Although diasporas remain interconnected across multiple national borders, each is founded upon movements from a “cultural hearth” to a “diasporic node” (Voigt-Graf, 2004, p. 38), a process that, since the early 1990s, has been linked to globalisation and the decreasing significance of national boundaries. Madan (2000, pp. 33–34) argues that describing an ethnic community as a diaspora is a “political act signaling the fact that large, globally connected, migrant communities are shifting away from ethnic and national subjectification into postmodern spaces that are beyond the Nation ideal, beyond assimilation.” A focus on the everyday activities of diasporas demonstrates, however, that they are at once situated globally and nationally, especially through family and social networks that knit members across multiple nations (Bashi, 2007; Olwig, 2001; Sutton, 2004; 2008), or within racial formations that link them to compatriots with similar ancestry (Edwards, 2001; 2003; Thomas and Clarke, 2006). After all, in order to cross borders, as members of diasporas so often do, passports and other means of documenting national affiliations are compulsory.

As black masculinity formed in the Caribbean without clearly defined national communities, black male subjectivity has always been outward looking, linked to black men in other places. Michelle Stephens writes of the black diaspora that “[w]hile in contemporary discourse the terms nation and diaspora are often posed in opposition to each other, in certain forms of black discourse from the early decades of the twentieth century they constituted two equally determinative and linked notions of blackness” (2005, p. 36). Later in her text, she describes the Caribbean diaspora as also determined by national and transnational discourses: “to say we are all Caribbean without interrogating our own location in relationship to empire and the nation state” is not useful (Stephens, 2005, p. 271). In this chapter, I consider Clifford’s (1994, p. 307) question, “But are diaspora cultures consistently antinationalist?” The answer is a resounding “no.” This chapter builds on other work on the Afro-diaspora that notes the importance of distinguishing the nations from which migrants come, and
equally important, cautions Schmidt (2008), avoiding blurring the nations in which migrants settle. Referring to the Caribbean diaspora in general is insufficient: “We must distinguish between Caribbean New York, Caribbean London or Caribbean Berlin” Schmidt (2008, p. 30) warns. The politics of the place of residence as it intersects with migrants’ class status, gender, time since migration, sporting performance and other characteristics will have a profound influence on how they interact with the diaspora and the connections they are able to make (or interested in making) across the Black Atlantic. This chapter highlights the many ways in the early decades of the twenty-first century, in which black men continue to be positioned diasporically and nationally.

The final events at one tournament in St. Lucia, in March 2008, clearly elucidate the multiple affiliations of Afro-Caribbean men. Tournament organisers posited white and black teams against each other, naming them The West (England and Australia) and The Rest. The Mavericks, a group of Antiguan-, Barbadian-, Grenadian, Guyanese-, Jamaican- and Trinidadian-Canadians joined Trinidadian and Jamaican nationals to celebrate unity and pride in black masculine sporting prowess, exerting a unified black identity despite their varied Caribbean origins and current places of residence. The following is an excerpt from my field notes.

**The West vs. The Rest**

They began the final game of the tournament with friendly heckling of their opponents and boasting about the aptitude of a unified black force. Unity was fleeting, however, as The Rest could not help but acknowledge their national differences, especially as tensions rose throughout the game. With just two overs left, there were eighteen runs needed to beat the English–Australian team. The batsmen had their sights on the boundary for each of the twelve balls left. If they could just hit a few fours or sixes, the game could be wrapped up in short order. Players and supporters yelled instructions from the stands: “Hit them!” “Tek dem out. Bap bap!” “Don’ waste time. Run! Take three runs! Ok. Take two!” They quietened only when the umpire raised his index digit. Batsman out: leg before wicket. A moment of silence pervaded the usually noisy stands before The West began cheering. The players and supporters for The Rest then erupted with blame being placed not on individual umpires or batsmen, but on national groups: “Jamaicans always droppin’ catches!” “De Trinis and dem cyan’t hit four fe save dey life!” “Why we never put de Canadians in firs’?”

The easy slippage between racial and transnational unity in one moment and national discord in the other is striking. Despite their similar regional origins
and racial affiliations, the Canadian Mavericks and the Jamaican and Trinidadian cricketers of The Rest continue to entrench boundaries around the nations in which they were born and where they now live, depending on the context.

**Ongoing salience of nationalisms within diasporas**

In the Canadian setting, a few studies have highlighted the unique experiences of Caribbean-Canadians, their relation to global geopolitics and racial discourses, and their specific nation-of-origin differences. For example, Jamaicans in Toronto are well known for their ongoing efforts to celebrate 1 August, the day on which their nation of origin transitioned from a colonial outpost to a sovereign nation, although they have seemingly left behind the area of nation building. Burman’s (2002) interrogation of this celebration raises questions about Jamaican, Canadian, Caribbean and black belonging. These operate simultaneously and depend on ongoing desires to return home, a capacity for transnational travel, proliferating social networks, national policies, cultural exports, family celebrations and political conflicts. A double consciousness of being simultaneously Canadian and “not quite” fixes Jamaicans’ and other MCSC members’ connections to both here and there.

Similarly, this chapter points out the range of national groups to which Afro-Caribbean Canadians belong and the ongoing salience of nationalisms within diasporas. Rather than posit a false binary and fall into a trap of romantic, pure nationalisms, this chapter draws from empirical evidence to interrogate how Caribbean-Canadians embody multiple, hybridised national identities, and explores the ways in which they draw boundaries around their communities and use dominant discourses to demonstrate national identities that are distinct and pure. The use of national iconography and symbols such as the maple leaf (Canada), or curry goat (Jamaica), is central to the attempts to fix national identities in cricket spaces. The active handling of meanings of various local and foreign cultural streams “can allow them to work as commentaries on one another, through never-ending intermingling and counterpoint” (Hannerz, 1997, p. 323). In other words, the Mavericks come to know themselves as Canadian or Jamaican through their interactions and interminglings with players from the United Kingdom, Australia and Jamaica among others.

