

BLACK YOUTH LEADERSHIP AND MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

09/1/2020 - 11/28/2020

September 1, 2020 –
November 28, 2020

Black Youth Leadership and Mentorship Program

FEBRUARY 2021



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High School Student Reflection

“As a result of participating in these projects and learning many useful lessons, I now have a lot more knowledge about not only what it means to be the best version of myself academically and mentally, but what it means to be a person of colour. Being a person of colour is a privilege that I now pride myself in but I have learned that it should not be my main drive for accomplishing my goals. My love for what I am doing should be my motivation. Because as wonderful as it is to be Black, my colour is not what defines me as a person, but my actions in my everyday life. One of the most important things that I have learned while being in this mentorship program/ research assistant job is a lesson from Dr. Salami, to always say thank you for every opportunity I get. So to Dr. Salami and to everyone who was involved in this program I would like to say thank you. Thank you for how much you have helped me and prepared me for the future. It is something that I can only repay you back for by going out and using all the tools you have equipped me with to make society a better place for future generations.”

Written reflection by Anjola Oyelami



Abstract

Black youths experience poor outcomes, including low educational attainment. Lack of mentors and role models in the community and racialization contribute to the poor social outcomes of Black youths. The Black Youth Leadership and Mentorship Program used a participatory approach aimed at improving community belonging and leadership skills, as well as fostering a positive cultural identity for Black youths. Thirty-six youths were selected to participate in the 13-week mentorship program, which took place between September 1 and November 28, 2020. The youths were selected via a competitive process comprising several application documents: a one-page essay explaining why they wanted to participate in the program, their high school transcript, and an application form. Short-, medium-, and long-term objectives were set for this mentorship program. Overall, the short- and medium-term objectives were met. Despite a few drawbacks, especially relating to change in delivery of the program from in-person to online due to COVID-19 restrictions, feedback received from participants and project personnel strongly suggest the program should be extended across a larger group of Black youths to improve outcomes related to cultural identity, economics, and full participation in society. The program created a sense of community among the mentees as well as the Black professors and graduate students involved. It was empowering to see 17 Black professors across the different faculties at the University of Alberta. Several professors and university students were present for the many sessions and this allowed high school youths to become more acquainted with each other and to be aware of their Black colleagues.



PROJECT TEAM

PROJECT LEAD

Dr. Bukola Salami, Associate Professor, Faculty of Nursing

FACULTY

Dr. Adetola Adesida, Associate Professor, Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry, Surgery

Dr. Sedami Gnidehou, Assistant Professor of Biology, Campus Saint Jean

Dr. James Kariuki, Associate Professor of Chemistry, Augustana Campus

Dr. Jennifer Kelly, Professor Emeritus, Faculty of Education, Educational Policy Studies

Dr. Andy Knight, Professor, Faculty of Arts, Political Science

Dr. André McDonald, Professor, Faculty of Engineering, Mechanical Engineering

Dr. Ubaka Ogbogu, Associate Professor, Faculty of Law

Dr. Philomina Okeke-Ihejirika, Professor, Faculty of Arts, Women's and Gender Studies

Dr. Onookome Okome, Professor, Faculty of Arts, English and Film Studies

Dr. Temitope Oriola, Associate Professor, Faculty of Arts, Sociology

Dr. Lahoucine Ouzgane, Associate Professor, Faculty of Arts, English and Film Studies

Dr. Kathy Robinson, Associate Professor, Faculty of Education, Elementary Education

Dr. Anne-José Villeneuve, Associate Professor, French Linguistics, Campus Saint-Jean

Dr. Marvin Washington, Professor, Strategy, Entrepreneurship, and Management

Dr. Jared Wesley, Associate Professor, Faculty of Arts, Political Science

Dr. Sophie Yohani, Associate Professor, Faculty of Education, Educational Psychology

ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Zeinab Abugrga, Black Youth

Yar Anyieth, Black Youth and YEG ComeUp Group

Thomas Bankole, Yoruba Cultural Association of Edmonton

Joseph Luri, Sudanese Community

Sandra Muchekeza, Council of Canadians of African & Caribbean Heritage (CCACH)

