Addressing Anti-Black Racism in Child and Youth Care Education

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April 4th, 2025

Abstract

Canada has a deep-seated history of anti-Black racism (ABR) embedded within its social services, education, government and child protection systems. The field of Child and Youth Care (CYC) is no exception; CYC is built upon Eurocentric ideologies founded by predominantly white and male practitioners, theorists and researchers. In this paper, I explore the lack of intentional and specific discourse on anti-Black racism in the CYC classroom and the unique needs of Black children, youth and families. The purpose of this paper is to explore the gaps in curriculum pertaining to Black youth and ABR within CYC, and the impact of those gaps on CYC practitioners and subsequently, the Black children, youth and families they seek to serve. This paper is guided by the following research questions: (1) How does the lack of required curriculum on ABR impact practitioner's abilities to co-construct relationships that don't reinforce systemic whiteness and oppression? (2) How is ABR addressed within Douglas College's CYC program, what limitations exist and what improvements can be made? This study reviews existing literature on ABR and CYC curriculum, drawing on my own experiences as a Douglas College student to identify gaps and provide recommendations for Douglas College CYC faculty to implement anti-oppressive and anti-racist frameworks on an institutional and educational level. The anticipated findings propose the generalization of blackness and the exclusion of ABR in CYC education negatively impacts a practitioner's ability to engage in anti-racist and anti-oppressive practice, contributing to the further marginalization of Black individuals.

Anti-Black Racism in Child and Youth Care

Canada has a deep history of anti-Black racism (ABR) that still impacts Black children, youth, families and communities today (Maynard, 2017). Anti-Black racism is embedded in Canadian social services, child protection systems and educational systems (Maynard, 2017). The field of Child and Youth Care (CYC) is no exception. CYC is rooted in White, Eurocentric ideologies founded by mainly White and male practitioners, theorists and researchers (Gharabaghi, 2017). In this paper, I explore the lack of intentional and specific discourse on anti-Black racism and on the unique needs of Black children, youth and families in CYC classrooms. The purpose of this paper is to explore the gaps in curriculum pertaining to Black youth and ABR within CYC, the impact of those gaps on CYC practitioners and subsequently, the Black children, youth and families they seek to serve. In this study, I review existing literature on Blackness throughout Canadian history from slavery and segregation to the child welfare system and the continued erasure of Black experiences. Furthermore, I will explore the requirements for CYC curriculum, course guidelines and the most recent Douglas College CYC program review, drawing on my own experiences as a Douglas College CYC student to identify gaps and provide recommendations for Douglas College CYC faculty to implement anti-oppressive and anti-racist frameworks on a personal, institutional, and educational level.

The profession of Child and Youth Care (CYC) in Canada has never been regulated; while there have been attempts towards regulation, CYC remains an unregulated profession (Gharabaghi, 2024.) This, in part, leads to the varied requirements for CYC programs throughout different educational institutions in Canada. Some of these variations include the number of practicums a student is required to take, the types of courses and the number of courses. Daniel (2021) examines the courses required to obtain a credential in CYC across Canadian institutions, focusing on the incorporation of anti-racism, diversity and anti-oppression courses. Daniel

(2021) found there are no required courses in the curriculum with a focus on these topics across institutions. This has been synonymous to my experience in the Douglas College CYC program; except for a course focused on Indigenous perspectives, curriculum emphasizing anti-racist approaches generally, and understanding anti-Black racist specifically, have not been part of my experience. CYC practitioners are bound to engage with Black children and youth in several environments, highlighting the necessity for education directly addressing the unique needs of Black youth. Students need to learn to examine the ways that power structures exist in the lives of racialized youth and learn anti-oppressive and anti-racist theories to become effective CYC practitioners that understand relational engagement with Black children, youth and families.

Positionality

As an uninvited settler, I live, play, and work in the traditional unceded territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh nations. My maternal ancestry is rooted in West Africa in Ghana and Benin; my mother was born in West Africa where she lived until she moved to England in early adolescence. My paternal ancestry stems from Canada, Poland and England. My West African ancestry is an essential component of who I am, with my middle name stemming from the West African language Ewe, as part of a tradition passed down throughout many generations in my family. I was born in England and then moved to Salt Spring Island, located on the traditional territories of the Coast Salish Peoples. Salt Spring Island has a rich history of Black settlement, with the first Black teacher in Canada arriving on Salt Spring Island in the 1850's (BCBHAS, n.d.).

Over the past three years in the Douglas College CYC program, I have noticed a lack of course content specific to Black youth and anti-Black racism within the context of CYC, with Black youth often being generalized within the larger discussions of marginalization. While we

have explored Indigenous history, supporting Indigenous youth, Anti-Indigenous racism and decolonizing praxis--all relevant topics and incredibly important for us to learn about in CYC--I have also noticed a lack of conversations exploring the experiences of Black youth. As a student, I have to take the initiative to seek out opportunities to explore this topic. I have always had an interest in this topic because of the impacts of anti-Black racism on my family; I was then, serendipitously gifted the book "Policing Black Lives" (Maynard, 2017) at a protest. That further ignited my interest and commitment to find out more. Furthermore, my positionality as an individual with West African ancestry deeply impacts my propensity towards researching anti-Black racism within CYC.