Certainly, the family and friendship ties of cricketers lead them to visit regularly their nations of origin in the Caribbean, or Caribbean spaces in the United
States and England, criss-crossing geopolitical borders to maintain their relationships, connections to their homelands and a deterritorialised community (see Chapter 3). Their interpersonal networks and movements within the diaspora show their “simultaneity” within plurilocal homelands (Levitt and Glick Schiller, 2004). However, their multi-placedness and desires for affiliation with a regional Caribbean elsewhere does not negate their understandings of themselves as national citizens. The purpose of this chapter is to highlight the relationships between deterritorialised communities, or diasporas and bordered geopolitical regimes, or nation-states; it demonstrates how nationalisms are reinforced, not dissolved, in transnational spaces. This chapter conceptualises two different types of nationalisms Afro-Caribbean Canadians passionately espouse through their cricket-related travel: Canadian and nation of origin.

It has been suggested that the experience of racism is what connects black people in Canada (Henry, 1994); however, racism is too broad a brush for painting ethnic, gender or national particularities, and it cannot “solely account for the constitutive differences among Afro diasporic peoples in Canada” (Campbell, 2012, p. 50). Black populations are often made to appear itinerant, fleeting, new or unexpected as Canadian nationhood, belonging, geography and citizenship is coded as European and white (McKittrick, 2002). This coding may be responsible for pushing black people towards an elsewhere, but it does not tell the whole story.

Co-existing with the discourses emphasising Canada as a white, French and British nation (Indigenous peoples are also erased or at best marginalised in dominant national representations) is the view of Canada as a mosaic. The Canadian response to growing immigrant populations of colour has been a multiculturalism policy that encourages maintenance of “ethnic heritage” (Mackey, 2002; Thobani, 2007). In this mosaic model, ethnic minority groups celebrate their nation of origin cultures through “saris, samosas, and steel pans,” noted by James Donald and Ali Rattansi (1992, p. 2) in reference to the English education system as cultural elements given the power to represent difference and pluralism, and to stifle conversations about racism and structural inequalities. Caribbean and black popular cultures are produced by people “crucially and simultaneously engaged in a politics of how to belong to the nation-state as not-quite-citizens and how to desire beyond the too rigid confines of nation-state governmentality” (Walcott, 2003, p. 134). Whether they understand Canada to be white or multicultural, Afro-Caribbean-Canadians continue to identify with their ancestral cultures and ethnic identities through connections to the Black Atlantic and Caribbean diaspora.
If popular culture is a political practice, as Walcott (2003) suggests, then Afro-Caribbean-Canadians can use cricket in combination with the Canadian discourse of heritage within multiculturalism to stake their claim to nationhood, negotiate tensions of home and elsewhere, reconcile their stasis and movement, and include in their communities their friends and family from the United States and England. Symbols, language, food, media, politics, travel and sports continue to connect them to their nations of origin, even as they are hailed into entirely new “imagined communities” (Anderson, 1983). The ability to celebrate their heritage at cricket games where they wear their white uniforms, eat traditional foods, speak in their native languages and dance to music from the homeland is commemorated by the Mavericks as a source of both Caribbean and Canadian pride.

**Canadian nationalism**

Most of the Mavericks were little fish in a big sea in the jobs they found when they arrived in Canada in the 1960s and 1970s, but through cricket some of the MCSC members were revered for their skill and enabled to represent the province and the nation, which gave them a sense of Canadian national pride. Their above average talent, opportunities to compete among experts, and the centrality of cricket to their social circles and senses of self, all led to the intensely competitive cricket they played upon arrival at their new homes in Canada. Warlie and Riddick, both black Barbadian-Canadians, moved to Montreal, Quebec as young men and began playing elite-level cricket immediately. Warlie explained: “I played inter-province games which Ontario play Quebec every year. And they go like one year they play in Quebec and one year they play in Toronto, here. So I represent Quebec at that time. I did well in those games too.” Warlie expressed great pride in being a provincial representative. Similarly, Riddick explained, smiling, that “When I was 18-years-old I started playing for the Quebec provincial team. It was an all-black team. We went to tournaments in Calgary, BC and Ontario. The Quebec and Ontario teams were the strongest in Canada.” The “all Black” provincial cricketers hailed from the Caribbean. Riddick points out the racial difference of the team from the white mainstream in British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec in the 1960s and from the current provincial and national teams dominated by South Asian-Canadians: “Now it’s all Indian, but back then we dominated.” Winston, a black 59-year-old Antiguan-Canadian, also proudly
represented the province of Ontario. He “never played on a white team,” neither in Antigua nor in Canada:

With my performances it gave me an opportunity to be selected for the trials to play for Antigua … many times I found myself in the final 16. I didn’t quite make it to the final 11, you know, or 12 guys. I just missed out. But I represented Ontario in cricket. I remember one year we played, I topped the batting average in the competition, of all the provinces, I was top.

The Mavericks’ pride in their ability and opportunity to represent their new nation is expressed in the memorabilia they retained from those days, including provincial uniforms, brochures or newspaper articles with their names on them and the ways in which they discuss their success. They do not merely recount that they played provincially, but also insist that they (blacks and Caribbeans) “did well,” were “top,” and “the strongest” in the intra-provincial leagues, and therefore among the best in Canada. There has been a tendency in Caribbean cultural studies to emphasise the anti-hegemonic cultural practices that take place during carnival and in dancehalls, whereas, this study shows that rather than being transgressive, Caribbean peoples (especially those of the middle-class) are often embedded in mainstream, bourgeois and assimilationist nationalist projects and sentiments.