Siba Ncube, Zimbabwe Community

Dunia Nur, African Canadian Civic Engagement Council

Adedayo Ojeleye, Nigerian Canadian Association of Edmonton

Morenike Olaosebikan, Ribbon Rouge Foundation

Joy Thomas, National Black Coalition of Canada

PROJECT TEAM

PROJECT PERSONNEL

Nimo Bille, Teacher and Mentor

Charlotte Carr, Undergraduate Student and Mentor

Benjamin Denga, PhD Student and Research Assistant

Dr. Michael Kariwo, Project Coordinator

Olga Loggale, Undergraduate Student and Mentor

Alleson Mason, PhD Student and Research Assistant

Toluwani Ola-Ajayi, Undergraduate Student and Mentor

Dr. Omolara Sanni, Evaluator

Robyn Taylor, Undergraduate Student and Mentor

PRESENTERS

Ajibola Abitoye, Politician

Dr. Dominic Alaazi, Postdoctoral Fellow

Diane Allen, Equity Human Resources

Shammawi Anderson, Mechanical Engineer

Hanna Daniel, Undergraduate Student, Business; Executive of the Ethiopian and Eriterian Student Association

Celine Caruso Dixon, Undergraduate Student, Political Science; President of Black Student Association

Sahar Charradi, Center for Race and Culture

Dr. Greta Cummings, Dean, Faculty of Nursing

Dr. Stephen Dew, Provost, University of Alberta

Joshua Duarte, RBC Bank

Shayla Dube, Registered Social Worker

Lisa Dublin, University of Alberta

Hilda Fankah Arthur, PhD Candidate and Policy Analyst

Higinio Fernández-Sánchez, PhD Student

Haben Ghezehei, Masters of Nursing Recent Graduate

Jonan Hatt, Careers: The Next Generation

Prof-Collins Ifeonu, PhD Student, Sociology; President of Black Graduate Student Association

Conor Kegg, Norquest College

Tolulope Kolawole, Registered Nurse

Jean Louis, Senior Regulatory Affairs Officer

PROJECT TEAM

cont.

PRESENTERS

Dr. Deng Mapiour, Surgeon

Alleson Mason, PhD Candidate

Mansoureh Modarres, Center for Race and Culture

Tinashe Mtshiya, Lawyer

Sandra Muchekeza, CCACH

Idowu Ohioze, Lawyer

Dr. Tolu Olateju, Physician

Peace Penzi, Undergraduate Student, Law

Karen Richards, CCACH

Dr. Wendy Rodgers, Deputy Provost

Ibrahim Sadiq, Undergraduate Student, Medicine, President of Black Medical Student Association

Allison Sivac, Librarian

Sharon Thach, Careers: The Next Generation

Melissa Uwera, Undergraduate Student, Psychology

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Salamane Yameogo, Private Consultant

Elliott Young, Norquest College

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BACKGROUND

Black youths experience poor outcomes, including low educational attainment. Lack of mentors and role models in the community and racialization contribute to the poor social outcomes of Black youths. The Black Youth Leadership and Mentorship Program used a participatory approach aimed at improving community belonging and leadership skills, as well as fostering a positive cultural identity for Black youths. The program was led by a team of researchers and community collaborators with Dr. Bukola Salami, a Black Associate Professor at the University of Alberta, as Program Lead. A stakeholder Advisory Committee was established at the beginning of the program, consisting of Black youths, community leaders, and religious leaders who informed all stages of the project.

The mentorship program has a number of anticipated primary outcomes, namely to: 1) understand and create awareness of the issues affecting the full participation of Black youths in society and the economy; 2) increase the leadership skills of Black youths; 3) increase the post-secondary entry and completion rate for Black youths; 4) foster community belonging for Black youths; 5) create a positive cultural identity for Black youths; and 6) increase the ability of Black youths to tackle issues of racism and discrimination. These outcomes were designed to be measured in the form of short- or medium-term objectives, as highlighted below:

SHORT-TERM OBJECTIVES

- Increased knowledge on the issues facing Black youths' full participation in society and the economy;
- Increased knowledge of resources to support post-secondary education, including finances, writing support, and study skills;
- Increased knowledge of resources to promote and strengthen leadership skills; and
- Increased knowledge on strategies to tackle racism and discrimination.

BACKGROUND

cont.

MEDIUM-TERM OBJECTIVES

- Increased number of Black youths who begin and complete post-secondary education;
- Increased number of Black youths targeting issues of racism and discrimination in the community; and
- Improved cultural identity of Black youths.

This report will focus on the short-term objectives in particular as well as some of the medium-term objectives. Data on long-term objectives, given below, will be collected in the future.

