundational level, faith in liberalism and its approach to equality, in addition to the commonplace consumption of Canada's multicultural myth, as demonstrated by the belief that Toronto is "one of the most racially peaceable cities in all of North America" and "one of the world's most multicultural, tolerant, safe cities" (Wente 2016, Silverman 2016). Given the operation of liberalism and the social privileging of whiteness in the Canadian context, the LGBT movement has become dominated by white citizens. In the same vein, white Western conceptualizations of queerness continue to dominate the landscape of LGBT authenticity (Altman 2002, Manalansan 2003). Simultaneously disrupting perceptions of queer identity, the achievement of positive LGBT/state relations, and the discourse of multiculturalism goes against the grain of mainstream understandings of equality and the road to its achievement.[22]

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[21] Here, it is worth making a distinction between newly arrived migrants and communities of colour perceived as inauthentically belonging to the state despite a history of residency (Thobani 2007, 148).

[22] This can also be observed in the controversy surrounding the participation of Queers Against Israeli Apartheid in the 2008, 2009, 2010, and 2012 Toronto Pride parades (Gentile and Kinsman 2015).

Here, it should be noted that the welcoming of LGBT citizens into the realm of the national imaginary, which remains contested, is not only predicated on whiteness, but also sexual normativity and economic productivity. Eng writes that "queer liberalism articulates a contemporary confluence of the political and economic spheres that forms the basis for the liberal inclusion of particular gay and lesbian US citizen-subjects petitioning for the rights and recognition before the law," addressing the rise of *neo*liberalism and the role it plays with regards to sexual regulation (Eng 2010, 3).[23] As various scholars have pointed out, the reach of neoliberalism in terms of social organization can be observed in the LGBT movement's shift away from challenging sexual regulation to a politics of assimilation that mirrors heteronormativity (Warner 1993, Duggan 2002). Accordingly, the legalization of same-sex marriage has been framed as the greatest success of the LGBT movement, as it concurrently appears to extend equality rights while also "privatizing gay politics and culture of the new neoliberal world order" (Duggan 2002, 188).[24] Therefore, some gays and lesbians have achieved a sense of legal legitimacy, resulting in a partial inclusion "within the bounds of respectable citizenship" (Cossman 2007, 171). For Brenda Cossman, the formation of the acceptable queer national subject demonstrates the role of self-governance in commitment to the liberal rights framework, sexual normativity, the economic and social order of neoliberalism, and the exclusion of defiant sexual citizens (Cossman 2007, 197). This exclusion is particularly troublesome given the role of neoliberalism and its impacts on people of colour, housing, labour unions, poverty, immigration, trans people, and the prison industrial complex (Gordon 2006, Spade 2011). As Cossman argues, this process is integral to conceptualizations of authentic citizenship, as the border of acceptability "is only meaningful if there is also a subject, a non-citizen to exclude, or a bad citizen to punish" (Cossman 2007, 197). The legitimate national subject, which now includes some gays and lesbians, thus becomes emblematic of the modern, progressive state's purported values (Butler 2006, 20, Thobani 2007, 3, Seuffert 2011).

In effect, this means that the ideal queer is dominantly imagined as not only being homonormative and a good capitalist, but due to systemic racism, this role is most commonly filled by a white subject.[25] Social acceptance of queerness has, therefore, come to be defined by these characteristics, resulting in the exclusion of other populations, including queers of colour, trans people, queers living in poverty, and Indigenous queers, or simply put, those who do not fit the mould of sexual normativity and the racial core of the Canadian nation-state (Gentile and Kinsman 2015, 140). Under neoliberalism, race and (homo)sexuality are constructed as separate and unrelated categories in terms of intersectional marginalization, which both facilitates "the systemic dissociation of queer politics from critical race politics" (Eng 2010, 3) and fosters the "ascendancy of whiteness" that allows certain gays and lesbians to fit neatly within the capitalist, sexually normative, white Canadian nationalist project (Puar 2007, 2). Jasbir

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[23] At its most basic, neoliberalism refers to the "enact[ment] of economic policies in accord with its root principle of affirming free markets," resulting in the interrelated reduction of the welfare state and the development of large-scale privatization (Brown 2015, 28).

[24] As Brown (2015, 108) notes, drawing on Foucault, the successful operation of neoliberalism relies on the discursive framing of responsibilization as liberation.