In a touching moment, one player, Jared, a black 57-year-old Antiguan-Canadian laments not being selected for the Canadian national team as a defining moment of his life. He was in his late twenties and had been living in Canada for three years: “I really wanted to make the Canadian team so that we could come up against the West Indies team in a tournament. Then I could play against Viv. I used to dream of that. Me on the Canadian team, him playing for West Indies.” Jared grew up with Vivian Richards, who was knighted in 1999 for his outstanding contributions to international cricket. Jared did not want to believe that his migration (which had been forced upon him as a result of his financial and emotional commitments to his family members who had already moved to Canada as well as those left behind in Antigua) meant an end to his elite cricket aspirations. Unfortunately, it was not migration but his lacking specific skills and “fit” on the team that kept him out of cricket’s top ranks in Canada. Some of his contemporaries made it, however:

Dey called me up. An’ dey had dis team touring to Barbados an’ I got a game playing for Canada. In Barbados! … After leaving Barbados to come to Canada an’ wear Canadian colours it was a great t’ing fe me. I really enjoyed de time I got to spend dere and got to show who I am … [but] I very outspoken an’ dat prevent me from progressing farther into it because, for me, I look at it like life is difficult an’ [I] come from West Indies to play for Canada an’ I recently married an’ I had a kid on the way … I figure if I gonna leave [work] to represent de
Canadian team I should at least get something fe compensate me …. Dey call me at certain times for their uses an’ I refuse … Yeah at de time (pause), funding was critical in dem times dere. (Otis)

Otis, a black 47 year-old Barbadian-Canadian, was unable to continue playing for Canada because the amateur sport system relied (and arguably still relies) on the idea of self-funded, middle-class athletes who are willing to devote their lives to the sport without substantial remuneration. Playing for Canada also meant adopting dominant attitudes, which for Otis meant remaining silent about racial and economic oppression. Although he aspired to respectability through assimilation and the chance to “wear Canadian colours,” he ultimately drew from a Caribbean reputation value system (Wilson, 1973) and became “outspoken,” transgressing rules around decorum, which got him released from the team. He, too, was told that he would no longer “fit.”

Riddick, originally from Barbados moved from Quebec to Ontario in his twenties and found that his cricket skills were the cultural capital he needed to network with some important people. Ironically, his cricket contacts got him a job with the Toronto police force, which ultimately stunted his cricket career:

I came here and was an exceptional player by their [Canadian] standards. There were lots of guys at my level back home … I played for the Ontario team and the Canadian national team versus the USA for three to four years, but at that time it was 80–90% West Indian. Even the selectors were West Indian … I was selected to play for Canada in the World Cup in 1967, but cricket was not in the police peripheral so I couldn’t get the time off. I was new and I had to choose between police as a career versus cricket as a career. (Riddick)

Unfortunately, many players echo the experience of having to choose to work over playing cricket in those years due to obligations to feed their families and a lack of national funding for the sport (which continues today). Many migrants come from the Caribbean with short-term educational and economic goals in mind. As James (1963) describes, regarding Learie Constantine’s decision to play professional cricket in England in 1928, many of the Mavericks were talented cricketers and never would have settled abroad if they “had had not only honour but a little profit” in their own countries (p. 109). Their decision to migrate “was the result of personal choice arising from national neglect;” with white or even light skin, they “would have been able to choose a life at home” (p. 110). Instead, they moved to Canada, where they were not greeted by professional cricket opportunities that could pay the bills. Their pride in being able to represent their new nation was not enough to sustain their participation at elite levels.

Forty years later, the Mavericks continue to represent Ontario or Canada in international cricket competitions, though as ‘friendly’ masters cricket players.
When they do so, they battle the stigma of Canada being regarded as a weak cricketing nation. At one of the Mavericks’ home games versus a team visiting from Boston, one Jamaican-American man commented that he was “surprised” that the Canadians could beat them. Erol chimed in: “See what happen when dey say Canadians cyan’t play cricket? [Once] we were on a tour in Barbados. I go in wit’ my partner an’ he hit dat ball so far, I tink dat ball still flying down Bridgetown today!” In a pep talk on the bus before the first game of the 2008 tour in England, one of the players stood up, hoisted a uniform into the air and reminded everyone that they were playing for Canada: “The uniforms might say [Mavericks], but they also have that maple leaf, so we're representing Canada in a sense. Play good!”

The trip to England was significant for many of the Mavericks who had never been before, both because it was the birthplace of cricket, and because it was the colonial motherland. These men had lived over half a century with an embodied understanding of cricket as a game that exemplified civility, gentlemanly behaviour and fairness, which they equated with Englishness. They would agree with Malcolm’s (2013, p. 13) observation “that ‘Englishness and cricket’ amounts to a pleonasm (the use of more words than is necessary to express an idea).” At the same time, cricket has come to represent a challenge to British hegemony; a black masculine identity associated with strength, speed and dominance; and a space for breaking colonial rules. These conflicting perceptions of English cricket as a benchmark for ideal masculine behaviour became a central issue for the Canadian team, even before they left for the trip.

At a meeting two months prior to departure, the Mavericks’ newly elected manager, Marshall, a 58-year-old black Barbadian-Canadian, promptly enacted his first order of business, a rule that no member of the team would drink while in the maple leaf uniform at games in England. This rule meant that if the Mavericks batted first, cricketers could not drink until the end of the game (six to eight hours in most cases), and if they batted second, alcohol could only be consumed after they were caught, bowled, run out, or what the Mavericks call “t'ief” or “steal” out. “Get steal out means you got robbed – not bowled out, but the umpire stealin’ for the other team,” Erol explained to me. “It’s the only good part about getting steal out,” Vilroy said with a broad smile across his face as he exited the field after the first game and walked directly into the changing room to take off his uniform and the cap on his bottle of beer.

Controversy blossomed, however, when some players expressed alternative ideas about how to perform or demonstrate their gender, race and Canadian
identities in a cricket environment. At the first game in England, one member of
the opposing black British team joked to a late-arriving teammate of his, “Listen,
there’s no drinking today,” making fun of the Mavericks’ rule. The player stopped
frozen in his tracks for a second before saying “No what?! Just hush you’ mout’
jackass!” The opposition and black British spectators taunted the Mavericks by
pouring extra-strong drinks for themselves. Erol, a black 55-year-old Barbadian-
Canadian, who had been chosen to bat eighth in the second innings, decided he
could wait no longer before opening a cold bottle of beer. He was stealthily sipping
from a plastic cup when the team manager noticed him, confiscated his
drink and suspended him for one game. Erol was extremely upset and called
the manager a “dictator” as well as other more crude names. The opposing
team’s captain remarked as he shook his head, “Man cyaan’t drink?! What?! But
I thought this a touring team. Man cyaan’t drink, man cyaan’t happy!” He was
truly sorry for Erol, who walked away from the field ripping off his uniform.