Problem Statement

The topic I will explore in this paper is the lack of intentional and specific discourse on anti-Black racism, the unique needs of Black children, youth and families, and the overgeneralization of these individuals as part of the larger "marginalized community" within the CYC classroom. Furthermore, I examine how the lack of oversite and the unregulated nature of the CYC profession contributes to the under-preparation of CYC students during practicum and CYC graduates starting in the workforce. This paper seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the consequences of generalizing Black children, youth and families within the broader discussion of marginalization in CYC?
2. How does the lack of required curriculum in CYC education on Black youth and anti-Black racism impact new practitioner's capacity to co-construct meaningful relationships that do not reinforce systemic whiteness and systems of oppression?

3. How does Douglas College's Child and Youth Care program approach anti-Black racism in its curriculum, what limitations exist, and what are some considerations for improvements that could be initiated?

The findings of this paper could provide a fresh student-led perspective to the ongoing discourse surrounding CYC as a diverse and inclusive field; particularly considering the historical dominance of Eurocentric, white ideologies in the profession and the prevalence of white, male practitioners, theorists and researchers as the foundation for CYC practice (Daniel, 2021). Additionally, I seek to provide practical and actionable recommendations for Douglas College CYC faculty to expand their curriculum and practice to include anti-racist and anti-oppressive frameworks on an individual, educational and institutional level.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this paper is to explore the gaps in curriculum pertaining to Black youth and anti-Black racism within CYC, highlighting the limitations and the impact of those limitations on practitioners and subsequently, the Black children, youth and families they seek to serve. Additionally, I provide recommendations for CYC faculty to implement anti-oppressive and anti-racist frameworks on an institutional and educational level.

Significance

> If CYC students are not exposed to anti-racist and anti-oppressive frameworks during their academic journeys, they are positioned to repeat the negative ideations and practices, thereby limiting the quality of support they can provide to Black children and their families and also limits the possibility of developing effective relational engagements. (Daniels, 2021, p. 113).

This quote highlights the crucial need for CYC students to be educated on anti-Black racism to support Black individuals, but also to disrupt the stereotyping and biases that society holds that are rooted in anti-Black racism. In this paper, I seek to identify the gaps in learning that current and future CYC students experience and offer tangible recommendations to move forward. Ultimately, I explore ways to support developing CYC practitioners to be prepared to create positive, therapeutic relationships that support Black children, youth and families when they enter the field of CYC.

Theoretical Perspective

The primary theoretical framework for examining my research questions is Critical Race Theory (CRT). The CRT movement engages individuals in exploring the relationship between race, racism and power (Delgado & Stefancic, 2023). According to Delgado and Stefancic (2023), CRT follows several basic tenets. The first is ordinariness, which posits that racism can be difficult to address due to its lack of being acknowledged. The second tenet, interest convergence, states that White individuals will support racial justice movements only when it also benefits them. When interests converge, racism advances the interests of both White and racialized individuals, which can lead to society having little interest to abolish racism. CRT also argues that race is a social construct and explores how individuals experience race differently

due to the intersecting ways their social identities interact with each other (Delgado & Stefancic, 2023).

Using CRT as the primary lens through which the intersection of Anti-Black Racism (ABR) and CYC will be examined acknowledges that racism is engrained in our everyday experiences and in the experiences of the children, families and youth that CYC workers will interact with in their work. CRT also helps us understand how racism shows up in a structural way, recognizing that anti-Black racism is nested in policies, practices and institutions (Delgado & Stefancic, 2023). As my interest is anti-Black racism in CYC education and practice, this framework aligns with my research questions. In addition to using CRT as the primary framework, I have chosen to include Anti-Black Racism Theory (ABRT) as a second lens to analyze CYC education. ABRT acknowledges that racism towards Black individuals differs from racism towards other racialized individuals (Akuoko-Barfi et al., 2023). This is an important addition to this paper as I am arguing that generalizing Black individuals within a wider group of "racialized individuals" is not enough in CYC education; it is imperative that developing CYC practitioners explore and understand the unique needs of Black children, youth and families, specifically.

Literature Review

Historical Context of Anti-Black Racism

Canada hides a horrifying history of appalling acts of violence and racism towards Black individuals and families on individual, institutional and government levels spanning centuries. Despite Canada being commonly referred to as a diverse and inclusive country, the history of anti-Blackness in Canada has mostly gone unrecognized by most individuals (Maynard, 2017). From slavery and police violence to segregation and the overrepresentation of Black youth in the

child welfare system, the historical and present experiences of Black individuals have been largely influenced by state-sanctioned racial violence and oppression (Maynard, 2017). These experiences are not isolated within specific injustices, they are rooted in a larger pattern of subordination spanning across centuries (Maynard, 2017). Carty (1994) highlights the systemic racism endured by African Canadians within state systems:

> African Canadians have always been in a relationship of social subordination in dealing with the state. It is irrelevant whether the relationship is with the government, the judicial system, the education or social-welfare systems, or any other state-controlled or state-influenced institution. The defining feature of the relationship has been Eurocentrism, that is, an insistence on the centrality of Franco- and Anglo-Canadian concerns to the exclusion of all others. Inherently, it is a relationship of racial superiority. (p. 197).