LONG-TERM OBJECTIVES

- Increased economic outcomes (especially income) of Black people and youths;
- Increased number of Black people in leadership positions;
- Increased sense of community belonging for Black youths; and
- Decreased incidence of racism and discrimination in Canada.



METHODS

A Steering Committee made up of Black faculty members and an Advisory Committee made up of community leaders and youths were set up. The Advisory Committee met two times to discuss the recruitment process and contribute to the development of the curriculum for the mentorship program. Thirty-six youths were selected to participate in the 13-week mentorship program, which took place from September 1 to November 28, 2020. The youths were selected via a competitive process comprising several application documents: a one-page essay explaining why they wanted to participate in the program, their high school transcript, and an application form.

Two graduate students assessed the applications independently and assigned scores based on pre-designed evaluation criteria. They then compared their individual scores for each applicant and agreed on a final score. Program Lead Dr. Bukola Salami, Program Coordinator Dr. Michael Kariwo, and the two graduate students (Benjamin Denga and Alleson Mason) then met and decided on which applicants would be invited to participate in the program based on the scores they had been assigned. Of the 36 youths selected for the program, two dropped out early due to health and family challenges, and one youth dropped out midway due to academic challenges exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mentees were assigned to groups based on their subject/discipline preference. There were five groups in total, namely: (i) Allied Health: Nursing, Psychology, and Speech/Language, (ii) Law, Social Work, and Social Justice, (iii) Engineering, (iv) Medicine, and (v) Business, Management, and Administration. In addition, 10 youths concurrently worked as research assistants with professors (see below).

The program involved attendance at workshops that were held on Saturdays. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, mentees could not attend the workshops in person. Zoom links were sent out in advance for each workshop session.

Mentees that were selected for the program were assigned to either a mentorship or research assistant stream. Youths in the mentorship stream were required to complete a group project with mentorship from an undergraduate student and submit a 6- to 10-page group paper at the end of the program. Youths in the research stream were required to complete a paid research placement with a mentor who held a faculty position at the University of Alberta, as well as submit a 2-page report at the end of the program.

SUMMARY OF EACH DAY

SEPTEMBER 1 – OPENING

September 1, 2020 was the official opening day of the Black Youth Leadership and Mentorship Program. It was attended by 10 Black faculty, 27 Black high school youths, eight university students/research assistants, four administrative staff members, and one librarian.

A welcome address was delivered by the Program Lead, Dr. Bukola Salami. Dr. André McDonald, who was program co-lead at the time, also delivered a welcome address. They were followed by welcome addresses from Dr. Wendy Rodgers, Deputy Provost, and Dr. Greta Cummings, Dean of Nursing.

Steering Committee members, who are Black faculty at the University of Alberta, gave brief statements on life at university, their work, and how they achieved their careers. A member of the Advisory Committee also gave a brief statement on challenges facing Black youths. Dr Bukola Salami presented an overview of the program. This was followed by discussions about administrative issues, access to the library, and any outstanding registration issues.

The main objective of the opening day was for students to be introduced to University of Alberta Black faculty. Students reported they found the experience enriching.

SUMMARY OF EACH DAY

SEPTEMBER 5 – PREPARING FOR UNIVERSITY AND CAREER PLANNING

This workshop was attended by 10 Black faculty, 32 Black high school youths, eight university students/research assistants, and one administrative staff member.

A Faculty career panel comprised of Black professors was held in the morning. Members of the career panel spoke to the mentees about themselves, addressing the following questions:

- i) How best can Black youths position themselves for success at the University?
- ii) Please describe your program of research.
- iii) Please describe your career path, including any previous job you had prior to becoming a professor. What do you like about the job? What skills or education did you need to get the job?
- iv) What is your advice for Black high school youths who are planning to attend university? What can they do in high school to position themselves for success at the University of Alberta?
- v) What can high school students do to increase their chances of gaining admission to university? What are essential components of a letter of application to university?
- vi) What opportunities exist at the University of Alberta that Black students are often not aware of or do not access? (Some examples are Undergraduate Research Experience, Counselling service, advantage of attending Augustana campus, Alberta Innovates Summer Experience.)