Despite openly raising no concerns when the rule was proposed at the meet-
ing, most players saw the restriction on alcohol during games as too severe once
it was in effect. Layton explained to me the opposite rule typically in effect for
their bus trips: “You must drink from the time you get off the bus, then bat your
age at least! These are the rules of the road for every man.” His suggestion that a
60-year-old man could score 60 runs every time at bat was an exaggeration, but
conveys the idea that drinking, being intoxicated while playing and performing
well are important ways in which these Afro-Caribbean men “do gender” (and
race) when they travel outside of Canada. The Mavericks did not see drinking
while playing as incompatible with representing the nation. Barth indicates that
boundaries are drawn around ethnic groups through overt signals and signs that
show identity, such as dress, language and general style of life, along with basic
value orientations, the standards of morality and excellence by which perform-
ance is judged. “Since belonging to an ethnic category implies being a certain
kind of person” (Barth, 1998, p. 14), the Mavericks’ policy brought into question
whether they were the same kind of men as their black British opponents.

This confrontation is a classic example of what Peter Wilson (1973) referred
to as the conflict between exhibiting Caribbean “respectability” and “reputa-
tion.” If respectability is gained through approximating a standard of dress, use
of language and conduct of the middle- and upper-class British colonisers, and
Canadian culture more broadly, the aspiring, respectable Afro-Caribbean must
embrace a restrained and obedient demeanour. The primary institutions to incul-
cate respectability included the Christian Church, nuclear family and education.
Within the latter, school cricket also played no small role in teaching young
black boys how to be “civilised,” in education institutions across the Caribbean (Sandiford, 1998). It was not only the sport itself, but the style of play that conferred a respectable habitus. However, as is the wont of (post)colonial subjects, a simultaneous alternative value system developed: “reputation.” Within cricket, a “respectable” habitus was rejected in favour of a style of life that gave value to breaking the rules with impunity, dominating through athleticism; being loud, ready to fight and proficient with language; and demonstrating a capacity to drink. Without the opportunity to display these characteristics to their fullest extent, club members’ authority, as blacks and as men, felt threatened.

When the rule was introduced, the manager explained that the Mavericks would be travelling as a representative team. He reminded his teammates that they represent Toronto and the entire nation of Canada and must show the Englishmen that they are serious about cricket. On the bus to the first game he announced: “They [English players] need to know that even though we’re from Canada, we know ‘bout cricket. We need to play like home.” For him, “play like home” meant play to win, like the West Indies team used to, and like they do in Toronto. One player piped up “I drink when I play home!” and Marshall responded, “Ok, then, don’t play like home!” Marshall’s desire to show the English players what serious cricketers they were is a reflection of insecurity about his cricketing authenticity as a Canadian citizen, despite his Barbadian background. Yet, in England as in Canada, older Afro-Caribbeans are serious only about liming, their performances of Caribbean masculinity and its associated drinking culture. The expression “Man cyaan’t drink, man cyaan’t happy!”, spoken with a Caribbean accent, directly links Caribbean masculinity and alcohol consumption. If pleasure, fun and happiness are motivating factors for men’s participation, then alcohol is a necessity in Canada and England. “Dese guys cyaan’t play 'less dey drunk!” Terrel exclaimed when the sober Mavericks’ wickets started to fall. Marshall’s desire to manage a team presenting as sophisticated and authentic cricketers ended up in a rule that elicited the opposite effect. Instead of being regarded as gentlemen, the Mavericks were ridiculed for being “soft,” “weak,” “poofs” (homosexuals) and “too Canadian.”

This episode highlights another of the disjunctures of diaspora. Within the black diaspora, Brent Hayes Edwards insists, there are moments of décalage: misunderstandings, lack of translation among members of a globally dispersed population. Though the conflicts that erupted were not a result of linguistic divergence in the Black Atlantic as Edwards had studied, the ideas associated with the authentic or “proper” cricketer and national identity were different between those Afro-Caribbean men who only imagined cricket in England and
those who had lived it. The misreading of the diasporic culture, in this case as different, when it was actually the same, demonstrates the influence of geographic separation, and the necessity of travel in forming embodied understandings of culture within the Black Atlantic and to break down barriers between plurilocal Afro-Caribbean groups.

MCSC members and their opponents spent a lot of time around the boundary keeping noise about Marshall’s rule, and when the resistance of his teammates became too strong to ignore – nearly one week into the two-week tour – Marshall renounced the no-drinking rule on the bus while returning home from a game. I suspect this was owing to his sense of impending mutiny and because he recognised that his original purpose, to show the English how serious they were and that they had not lost their talent after being in Canada for 30 or more years, was not validated. The Englishmen he wanted to impress were diasporic Caribbean men like himself, whose primary reason for playing cricket was to have fun and socialise; limiting the Mavericks’ alcohol consumption limited their enjoyment of the tour as well as the pleasure of their opponents. He acceded that the rule would remain relaxed as long as the players did not embarrass themselves, their region, or Canada. The team was very happy about this news. They had already been drinking cognac clandestinely at the back of the bus, but Marshall’s announcement was cause for overt celebration. Another round was poured openly and they toasted “To Canada!”

This overt Canadian pride was matched by the use of symbols and iconography of the nation. When touring, the Mavericks enact a significant ritual that is not present at their home games in Toronto. They typically travel with the national maple leaf flag and find a way to affix it close to their changing room, their side of the clubhouse, or the stands where their supporters sit. In Barbados, England, St. Lucia or the United States, playing against Caribbean men with other national affiliations opens up the contest to be more than a friendly game between Caribbean “brothers.” Sport plays an important role in the construction and reproduction of a national identity. When the game is represented as an international competition, it becomes linked to national heritage and pride. It is interesting to note that the Mavericks’ desire to shore up a Canadian identity, by placing the Canadian flag on one side of their opponents’ clubhouse, occurs solely outside of Canada, in black spaces where it is necessary to mark their national difference from their opponents.