This quote highlights how Black children, youth and families have constantly been placed in positions of inferiority across systems within Canada's society. Additionally, it underscores how the historical and ongoing mistreatment of Black individuals is not incidental and has been accomplished within the scope of Canadian laws and policies (Maynard, 2017, p. 6) constructed by Eurocentric ideologies, racial violence, and white supremacy at the expense of Black individuals and communities.

The Foundations of Anti-Blackness in Canada: Slavery

1444 marks the beginning of racial violence; during this year, the first Black individuals were taken from Africa by European raiders, degraded, shackled and forced to leave their homes. Many individuals did not survive their capture, the journey to the West African shores or the sea journey that followed. Those who did survive were sold into slavery (Maynard, 2017). According to the Government of Canada webpage for Black History Month (Government of

Canada, n.d.), the first enslaved Black person arrived in Canada in 1628, marking the beginning of the enslavement of Black individuals in Canada that was practiced for over 200 years. Slavery in Canada was characterized by economic gain, desire for power and the deep racist belief that Black individuals were less than human. They were viewed as objects for "White owners" to misuse, abuse and gain complete physical, psychological, sexual and economical control over (Maynard, 2017).

During the American Revolutionary War, enslaved individuals were offered freedom, land and equality in return for pledging allegiance to the British empire and fighting for the British in the war; these individuals were commonly referred to as the "Black loyalists" (Government of Canada, n.d.). While this is commonly referred to as a significant event that granted freedom to some enslaved Black individuals, the conditions they faced were not as promised; the Black loyalists were given smaller plots of land, fewer resources and expected to work for significantly less than the White loyalists (Government of Canada, n.d.). The following decades brought several anti-slavery movements, leading up to the *Act on the Abolition of Slavery in the British Empire* of 1833; this Act meant that Black people could no longer be legally enslaved in most British colonies, including Canada. The Abolition Act made Canada a desired destination for escaped slaves from the United States; US slaves would attempt to escape to Canada through the underground railroad. The escaped slaves during this period are commonly referred to as "freedom runners" (Maynard, 2017, p. 29). While the Black loyalists, freedom runners and Canadian-born Black people were supposedly free individuals, the harsh reality was that Black lives were still considered to be less valuable than White settlers' lives. Black individuals and communities faced racialized violence, discrimination and segregation throughout the following decades (Maynard, 2017).

Slavery set the tone for the racial stratification that would continue to shape Canadian society for decades after its abolition. The deep-seated ideology that Black individuals were less than human and inferior to White settlers influenced all aspects of Black life and, despite the promised equality and freedom, Black individuals remained dehumanized and marginalized. The legacy of slavery furthered this narrative of Black life as unworthy and left lasting impacts on social systems, contributing to the ongoing racial disparities Black individuals face today.

Anti-Black Racism within the School System: Segregation

The abolishment of slavery in Canada did not end the atrocities committed towards Black individuals; Canada's history includes racialized violence, segregation and discrimination that spans far after slavery was abolished. Black individuals in Canada were barred from accessing certain public spaces, public transit and education. Segregation did not stop even in death. Cemetaries had sections for Black individuals away from the areas where White individuals would be laid to rest. Maynard (2017) highlights the ways that Black individuals faced exclusion from White spaces for over a hundred years after slavery was abolished, justified through the perceived danger that Black lives imposed on White individuals. Black children were believed to be outside the construction of innocence, demonized and suggested as a danger to White children. Less than a decade after the abolishment of slavery, these ideologies led to the construction of the *Act of Union* legally endorsing segregated schooling. Segregated schooling was practiced throughout the country, providing less than adequate education to Black children. In some areas where the population of Black children was low, Black children and youth were told that they were incompetent and did not have the ability to learn at school to stop Black children from attending education with White children (Maynard, 2017).

The last segregated school in Canada closed less than 50 years ago, however the impacts of these schools continue to impact African-Canadian individuals alive today. This history of segregation in Canada highlights the systemic racism towards Black individuals, showcasing how they were discriminated against as they were seen as not only inferior to their White peers, but also as a danger. For us to understand the current educational context that Black children and youth navigate today, it is imperative for use to have a foundational knowledge of how Black childhood has been historically understood. From the beginning of slavery, Black children were viewed as property and excluded from the concept of "innocence" that was central to the construction of childhood for White children and their need for protection as vulnerable individuals (Maynard, 2017). This idea has implications for today's youth--they continue to be seen outside of this construction of innocence, perceived as older and exposed to societal systems that continue to perpetuate negative stereotypes and marginalization of Black youth (Maynard, 2017). While the last official segregated school closed in 1983, its legacy remains engrained within the public education, enacted in teacher's attitudes towards Black children, the streamlining of Black children into lower-track education programs and the lack of representation of Black experience in both curriculum and staffing (Maynard, 2017).