Following the career panel, mentees were split into smaller groups and a faculty member was assigned to each group as follows:

Law: four students and one professor

Social Sciences: four students and three professors

Medicine and Life Science: 10 students and two professors

Engineering and Physical Science: one student and two professors

Nursing and Psychology: eight students and two professors

Business: five students and one professor

SUMMARY OF EACH DAY

SEPTEMBER 5 – PREPARING FOR UNIVERSITY AND CAREER PLANNING CONT.

The discussions that took place in each group followed the format highlighted below:

- i) Each youth identified his/her career goal and plan to achieve their goal.
- ii) Youths discussed their fears and concerns about university and the challenges they thought they would encounter.
- iii) Professors guided youths in exploring some of the ways to ensure success at university.

Later in the afternoon, Dr. Bukola Salami (the Project Lead) introduced group work. Each group started work on a project related to their own discipline of interest. The guidelines for group work were as follows:

- i) Introduce yourself;
- ii) Identify your team goal;
- iii) Identify your values;
- iv) Identify your expectations of each other and for the project;
- v) Identify how you would resolve conflict; and
- vi) Brainstorm ideas for project.

Overall, mentees found this workshop stimulating. They expressed that they really enjoyed it and learned a lot during the sessions. Some comments made by mentees after this workshop are highlighted below:

“My reasons for my answer in question number four are because, we got to hear more about our peers and what they are thinking about doing in the future. We got advice on some strategies and different resources to help us in post secondary, and a bit more personal advice from a professor who is working in our field of interest.”

SUMMARY OF EACH DAY

SEPTEMBER 5 – PREPARING FOR UNIVERSITY AND CAREER PLANNING CONT.

“Because I got to understand why everyone else in the room wanted to take the same course as me and it was very educational.”

“I liked talking together in the small groups where we kind of have the same goal.”

“I felt that it was very informative and helped answer some of the questions I had about being a Black lawyer in Canada.”

“Hearing about the experiences of older Black people in fields that are predominately white was completely surreal because I haven't gotten this much insight before.”

“I was able to receive a direct answer instantly and if I had follow up question, I got an answer right away.”



SUMMARY OF EACH DAY

SEPTEMBER 12 – CONDUCTING LITERATURE SEARCHES AND LITERATURE REVIEWS

Forty-one people attended this workshop, including mentees, mentors, speakers, and research personnel. This workshop, led by Allison Sivak, a librarian from JW Scott Health Sciences Library, focused on teaching the mentees how to conduct literature searches and reviews. The presentation covered the use of library databases to find academic publications and other search strategies. Mentees were assigned topics for a literature review based on their subject of interest. PhD students and post-doctoral fellows at the University of Alberta mentored the high school students in small group sessions.

The assigned literature review topics were as follows:

- **Allied Health: Nursing, Psychology, and Speech/Language:** What is the role of diverse health professionals in addressing the mental health of Black people in Canada?
- **Law, Social Work, and Social Justice:** What can be done by diverse professionals such as lawyers, social workers, educators, and criminologists in addressing racism in schools?
- **Engineering:** Conduct a literature or internet review on how engineering can be used to improve the lives of Black populations in developing countries. Provide a summary of the improvements and the net benefits for a region, country, or local community.
- **Medicine:** Complete a review of the literature on bone marrow transplant as a treatment for sickle cell disease. Develop recommendations for physicians on how to treat patients with sickle cell disease who are undergoing bone marrow transplant.
- **Business, Management, and Administration:** What is the role of leadership in addressing racism within organizations?

During this workshop, mentees converged in their smaller breakout groups to brainstorm how to tackle their assigned literature search/review topic. By the end of the workshop, each group came up with an outline that they planned to use as a guide to successfully conduct their literature search and review. This activity helped to achieve the objective of this session, which was to introduce the youths to the concept and steps required to carry out a literature review. Overall, mentees found this session really helpful and engaging, which was evident in some of their comments below:

SUMMARY OF EACH DAY

SEPTEMBER 12 – CONDUCTING LITERATURE SEARCHES AND LITERATURE REVIEWS CONT.

“I enjoyed discussing my subject and paper with my group members.”

“My group gets along great and we all have good ideas!”



SUMMARY OF EACH DAY

SEPTEMBER 19 – IMPROVING YOUR WRITING SKILLS

This workshop was attended by 38 people. This workshop was facilitated by the Centre for Writers. This was a highly engaging session where mentees learned different techniques to help enhance their writing and produce university-level work. Multiple breakout sessions took place where mentees examined various pieces of work written by other university students and performed a reverse outline to determine the main idea of the body of work. This strategy helped mentees to understand how to identify good and bad writing styles. One of the main aims of the Black Youth Mentorship Program was to increase the rate of university entry and completion rates for Black youth. Learning about university writing early is beneficial to students because they can begin to apply these tools early on, and have a head start amongst their peers. This workshop gave students insight into writing at a university level.