After every game when the Mavericks were on tour, the two teams made presentations to each other to “trash talk,” show gratitude for the opportunity to play and exchange gifts. During his post-game speeches, the Mavericks’ captain, Sam,
a 61-year-old black Barbadian-Canadian, handed out Ontario flags and maple leaf pins, and invited his opponents to come to Canada so that the Mavericks could extend the same hospitality. At one game, he stated:

I would like to bring greetings on behalf of the [Mavericks] of Ontario and Canada to England … So as I said we have a part of Canada to share with you. As you know we are part of the Commonwealth, so part of us is still ruled by England and the Queen, so we have – well this is the Ontario flag and it has the Union Jack and the [crest] from Ontario – to share with you and we also have some pins … we didn’t know so many Jamaicans would be here [in England] so it’s our pleasure to meet our West Indian brothers here and any time you come to Canada you are welcome. (Sam)

The symbols of the province and nation, Ontario flags and maple leaf pins were given to every player the Mavericks encountered on tours and at tournaments. Four players were charged with going to their local city hall and obtaining twenty-five pins or flags so the team would have enough to hand out to each opponent. In addition, the Mavericks travelled with statuettes of beavers, deciduous trees and loons (divers), which they handed out to honour the captain and man of the match of their opposing teams. These exchanges of Canadiana were important parts of every game, signified by the gathering of players to photograph the exchanges and speeches made about the symbols. Sam explained the significance of each gift: “The beaver is our national animal.” “Everywhere in our province you can see this kind of tree.” “The maple leaf is the symbol on our flag.” He effectively articulated the Mavericks’ connection with, and pride in, the nation. Some players also wore Canada hats and T-shirts when they were out of their cricket uniforms, proud to represent their home. Their immersion in an urban lifestyle – perpetually distinct from the woodland symbolism used to represent the nation – is obfuscated in favour of a celebration of Canadian flora and fauna. Their use of these symbols to represent themselves, when many admit they have infrequently accessed wooded camp grounds or cottages, or ever seen a real beaver, articulates the tensions between diasporic identities and powerful discourses, signs and symbols of nationalism. Taking from the land without acknowledging indigeneity (not to mention ongoing colonialism) is well rehearsed in dominant Canadian discourses. Club members are not immune to the charms of the language, imagery and ideology of Canadian nationalism, demonstrating that deterritorialisation has destabilised identity, but it has not created subjects who are free-floating nomads, despite what is sometimes implied by those eager to celebrate the freedom and playfulness of the postmodern condition (Gupta and Ferguson, 1992, p. 19).
Though the wildlife statuettes are inadequate for representing MCSC members’ hyphenated identities, they are wholly embraced. What authorised symbols of nation could they share with their black British brothers to connote an urban, Caribbean-Canadian identity? This illuminates one of the many powerful paradoxes of Afro-Caribbean-Canadian identity. Club members self-consciously make themselves the spokesmen and guardians of Caribbean and Canadian cultures at different times and the criteria for judging national identity are flexible. Sam lauds the label of “Commonwealth partner,” in conversation with other Barbadians living in England to demonstrate his passion for his “adopted nation,” Canada, as well as the bonds of Empire. At other times, he was known to rail against the monarchy, colonial powers and state-sponsored racism that limited his freedom. MCSC members’ privilege as mobile, middle-class citizens allows them to celebrate Canadianness and brotherhood with the English through the representation of the game as one between Canada and England, instead of a game between two groups of Caribbean or black men, similarly oppressed by, and continually challenging, their nation-states.

Loyalty to Canada is also fashioned in less obvious ways. Despite being embedded in a Caribbean cricket and social club, some players detach themselves from a working-class, Caribbean identity and are critical of the loud, raucous and what they refer to as “ignorant” behaviour of many of their Afro-Caribbean peers. On one occasion after a game in Barbados in one player’s hotel room, a number of the Mavericks became embroiled in a loud argument over how bakes (a flour dumpling) are made. Some thought they were deep fried, others, pan fried and still others insisted they were baked, hence the name. For nearly 10 minutes, five club members all talked at the same time, yelled, slapped the table for emphasis and clinked glasses full of cognac with others who shared their opinions.

Sitting at the periphery, Hussein, a 66-year-old Indo-Trinidadian-Canadian distanced himself from the conversation “You see this?” he asked me, “This is why Caribbean people don’t get anywhere. Sit around all night talkin’ stupidity. You know what the other [English] team is probably talkin’ something intellectual, politics … Here we goin’ on ‘bout bakes for half an hour!” Hussein, who had retired after 30 years of teaching in Toronto, often noted his surprise that Caribbean immigrants did not change their ways “after so long in Canada.” Abrahams (1983) notes that when Caribbean men talk it is not the content that is important; rather, the competition takes priority. A “man of words” communicates his power and personality and aims to “capture the attention, the allegiance and the admiration of the audience through his fluency, his strength of voice, and his social
maneuverability and psychological resilience” (Abrahams, 1983, p. xxx). Hussein remained unimpressed by the performances of his teammates, taking their discussion topic and words seriously. He complained that he moved to Canada to “get an education and get away from rum shops and foolishness,” but it seems he was unable to escape fully from his masculine, working-class, Trinidadian culture, especially when his peers were drinking and competing with words.