The Overrepresentation of Black Bodies in the Child Protection System

Black children, youth and families are overrepresented in the child protection system (Akuoko-Barfi, 2023; Daniel, 2020, 2021; Maynard, 2017; Pon et al., 2011) with Black children and youth in care at five times the rate of their percentage of the population in Ontario (Maynard, 2017, pp. 192). This overrepresentation of Black bodies in the child protection system can be traced back to the racist ideologies that informed slavery and segregation. Black individuals were considered property of White owners and their children subsequently became regarded as property, leaving the Black parents with no legal rights over their children; this legacy lives on

today within the child protection system (Maynard, 2017). To fully understand the current climate, we must understand the historical legacy that continues to impact current child protection practices. According to Maynard (2017), because of racism and segregation, most orphanages would refuse Black children, additionally, in the 1940's, children of African descent were considered "non-adoptable" (p. 189) leading them to be institutionalized rather than placed in foster homes.

Today, Black children, youth and families continue to be subjected to racial disparities within the child protection system. Black parents are reported in large for neglect, with over 70% of child removals in Black families occurring due to neglect (Maynard, 2017), with neglect often being linked to poverty and poverty itself intertwined with the historical effects of slavery and segregation. This exemplifies how racist actions carried out centuries ago continue to affect Black children, youth and families today under the guise of child welfare outcomes. Rather than addressing the systemic causes of poverty and preventative measures, the welfare system continues to reinforce cycles of criminalization, trauma, instability and racism.

The Continued Erasure of Black Experiences

Despite the long history of state-sanctioned violence again Black lives in Canada, Black experiences are too often overlooked, ignored and erased in Canadian history (Maynard, 2017). This section on the historical contexts of ABR in Canada provides a brief overview that only skims the surface of the atrocities carried out by White settlers within the scope of Canadian law. I purposefully chose to incorporate information about different elements of Canadian Black history in this paper due to the lack of awareness and education around anti-Blackness that continues to exist in our current society. Anti-Blackness is often completely ignored in Canada or when acknowledged, it is framed as an "American issue" or an issue of the past (Maynard,

2017). This is synonymous with my experiences growing up within the Canadian school system. Despite being raised on Salt Spring Island, an island with a rich history of Black settlement (BCBHAS, n.d), this history was not acknowledged in my education and continues to go unacknowledged or generalized into the broader discussion of marginalization in my post-secondary studies. For example, discussions of anti-Black racism and the specific needs of Black children and youth in Child and Youth Care (CYC) education is often lumped together with broader conversations of other marginalized groups or limited and referred to as an issue that is "greater" in the United States of America. In my experience as a student in their 3rd year of Douglas College's (DC) CYC program, I have observed countless instances in lectures, PowerPoint slides and textbooks where Black youth have been generalized. One example of this is in the textbook "Research and the Field of Child and Youth Care" (Gharabaghi, 2022). This text provides a section on Afrocentric and Indigenous research methods, however rather than separating the two, the author amalgamates the two approaches, speaking about marginalized individuals in a generalized way. Daniel (2021) found similar issues with CYC textbooks, highlighting how a popular textbook used in CYC programs over the country--a text book that was used in one of my very first CYC classes--"Foundations of Child and Youth Care" (Stuart, 2013) does not explicitly mention race, rather refers to race interchangeably with ethnic and cultural markings, despite the front cover of the textbook showing a racialized child.

Canada has a proclivity to ignore racial disparities, often being promoted as a diverse, accepting and multicultural country despite gross injustices and violent acts occurring less than 50 years ago. Throughout the 1980's the police in Montreal used photos of young Black men as target practice (Maynard, 2017); this obscene violence demonstrates the deep-seated systemic racism embedded within Canadian society. This obscene violence was not an anomaly, but a continuation of violent acts carried out across centuries that reflects systemic racism that has

shaped the historical and current experiences of Black individuals in Canada. Maynard (2017) speaks to how overt and explicit hatred towards Blackness is no longer culturally accepted within Canada. Overt racism is no longer tolerated, however it is so deeply engrained in our society that it continues to show up in systems, colorblind attitudes and microaggressions. While today's Canada is supposedly not overtly racist, a little over a year ago, Coquitlam, BC was plastered with posters for a "Whites-only" parent and child group (Pawson, 2023). This demonstrates that while Canada is often regarded as a diverse and inclusive country, systemic racism, white supremacy and oppression still exist in our society today. The "Whites only" posters exemplify how the legacy of slavery and segregation continue to impact Black individuals today and how racism persists in our society despite our proclivity to turn a blind eye to it.

What is CYC?

Admittedly, when I first enrolled in the Douglas College CYC program, I did not know in its entirety what CYC was or what CYC practitioners do. Douglas College (n.d.) describes the role of a CYC practitioner as an individual who works with children, youth and families experiencing varying types of stress, differentiating CYC practitioners from other professional helpers by working in the individual's daily life. This description is surface level and does not capture the complexity of CYC practice. Over the past three years at Douglas College, I have come to find out how special CYC is, and how different it can be from other helping professions. Unlike many other fields, CYC practitioners work with individuals within their unique life spaces rather than in fixed spaces at fixed times (VanderVen, 1991), promoting this idea that CYC practitioners "meet young people where they are at" (Cragg, 2020, p. 6). Garfat et al. (2018) proposed 25 characteristics of a relational CYC practice in the three overarching areas of being, knowing and doing, highlighting the role of a CYC as extending beyond providing

resources, interventions and services to forming meaningful relationships that serve as the foundation of CYC.