[25] As Eng (2010, 45) notes, "queer liberalism is not necessarily about excluding bourgeois racial subjects from its aegis. To the contrary, it is about failing to recognize the racial genealogy of exploitation and domination that underwrites the very inclusion of queers and queers of color in this abstract liberal polity".

Puar's work analyzes the convergence of these factors with the term "homonationalism," which refers to "a historical shift marked by the entrance of (some) homosexual bodies as worthy of protection by nation-states, [thus signifying] a constitutive and fundamental reorientation of the relationship between the state, capitalism, and sexuality" (Puar 2013, 337). While on the surface, homonationalism might appear to be indicative of the successes of the LGBT movement, it has emerged out of and reproduces the limitations of queer liberalism and neoliberalism. Non-normative queers and racialized queers are thereby excluded from the scope of its concern. This is not to suggest that the visibility of such populations is not important for upholding the illusion of equality, but just as multiculturalism projects the myth that everyone is capable of being authentically Canadian, the same can be said of homonationalism and becoming acceptably queer (Puar 2007, 28). Acceptable gayness is predicated on the same principles of authentic inclusion in the neoliberal settler-colonial state: whiteness and wealth. As this version of gayness becomes further associated with the state, both through expressions of gay and lesbian patriotism and the governmental adoption of lesbian and gay rights discourses to foster narratives of progress and modernity, homophobia becomes othered, disassociated from a liberal us and projected onto an illiberal other, constructed as existing outside the ethnic core of the nation-state (Puar 2007, 29). Consequently, normative LGBT sexuality has become interwoven with the racial politics of the nation-state.

Media coverage of the BLMTO/Pride protest demonstrates the operation of liberalism, and to that end, multiculturalism, neoliberalism, and homonationalism, in a number of ways. First, the theme of police inclusion draws on public support for the efficacy of the TPS, and the state more generally, in protecting residents of Toronto. Within this narrative, the framing of Krangle's experience in the Canadian Armed Forces and TPS emphasized his commitment to upholding national values. A consideration of homonationalism underscores his representation as a patriotic, white, middle-class man, unfairly excluded from full participation in Pride due to the actions of an allegedly illiberal, race-based movement that betrayed its own aspiration of social justice. Second, BLMTO explicitly challenges the state's purported protection of equality, strengthened by its relation to liberalism and multiculturalism, while also calling out racism within Pride and queer spaces. This not only constituted an affront to the nation-state and disrupted the imagined separation of blackness and queerness, but it provided the opportunity to represent BLMTO in contrast to the victims of its protest. Third, the rise of neoliberalism and homonationalism has produced a welcoming of some queers into the fold of the Canadian national imaginary. News content describing the evolution of positive relations between the state and LGBT populations contributes to common perceptions of what constitutes authentic queer citizenship, but more revealingly, who does not. What becomes clear through a CDA of media content is the way in which liberalism and mainstream LGBT rights operate in tandem to legitimize the Canadian state as a paragon of equal opportunity. Under this fallacy, the prevalence of anti-Black racism becomes further supplanted, resulting in a popular incomprehension and repudiation of BLMTO.

7. Conclusion

In the months following the July 2016 protest, a last-minute vote was held at Pride Toronto's annual general meeting that resulted in the adoption of all nine of BLMTO's demands. Pride also selected Olivia Nuamah, its first Black queer woman, to serve as executive director, lending symbolic representation to the relationship between Blackness and queerness.[26] Finally, at the time of this paper's publication, the TPS has not reassumed official participation in subsequent Pride parades, despite continued public debate and intermittent media coverage These developments can be regarded as steps in the right direction to combatting anti-Black racism, but what remains clear is the challenge posed by discourses of multiculturalism and queer equality. As Taylor writes:

> No one knows what stage the current movement is in or where it is headed. We are very early in the most current rendering of the Black awakening. But we do know that there will be relentless efforts to subvert, redirect, and unravel the movement for Black lives, because when the Black movement goes into motion, it throws the entire mythology of the [state] – freedom, democracy, and endless opportunity – into chaos. (Taylor 2016, 218)

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[26] The point here is not to advance an essentialist argument, but to consider the optics of Nuamah's tenure in the wake of the 2016 protest.

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