Hussein’s Indo-Caribbean status also complicates his critique of his mainly Afro-Caribbean teammates; however, the emphasis of this scene as an example of Indo–Afro-Caribbean conflict is minimised when the words of Learie, a black 56-year-old Guyanese-Canadian are taken into account. Learie was equally critical of the Mavericks “simple-minded” arguments, which he attributed to a “backward,” “underdeveloped” Caribbean mentality. He quietly removed himself from the group and read or slept when the conversation was “too base” for him: “You notice that in 50 years since most of these islands became independent we have produced little of international consequence. We came to the developed world and still we’re not contributing anything.” The dominant Canadian attitude that black Caribbean immigrants have not contributed to Canadian history, literature and scholarship is perpetuated by some of the Mavericks. It is interesting to note that neither man challenges the group, but both detach themselves silently from this mode of representing Caribbean-Canadian masculinity. Invested in working for a municipal education board and a provincial electric company, respectively, Hussein and Learie’s lack of acceptance of this means of representing Caribbeanness may be related to their identities as intellectuals and choice of professions for the past 30 years. Their commitment to reproducing the Canadian nation and shifting to a middle-class status with “respectable” values may have influenced their perception of their peers who are more devoted to reproducing their homeland culture through the “reputation” value system.

While MCSC members see themselves as part of a borderless black nation, one defined in social rather than geographic terms, or a Caribbean community with a regional identity, they also endorse the symbols and ideologies of the Canadian nation-state. As Basch, Glick Schiller and Szanton Blanc (1994, p. 3) note, immigrants are bombarded with ideologies that promote their “ongoing incorporation … into the society and polity of the country in which they have settled.” Yet, their identities can be manipulated and contested depending on the agendas of interlocutors and the particular situation. Although they performed a decidedly Canadian nationalism on the one hand, on the other hand the Mavericks disavowed Canadianness in favour of an identity linked to their nation of origin.
Nation-of-origin identity

Economic, military and political forms of power in the nations of origin continue to influence national loyalties and resistances despite the deterritorialised or diaspora settings in which they occur (Alexander, 2005; Glick Schiller, 2005; Glick Schiller and Fouron, 1999; Walcott, 2003). Members of the MCSC who emotionally long for the past and the homeland; regularly send remittances to the family members they left behind; or remain invested in their nation-of-origin news, weather, or politics from a distance, are intricately linked to a national identity that is neither diasporic, nor Canadian. For some of them, this (re-)claiming of the home nation may be an anti-assimilation move (Walcott, 2003); nevertheless, they remain committed to their pre-migration heritage.

Several events occurred on the MCSC two-week cricket tour in England that exemplify the ways in which many of the Mavericks were quick to reject their Canadian status in favour of their nations of origin. On one of the first days without any games, some club members took advantage of the opportunity to do some shopping and sightseeing. We spent hours in a variety of sport shops, looking for a warm-up suit that the entire team both could afford and would find aesthetically pleasing, only to leave empty handed. If ever there was any doubt that the Barbadian nation-state had its hold on some of these migrants, that doubt could be dispelled when they made a point of abandoning the team track-suit search in favour of visiting the Barbados High Commission in London, their national government representative office. Coincidentally, when we arrived at the commission a ceremony was about to begin. Four parish ambassadors (18–30 years of age) from Barbados were being recognised for their role in a development programme that aims to involve youth in the national independence celebrations via a “Spirit of the Nation” competition. The ambassadors each spoke about “just taking the opportunities available to all,” “reaching out to the underprivileged,” and “the honour of working in one's community.” The final ambassador to speak was the youngest. At just 18 years old, she appeared to be the most confident and well spoken of the group:

Without the parish ambassador programme, I wouldn't be stan'in' here in dis cold country ... please come back and support people in Barbados ... Help our people become strong, make a better representation for the island. Come to Barbados – that's what ex-pats can do to help. This trip to London is part of our community outreach. Thank you.
She received an overwhelming round of applause. The High Commissioner introduced the Mavericks as a “cricket team visiting from Canada, primarily Barbadian and wholly supportive of the diaspora efforts.” He then proposed that there be two youth ambassadors from the Barbadian diaspora in each of London, New York and Toronto. The crowd seemed pleased with this suggestion that “will help to keep the broader Bajan community together.” The team captain, Sam, a black 61-year-old Barbadian-Canadian, was presented with the opportunity to make an impromptu speech. He boasted about the fundraising projects he had already begun and the association the Mavericks have with the Poverty Alleviation Bureau in Barbados. As such, he marked himself as a good Bajan citizen who mobilises funds to give back to the homeland. This formal ceremony was followed by a traditional Bajan meal, for which the Mavericks were grateful after a long day of window shopping. They mingled with other diasporic and visiting Barbadians and other Caribbean people as they ate and learned about current development projects in which they could become involved, or how they could mobilise youth in Toronto upon their return to Canada.

It did not take long for their cemented Barbadian status to be challenged. Just a few days later, an argument broke out around the boundary during a game, and many of the Mavericks were quick to assert that they are not Canadian and identify as Bajan “through and through.” A local passer-by, Dudley, who identified himself as “pure Bajan … just off the rock” stopped by the grounds to watch the game on his way home from work. He boldly stated that “these Canadian ol’ men don’t know nothing ’bout no cricket.” The Mavericks did not take this lightly and began to heckle him. He was significantly younger than them, believed his skills were superior and offered to “embarrass” them at the next game. “I’ll make a call tonight an’ I go be dere tomorrow. I go bowl dung half a you!” The Mavericks did not accept this prediction that he would get half of them out with his superior bowling skills.

Otis, a black 47-year-old Barbadian-Canadian tried to explain to Dudley that although they are old, they have the benefit of experience and that many of them were elite players in the 1970s. “We talking BCL (Barbados Cricket League)! Whose era was better? We had Joel Garner, Gordon Greenidge, Desmond Haynes! Legends! You understan’? I came up wit’ dese players!” Sam chimed in “Dem t’ink we from Canada don’t play no good cricket. Dey say we from snow white. Not one tour we go on where dem noh say looka dese ol’ men. Dem nah know we!” Sam is passionate that living in Canada, the land of snow, for half their lives and being old, does not mean they cannot play cricket. “Dem nah know we” (They don’t know who we are or what we are capable of) indicates that
he does not like to be judged and his use of patois authenticates his Caribbean (and not Canadian) status. “It’s the background that’s important!” Vilroy, a black 68-year-old Barbadian-Canadian adds to the debate with Dudley. He attests that Caribbean-Canadians and “just off the rock” Barbadians are on equal footing because they were brought up in the same cricket systems.