As the field of CYC has developed, so have several guiding theories, perspectives and approaches to practice. CYC is not only known for it's emphasis on relational practice, however it is also guided by holistic development, strength-based perspectives, social justice, trauma informed care and self-reflection (Cragg, 2020). However, despite the increasingly inclusive guiding principles and theories, it is crucial for us to reflect on whose voices have been central to the formation of CYC as we know it today. CYC was built upon Eurocentric ideologies founded by predominantly white and male practitioners, theorists and researchers (Daniel, 2021) and continues to be dominated by white theories and theorists (Gharabaghi, 2017). This focus on White theories and theorists has been referred to as the "White Stream" of CYC (Hillman et al., 2020, p. 50).

CYC Preparation: Curriculum

The requirements for CYC programs differentiate significantly throughout Canada, from the number of required courses, the content of these classes and expectations for practicum courses and hours (Daniel, 2021). Individuals can obtain different levels of education in CYC including a diploma or bachelors degree as offered at Douglas College. The Douglas College Diploma in Child and Youth Care requires a total of 60 credits comprised of 51 credits of required CYC and Child, Family, Community Studies (CFCS) courses, one required English or communications course worth 3 credits and 6 credits of university transferable courses (Douglas College, 2022a). The Bachelor of Arts in CYC requires a total of 120 credits comprised of 96 credits of required CYC and CFCS courses, 6 credits from English courses, and 18 credits of university transferable courses (Douglas College, 2022b). The Diploma program typically takes

2 years to complete, and is offered full time in-person, part time in-person and online part time (Douglas College, 2022a). The Bachelor of Arts program is offered both in-person part time and in-person full time, typically taking around 4 years to complete (Douglas College, 2022b). Both programs include practicum placements--the diploma program consists of two placements and the degree program adds a third placement in the student's final year of study in varying supervised CYC settings (Douglas College, 2022a, 2022b).

Course Guidelines

As part of this research project, I reviewed the course guidelines for each required course in both the Douglas College diploma and degree program particularly searching for key words: Racism, anti-Black, Black, Anti-Racist and Race. I found one mention of "anti-racism" in the required course on Indigenous perspectives (Douglas College, 2024). While incredibly important, it was provided in the context of anti-Indigenous racism and there were no specific connections to anti-Black racism mentioned throughout the syllabuses for any required CYC course. This gap suggests that while anti-racism is being spoken about in CYC, it is failing to address how different types of racial discrimination intersect, compound and affect varying racialized communities, once more generalizing the experiences of anti-racism within different racial minorities. This has been my experience in all aspects of my learning to date: while there have been significant conversations about anti-racism embedded within courses, course readings and course content about decolonization, Indigenization and the unique experiences of Indigenous children and youth, I can only recall one chapter we were required to read from Policing Black Lives (Maynard, 2017) this past semester. This is not to say that we should not be learning about Indigenous racism; it is to acknowledge how underrepresented Black children and youth are within our curriculum and highlight this critical gap in our learning.

Additionally, through informal conversations with faculty members (personal communication, February 24, 2025), I found out that the creation of course content, assigned readings, assignments and structure of courses is largely left up to the discretion of the faculty member teaching the course based solely on the course descriptions. This raises several concerns for me, specifically surrounding the impact of instructor positionality in the creation of course content. In several CYC courses we have been taught about *positionality,* positionality referring to the social and political contexts that shape a person's identity in relation to others and the external world. Positionality acknowledges that our perceptions and experiences are impacted by the different intersecting elements of our identity, such as race, class, gender, and ability, and how these elements situate us within systems of power and oppression. Holmes (2020) suggests that researchers are a part of the world that they are studying and cannot be separated from it, assuming that positionality impacts every part of the research process, this is synonymous with my experiences choosing research interests, my preferred methods of research and how I interpret findings. I assume that positionality would then affect an instructor's choice in what they include as course content and how they carry out the learning objectives for each course. Harrington (2022) builds on this idea, exploring how instructor positionality is rarely reflected upon despite an instructor's social location impacting their delivery of a course. Like researchers must critically reflect on their positionality during the research process (Holmes, 2020), instructors should also examine how their social locations impact their teaching and subsequently their students, to ensure a more culturally responsive and equitable learning environment (Harrington, 2022).

Comprehensive Program Reviews

The Douglas College program review policy A38 (Douglas College, 2010) outlines the expectation for all credentialed programs to undergo a comprehensive program review informed

by faculty, students and external stakeholders. These comprehensive program reviews assess programs and curriculum in alignment with the institution's key priorities; outlined in policy A38 as: Indigenization, accessibility, equity, diversity and inclusion (Douglas College, 2010). Additionally, Douglas College (2010) highlights that the program reviews should accomplish the following objectives: identify gaps, provide opportunities for improvement and provide public accountability. The program reviews are conducted on a 5-7 year rotation; the latest CYC program review was conducted in 2020 and the next one is scheduled for 2026 (Douglas College, 2020).