Drawing on a stereotype of Canadians as white and reifying the idea of the impossibility of belonging to Canada for blacks/Caribbeans (Walcott, 2003), Winston, a black 59-year-old Antiguan-Canadian called out, “I look Canadian to you?!” Pabst (2006, p. 119) explains “black Canadians are cast out of authent-ic Canadianness … [and] similarly cast out of discourses of blackness.” They constantly struggle to (dis)avow their Canadianness and blackness in the face of challenges from “more authentic” subjects. This binary suggests that they are unable to affirm the hybrid identities they actually experience on a daily basis. The discourses available to them place them in or out of national, ances-tral, or phenotypical categorisations when their impure, hybrid, culturally inter-mingled lives situate them in multiple locations and identities at once. In fact, Canadian national discourses of multiculturalism, that encourage immigrants to protect their ancestral heritage are coeval with discourses that reject racial others, restrict their citizenship rights and position white nationals as masters of national space (see Thobani, 2007). This makes a hybrid Canadian identity difficult to name. At the same time, these men came of age during the 1960s and 1970s black power movement. Rather than black self-hatred, their commitment to counter-hegemonic expressions of black self-regard, such as “black pride” and “black is beautiful” campaigns, which were linked to assertions of racial purity (Cohen, 2007, p. 377), also prevent them from embracing the mixture so evident in their daily lives and ancestral heritage.

As a young, newly immigrated man, Dudley regarded himself as a “true Bajan,” and a “mighty black” in contrast to older Caribbean-Canadian Mavericks whose temporal and spatial distance from home leaves them inevitably discon-nected from Barbadian (cricket) culture, old age prevents them from enacting physical cricket superiority and masculinity, and embedment in a white culture leaves their blackness in question. Dudley’s own lack of a sense of security in his new English home may be a precursor to his outer-national identification and attempt to mark his authenticity by lashing out against and denigrating other men of Barbadian origin. He probably maintained a plan to live abroad for only a few years to make money and then return home, just as many of the Mavericks once did. Some of them recounted: “the plan was to come here just five years” or “I came to be a cop but you know the kids start coming an’ I just stay.” Dudley
assumed that these men, who had stayed in Canada for 30 or 40 years could not possibly be true to their Bajan roots, and owing to the image of Canada as a non-cricketing nation, they could not possibly have maintained their skills. These factors, combined with the arrogance of youth, were used to construct a boundary between himself and Barbadian-Canadian Mavericks.

In response, the Mavericks deployed aspects of their culture such as the patois language (“dem nah know we!”) and the ancestral ties (“it’s the background that’s important”) in order to show their authenticity as Barbadian subjects. They even posit their age as an asset, owing to the experience it affords. In an interview, Sam, a black 61-year-old Barbadian-Canadian explained that he is able to play more cricket now than he could as a youth at home in Barbados because there are multiple teams to play for in Toronto and he has the time and money to travel due to his early retirement at 60 years of age. Schmidt (2008, p. 31) argues that diasporic groups “sometimes struggle with each other about the dominant feature” of what she terms the “polyphonic bricolage” (Schmidt, 2008, p. 24) that creates culture. Composed of heterogenous voices and constantly changing cultural practices and identities, members of the diaspora, even from the same nation of origin, may experience conflicts.

The players create fluid forms of solidarity and identity that do not rely on singular spaces or identities. Their de- and re-territorialisation “forces us to re-conceptualize fundamentally the politics of community, solidarity, identity, and cultural difference” (Gupta and Ferguson, 1992, p. 9), and to recognise that our social boundaries are created and expressed in conversation with people similar, but also different to us around such characteristics as age, time since migration and integration into the host community. If we consider diasporic cricket locations as yet another type of border zone that the MCSC members occupy, we see that they are sites of heightened consciousness where identities become defined, constructed and articulated. As Brubaker (2004, pp. 81–82) points out, race, ethnicity and nation are overlapping terms with multiple dimensions of differentiation including phenotype and other visible markers, distinctive language, customs, religion, degree and nature of territorialisation, fixedness versus fluidity of group membership, and claims to membership, criteria which are hotly debated. The boundaries we create, to divide “us” from “them” require classification and categorisation; these are cognitive process that create diasporic group (sub-)identities.

Their sojourner mentality, dreams of permanent return, frequent trips to the homeland, remittances to family and friends left behind, property holdings and other assets in the nation of origin, reading of Caribbean newspapers, tuning into back-home radio shows, following cricket scores on www.cricinfo.com,
belonging to immigrant national associations and performing well on the cricket field all point to a transnational identity that allows the Mavericks to disavow their Canadianness in favour of a Caribbean nation of origin identity when it suits them. Barth (1998, p. 14) describes ethnic groups as ascriptive and exclusive, but the nature of continuity of ethnic units is clear:

it depends on the maintenance of a boundary. The cultural features that signal the boundary may change, and the cultural characteristics of the members may likewise be transformed, indeed, even the organizational form of the group may change – yet the fact of continuing dichotomization between members and outsiders allows us to specify the nature of continuity, and investigate the changing cultural form and content.

The Mavericks constantly make boundaries around their national identities to distance themselves from “others” and delineate their communities. Because Warlie lived in Barbados until he was 30 years of age and travels back every year, he considers himself “a real Bajan” and enjoys getting into discussions with others about the prowess of Bajan cricketers. “My name is [Warlie Michaels], and I’m a real Bajan. All the others are counterfeit!”