Throughout my research, I found a document containing excerpted comprehensive program review self-study recommendations from 2020 on the Douglas College public website (Douglas College, 2020). I found this document interesting for several reasons. First, the document is an excerpted section of the full comprehensive review, however it is the only document related to CYC program reviews uploaded to the institution's public webpage. I reached out to the program advisor to see if I would be able to gain access through other avenues, however she informed me over that they were not able to release any internal documents related to the program review (personal communication, March 26, 2025). Additionally, within the document, there is a link titled "Action and Implementation Plan", however, when I tried to access it, I was met with a permission restriction; further limiting transparency and accessibility. From policy A38, I understood that the program review's objective is to "provide public accountability" (Douglas College, 2010, p. 2), which I interpret as promoting transparency between the institution and the public. This transparency can be accomplished by ensuring information is accessible in order to demonstrate how the program's actions, decisions and policies align with the institution and faculties stated goals and standards. However, by only providing the public with a summary, the institution fails to meet this

objective as it does not allow complete access to the public let alone students enrolled in the program.

The summary list provided 30 recommendations and their respective statuses/timelines; additionally, these 30 recommendations were reviewed by an outside reviewer from the University of Victoria who agreed with each recommendation and proposed an additional practicum related recommendation and then finally was reviewed by the Douglas College Vice-President, Academic and Provost who also agreed with the self-study recommendations and requested an implementation and action plan (Douglas College, 2020). 3 of the 30 recommendations can be connected to anti-racist and anti-oppressive practice, including recommendations 21, 24 and 26. Each of these recommendations will be discussed in greater depth below.

Recommendation #26 states "Prioritize Indigenous and BIPOC-identified faculty scholars during upcoming faculty postings, while looking at institutional support for retention." Douglas College's CYC faculty currently consists mostly of White faculty. Munroe (2016) describes her experience in a CYC program in Ontario as lacking BIPOC representation, limiting the knowledge of systemic oppression and racism among students leading to program graduates acquiring the practical skills however not the critical inquiry skills necessary for practitioners to build authentic helping relationships with marginalized children and youth. Furthermore, Munroe (2016) calls for CYC programs to examine their hiring processes to hire more BIPOC individuals, highlighting that in her experience most learning surrounding issues of race, social justice, systemic racism and oppression was taught by BIPOC professors, albeit in her program, there was only one Black professor. This points out a few issues, the first being the lack of diversity in faculty. This has been well documented and can be linked all the way back to the lasting effects of slavery, segregation and poverty leading to fewer opportunities for Black

individuals to pursue higher education that would qualify them to teach in universities (Maynard, 2017).

Another critical issue is the likelihood for BIPOC professors to experience *cultural taxation* which refers to the expectation for faculty of colour to take on additional labour related to diversity and equity based on the assumption that they are best suited to those roles due to their race or ethnicity (Reddick et al., 2020). BIPOC women in academia usually take on additional roles mentoring students of colour, sometimes as a way of "paying it forward" to the mentors they had when they were students, leading to an increase in emotional burnout (Azhar & DeLoach McCutcheon, 2021). While I have not been taught by any Black professors during my time at Douglas College, I have observed instances of ignorance related to issues of race in the classroom that go unaddressed. In my experience when issues of race are addressed, they are primarily addressed by faculty who are not White. One example of this was during a class, our cohort was expected to present on different theories of development. One group was assigned a theory related to healthy racial identity development. While presenting this topic, they included an activity for the class to complete where we were supposed to write a letter to our body/self where we took five minutes to write a letter to a part of ourselves that we struggled to embrace with the purpose of the activity being to express your frustration on how society determines your worth and value. This activity was misaligned with the core concepts of the theory, generalizing a theory specific to race and making it about self-esteem; by decentering race, it shifts the conversation from the unique racialized experiences of the children that were being studied. The professor in this class did address this and explained the importance of centering racialized experiences, however in similar situations with non-racialized professors, I have watched instances like this go unacknowledged. So, while recommendation #26 is an important idea, for it to be effective in its implementation, we must ensure that a framework for appropriate

institutional support for the BIPOC instructors hired exists to combat burnout and retain faculty (Azhar & DeLoach McCutcheon, 2021).

Recommendation #21 states "CYC to pursue CYC accreditation with the CYC Educational Accreditation Board of Canada." Also noted is that the Douglas College CYC faculty was to consult with the Child and Youth Care Educational Accreditation Board (CYCEAB) beginning in 2021. On the website for the CYCEAB, they have published several versions of their self-study guides intended for educational institutions to assess how well they are providing education within their CYC programs. The self-study guide contains guidelines for what a program needs to become accredited, containing sections 1.1 though 1.8 that outline "what you need" referring to the documentation a program would have to submit and "Engaging the evidence" referring to the written narrative that explains how the program meets the requirements for accreditation. I searched through two versions of the CYCEAB Self Study Guides, 2020 and 2024. Both versions state that to meet the requirements, a program must include both institutional and program specific statements for addressing racism in program curriculum and learning spaces. Interestingly, the 2020 version mentioned specifically "anti-Black racism AND anti-Indigenous racism" while the 2024 version only uses "anti-racism", additionally, within the full document, the 2020 version includes the words "Black" four times overall and the 2024 version did not mention the words "Black" or "Anti-Black Racism" at all.

While the CYCEAB requires an institution to implement these statements regarding racism, I could not find anything like this on the Douglas College website nor cited in our syllabuses. The closest thing I could find, cited in our syllabuses was the Non-Academic Misconduct policy which discusses bullying and harassment but does not specifically mention racism (Douglas College, 1999). This policy then points us to Douglas College's A59 Human Rights policy (Douglas College, 2018). While this document exists and covers human rights and

misconduct, it does not directly address racism. Furthermore, the language used in the document highlights individual accountability rather than systemic or institutional accountability, using phrases such as "the college reserves the right to investigate alleged instances of discrimination on its own initiative" (Douglas College, 2018, p. 5) suggesting that Douglas College can chooses to investigate claims, however, is not required to. This raises questions for me about accountability and safety - if the college doesn't have to investigate all allegations, how do they choose when they intervene and investigate versus when they don't?

Recommendation #21 was slated for conversations between the CYCEAB and faculty to begin in 2021. However, based on informal conversations with faculty members, this process does not appear to have made much progress nearly five years later. As seen from the requirements for accreditation, it appears that Douglas College's CYC program is lacking some key requirements, including institutional and program statements on anti-Black racism. While I do not think that adding statements to webpages is the end-all be all of fighting anti-Black racism, I do think it is important for the program to acknowledge the issue as a first step in the right direction. Furthermore, if these statements are produced, it is crucial that the institution demonstrates how and what they are doing actively to fulfill or live by their commitments to enact anti-racism within curriculum and learning spaces.

The last recommendation I will briefly touch on from the summary list is recommendation #24: "Explore and pursue CYC faculty group professional development opportunities for anti-oppressive/anti-racist and decolonizing & indigenization of educational practices". This recommendation was noted down as "underway, with discussions beginning in a 2020 faculty meeting." While I support this initiative, it is unclear what this looks like in practice; is there an update on this recommendation? Does it remain a priority for staff? How are faculty who engage in this professional development carrying these ideas forward into

curriculum and learning spaces? While I think this is an important recommendation, I think that there needs to be transparency on how and when this is occurring. In workplaces I have been a part of, there has been a tendency for staff being required to attend one workshop on racism and then they are assumed that they are now "anti-racist" or prepared, however in reality, engaging in anti-oppressive and anti-racist practice, requires ongoing knowing, un-knowing and dedication to the work.

CYC Preparation; Practice

Daniel (2021) emphasizes the relationship between educational quality and services provided by CYC students highlighting that "the quality of service provided by CYC practitioners is directly correlated to the education of CYC students" (p.123). With this quote in mind, imagine how the quality of service provided by CYC students to Black children, youth and families is if we are not learning in our education about their specific and unique needs, struggles and history that continues to affect them. If CYC students are being taught about Black communities through generalized statements, textbooks that portray Black individuals as pathologized and are not educated on anti-racist frameworks, then they are doomed to replicate harmful biases, stereotypes and practices with Black children and youth, therefore limiting their ability to engage in effective relationships (Daniel, 2021).

Hillman et al. (2020) argue that whiteness is central to CYC. With most CYC faculty, course content and overall focus of CYC programs being rooted in White centrality, many faculty members are underprepared to engage in intentional discourse on racism in their courses (Hillman et al., 2020). Furthermore, this leads students to learn perspectives that downplay the existence of racism and erase the experiences of racialized individuals. Additionally, Hillman et al. (2020) highlight the role of White CYC faculty to take responsibility to recognize how their

White privilege contributes to ongoing systemic oppression. Instead of turning a blind eye to conversations about racism, CYC faculty must take initiative to address these topics by moving away from a western, Eurocentric world view and embed anti-racist frameworks within the way they teach. Echoing these same worries, Maynard (2017, p. 4) writes "A history that goes unacknowledged is too often a history that is doomed to be repeated." When we omit Black history and Black experiences, we are effectively participating in Black erasure and perpetuating systemic inequities. By reinforcing these cycles of oppression rather than challenging them, we are co-constructing relationships with Black children and youth that reinforce systemic Whiteness and render ourselves ineffective in our roles as CYC practitioners (Daniel, 2021).

Recommendations Moving Forward

This next section focuses specifically on recommendations for CYC faculty moving forwards. Instead of offering broad generalized recommendations about anti-racist praxis, I am intentionally choosing to focus on small practical recommendations that invite meaningful change on the individual and institutional level. By narrowing my recommendations to actionable goals that can be implemented within CYC education, curriculum and practice, my hope is to provide a practical guide for small steps we can take as a field towards co-creating a more inclusive and equitable future in CYC practice.

Course Guidelines and Creation

My review of course guidelines for the required CYC courses revealed that terms like *anti-Black racism, Racism, anti-Black, Black, Anti-Racist and Race* are largely missing from course guidelines, with the exception of one course specific to Indigenous perspectives. Avoiding intentional discourse around anti-Black racism and excluding it from course guidelines reinforces erasure of Black experiences within the wider social context and promotes a

generalized approach to discussing racism in which we fail to address the unique experiences of Black individuals. Furthermore, with course guidelines serving as the foundation for instructors to use when they are deciding how to carry out a course, if anti-Black racism is not mentioned within the guidelines, instructors are not required to include it in their course content. I recommend that course guidelines are reviewed and revised (especially as some have not been updated for over 10 years) (Douglas College, 2015), to include anti-Black racism as a required learning objective alongside anti-Indigenous racism and decolonization. It is imperative that practitioners recognize the effects of racism and the unique needs of Black children; this necessitates the implementation of anti-racist and Black-centered frameworks to challenge the dominant narratives within CYC education by incorporating intentional and specific discourse in the classroom that will then inform the students in their practice (Daniel, 2021). Daniel and Jean-Pierre (2020) highlights how Black children and youth seek out safe spaces to talk about their experience with racism and that having positive social supports increases their self-esteem. In order for us, as CYC practitioners, to be able to engage in these relational dialogues, we must understand the historical context and current impact on Black communities. By integrating Black scholarship, course content and experiences, we can prepare developing CYC practitioners to engage in these dialogues.