In July 2008, referring to the election of Tillman Thomas in Grenada, Curtis, a black 41-year-old Grenadian-Canadian exclaimed “So I hear we have a new prime minister!” and engaged in discussion with his Grenadian teammate about the political future of the island. When his teammate asked, “How you hear dat already?” in reference to a controversy within the National Democratic Congress party, Curtis asked, incredulously “You don’t read News Now online?!” His teammate adamantly replied, “No I go down twice a year … I’m not glued to the [Inter]Net.” The club members highlighted regular travel to Grenada versus regular mediated access to the nation as contrasting means of performing nationalism. The constant discussions of criteria for belonging to the nation allude to the insecurity of this category. Connell (1995) describes a compulsory heterosexual masculinity that is so fragile that it is in need of constant reaffirmation in homosocial spaces such as sports teams. Within first-generation Caribbean-Canadian men’s sport, the complexity and vulnerability of masculinity also requires nationhood’s continual reaffirmation.

It should come as no surprise that some of the Mavericks identify as Canadian sometimes, Caribbean at others, and “truly” Bajan, or Grenadian, or any other national identity when it suits them. Within the Caribbean diaspora members each:

interpret their culture quite diversely and individually, depending on their circumstances … Each member marks different fixed aspects of their culture,
sometimes language, history, political conflicts or sometimes popular religiosity, depending on the place they live, the aims they are fighting for, the situation [with which] they have to cope, and the borders they want to construct. (Schmidt, 2008, p. 31)

During the conversations described above, we might wonder where were the Trinis (Trinidadians), Yardies (Jamaicans) and Kittitians (people from St. Kitts)? At times, they remained quiet while the Barbadians and Grenadians “kept noise” over who was the more authentic national subject. At other times, they used West Indies cricketers as proof of the relative merits of their nation of origin. For example, the famous batting skills of Rohan Kanhai, Garfield Sobers, or Vivian Richards were heralded as examples of the ingenuity of all Guyanese, Barbadians and Antiguans respectively. And, it should go without saying that female MCSC members, unable to prove their nationalism through cricket prowess, were also excluded from competing for national authenticity on these terms.

Nation-of-origin nationalisms also appeared strongly during holidays, in particular the Mavericks’ respective National Independence Days. Nearly every Caribbean territory celebrates its independence in Toronto. On these days, the Mavericks appear less as a unified team and segregate themselves into groups based on their nation of origin. Jamaica’s Independence Day, celebrated annually at Keelesdale Park is an opportunity to participate in island national affairs from a new dwelling place. The organisers advertise in the Share, Pride and Caribbean Camera Caribbean-Canadian newspapers, which promote a picnic with reggae music, a fête for insiders – and therefore “forge a direct connection between the Jamaicanised city and postcolonial Jamaica” (Burman, 2002, p. 59). Some of the Mavericks turned down the opportunity to play cricket and went to the Jamaican festival on Saturday, 26 July 2008, a notable decision given their devotion to the sport in the “short” summer and the importance attributed to the game against a visiting team from Connecticut.

For their Independence Day, Guyanese club members did not have to choose between cricket and a festival because their celebrations involved a cricket match:

Reggie: When is Independence, Guyana Independence, the Guyanese national team always come up … they have a big function at L’Amoreaux Park … and if you wanna reach a lot of Guyanese just fin’ where that park is.

Janelle: So who do they play against?

Reggie: They play against the Ontario 11 or the Canadian 11, so it’s a very very [competitive game]. One year I played in that.

Janelle: On which side? (laughs)
Reggie: I played in, (pause) Oh! (surprised) I can't remember now. Ah, I think it was the – oh yes, the Guyanese, because me and him (indicates Learie, another Guyanese-Canadian) played – yeah, we played on the Guyanese side … Of course! We represent South America!

Reggie’s inability to remember initially which country he represented exemplifies the fluidity of choice of members of the Caribbean diaspora and their always already placement within multiple national frameworks. His exclamation, “Of course!” comes late as he suddenly recalls his national (and continental) pride. Hussein explained to me, in a joking manner, that the Guyanese see themselves as superior to the rest of the Caribbean, “We are no little islanders! … We are big country people. We know better than anybody else, regards cricket.” The extended laughter at this joke, from Hussein and others within earshot, signalled how preposterous an idea it was that Guyanese could be superior to men from other Caribbean nations owing to (a) their mainland, South American status or (b) their expertise at cricket. The differences and hierarchies among the islands are typically presented as a joke when players are keeping noise around the boundary, but every joke is based on a kernel of truth from someone’s perspective, and may strike a chord or play on an insecurity of some members of the seemingly homogenous Afro-Caribbean diaspora.

Afro-Caribbean-Canadians constantly draw on their networks of migrants, living in dispersed diasporic nodes to create opportunities for travel and reunions. Return visits to play cricket games, like family reunions, allow them to maintain their kinship and friendship bonds across national borders and throughout the Black Atlantic. Diasporas are not inherently anti-nationalist, however. Nationalisms within diasporas are selectively presented and contingent upon circumstances and location. This study shows how nationalisms manifest as the result of ongoing dialogues between differently positioned people. Members of diasporas are multiply located and able to draw on many national and regional discourses and symbols for the purposes of making identity. Although all Afro-Caribbean-Canadians may appear to eat similar foods and understand each other when they speak, they may choose to obfuscate the connections to their regional ancestry in favour of a Canadian identity, revealed through their participation on elite teams in the past and the contemporary flags displayed, uniforms worn, pins exchanged and discourses shared by and among the Mavericks when they travel to the United States or England.

Afro-Caribbeans often walk tall as they espouse the “out of many, one people” attitude from the Jamaican national motto. Nevertheless, they also eschew their
similarities in favour of identification with their nation of origin in particular circumstances. Caribbean regionalism and specific Caribbean nationalisms are negotiated depending on the context, spatial opportunities and the perceived authenticity of interlocutors. Their discursive creation of a hierarchy of Caribbean nations reveals some of the fissures within the Caribbean community. As Clifford (1994) reminds us, nationalisms do not disappear when we discuss global flows; in fact, interactions within the Black Atlantic may make the boundaries around the nation-state more, not less salient. The following chapter links together the many boundaries (national, gender, racial, and ethnic) members of the Afro-Caribbean diaspora make and cross.