Additionally, I invite you to explicitly use terms like *anti-Black racism, Racism, anti-Black, Black, Anti-Racist and Race* in course descriptions, learning objectives and syllabuses. Furthermore, with the creation of course content being largely left to the discretion of the faculty teaching the classes, reflecting on Harrington's (2022) ideas around instructor positionality, faculty should take the time to reflect on how their social locations impact course development and should be required to include a positionality statement in their syllabuses where they acknowledge how their positionality shapes their approach to teaching similar to how researchers

include positionality statements within their research (Holmes 2020). However, this recommendation does not come without limitations. While the inclusion of instructor positionality is important, it is necessary to acknowledge that it is simply not enough. These statements may become done solely to fulfill a requirement rather than with good intentions; to mitigate this possibility, I propose the need for further discussion on how CYC can implement structured guidelines or oversight for content that reflects anti-oppressive, anti-racist and inclusive perspectives. Perhaps this is accomplished through the implementation of a student feedback process or the creation of a committee that assesses syllabuses for gaps in curriculum, recommendations for improvement and inclusivity, prioritizing BIPOC voices and experiences as central to the process.

Increasing Transparency and Accountability

My research found that access to the CYC program review documents was severely limited despite Douglas College's Policy A38 stating that an objective of the program review is to increase public accountability (Douglas College, 2010). This lack of transparency inhibits prospective students, current students and the public from accessing information on how the program's actions, decisions and policies align with institutional goals and standards. Additionally, the summary document provided a link to the "implementation and action plan" however this was also inaccessible, raising concerns about the implementation of program review recommendations. To counter this, I recommend that the institution and faculty increase transparency by making these documents publicly available on the Douglas College website. In the case of sensitive information, documents should be made available with the sensitive information redacted or the implementation of a clear process for individuals to request information from the institution regarding comprehensive program reviews.

Additionally, the excerpted summary provided three recommendations that can relate back to anti-racism including: Recommendation # 26 “Prioritize Indigenous and BIPOC-identified faculty scholars during upcoming faculty postings, while looking at institutional support for retention”; Recommendation # 21 “CYC to pursue CYC accreditation with the CYC Educational Accreditation Board of Canada”; and Recommendation # 24 “Explore and pursue CYC faculty group professional development opportunities for anti-oppressive/anti-racist and decolonizing & Indigenization of educational practices”. Each of these recommendations provide important ideas to move us towards an anti-racist education, however they were proposed over 5 years ago, and it is unclear if there has been any progress on these goals excluding informal conversations suggesting that progress has been limited. To ensure these recommendations are not simply performative allyship, I recommend that the faculty tracks their progress towards goals by releasing updates that are accessible to students and the public.

Furthermore, to address recommendation #26, I think that it is vital to not only prioritize the hiring of BIPOC faculty, however to also ensure that there is an appropriate framework designed and implemented to provide institutional support for BIPOC faculty while also prioritizing the preparation of White faculty members to engage in intentional discourse on race and racism within their courses, lowering the expectation for BIPOC faculty to assume the majority of work surrounding topics of marginalization.

Recommendation # 21 from the comprehensive program review speaks to CYC accreditation, for this recommendation I chose to specifically focus on the CYCEAB’s requirements noted within the CYCEAB self study guides found on their website. The CYCEAB requires a program to present both institutional and program specific statements on anti-racism within curriculum and learning spaces. Throughout my research I was unable to find either statement specific to Douglas College or Douglas College’s CYC program. While it is not clear

whether the CYC program is still working towards obtaining accreditation from the CYCEAB, it appears that without the implementation of these statements, they would not meet this accreditation requirement. To address this, Douglas College should develop an institutional wide formal statement on racism that acknowledges the impacts of systemic racism and outlines what it is actively doing to be anti-racist. Additionally, the CYC faculty should create a program specific statement on anti-racism that acknowledges systemic racism, the historical context and current impacts and what they plan to do to be actively anti-racist. These statements should not be created only as a requirement for accreditation, but also as a tool to guide institutional discussions on racism, course development and anti-racist/oppressive training for faculty members.

I will close this paper by inviting you to sit in the discomfort of the reality that for centuries, state sanctioned violence towards Black life were carried out and Black children, youth, families and communities had no choice but to endure this racialized violence and systemic oppression. The discomfort we feel when speaking about these injustices is insignificant compared to the atrocities these individuals faced for simply existing, and the continued erasure and racial violence Black communities endure when we fail to address it. If we as CYC practitioners are committed to upholding CYC values and ethics like relational practice, trauma informed care and strength-based approaches, we must be willing to acknowledge our positionalities, explore and confront our biases and engage in intentional discourse around sensitive topics.

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