Overall, mentees found this workshop helpful and provided positive feedback, as highlighted below:

“The speakers were fun and made my mind think in creative ways.”

“It had a lot of information and interactive.”

“I enjoyed being retaught some aspects to the academic process. I found the presenter very engaging and quite enthusiastic as well.”

“I found the presentation to be very informative and gave me a wealth of knowledge.”

SUMMARY OF EACH DAY

SEPTEMBER 26 – THRIVING IN UNIVERSITY: A CAREER PANEL WITH UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF BLACK YOUTH

This workshop was attended by 33 mentees. This workshop consisted of two sessions: (i) a panel of six university students who spoke about thriving in the university and career goals/path and (ii) a discussion around economics in relation to Black youth.

Youths were introduced to a panel of six guests who spoke about their respective disciplines, career path, and future career goals as well their involvement with student associations on campus. This session exposed students to Black undergraduate and graduate students in various fields, fostering a sense of community and belonging. The guests addressed questions the students had about dealing with issues of racism or discrimination they may experience in their fields of study.

Dr. Marvin Washington, a Professor of Strategy, Entrepreneurship, and Management, spoke about the economic empowerment of Black youths. He spoke to the youths regarding the opportunities that a post-secondary education can afford an individual, while illustrating to the mentees that obtaining a college education is only one path to economic empowerment. This workshop aimed to introduce mentees to pathways to financial success. Which would consequently improve their full participation in society and the economy. The youths reported positive experiences following this workshop:

“The presenter had some extremely useful advice and insights.”

“The presenter talked specifically about how to follow your steps in life and what you much learn after every step.”

“It was very informal and interesting, I liked how he was relating to things within his own life, and really getting the point across. The university students were also very interesting, sharing their own experiences.”

SUMMARY OF EACH DAY

OCTOBER 3 – EFFECTIVE STUDY SKILLS, EXPERIENCE OF APPLYING FOR AWARDS, FINANCING YOUR STUDIES

This workshop was attended by 30 mentees. This workshop involved a session on effective study skills facilitated by the Centre for Writers, a career panel session, and a session on finances. The session on effective study skills was highly interactive. Mentees learned techniques that would enable them to absorb more material over a shorter period of time. Mentees converged in breakout groups to complete exercises on how to pre-read by reading headings and subheadings to prepare their brain for the information it is about to receive.

Often, high school students struggle when entering university because they do not know how to study effectively given the much faster pace compared to high school. This workshop aimed to help circumvent the initial shock of the academic rigor of university.

During the career panel session, three professionals, one nutritionist, one nurse, and one psychologist spoke about their career paths and answered questions related to motivation, success in their career, and their plans for the future.


Finally, the session on finances involved discussions about funding post-secondary education and applying for scholarships. During this session, the two speakers Alleson Mason, a PhD candidate and Dr. Bukola Salami shared personal experiences and offered advice on sources of funding and application processes. In addition to this, representatives from the Royal Bank of Canada (RBC) delivered a talk about budgeting, money management, processes involved in applying for a credit card, managing student loans, and keeping a healthy credit score.

Feedback from this workshop included the following:

“It was very informative”

“Very engaging happy to hear their stories”

“They were very inspiring”



“They were very interesting, in the panel hearing how hard people are working and have worked was very motivational; I just liked hearing their stories. The post secondary presentation was also very interesting, because I had learned a lot about what to do and expect. It also was very informal, especially the university expenses calculator, I never knew it could be so much to go to university. The RBC presentation was also very informal and added a different aspect to the day (ex: the use of the live q&a).”

SUMMARY OF EACH DAY

OCTOBER 10 – BRAND AND INTERVIEW, PUBLIC SPEAKING, MENTAL HEALTH PROMOTION

This workshop was attended by 32 mentees. Three elements were integrated into this workshop. First, a presentation was delivered by the Chair of the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity committee for the Non-Academic Staff Association at the University of Alberta on public speaking, communication, and professionalism in higher education and the workplace. The speaker described professionalism and discussed methods to help one achieve and maintain the level required. There was thorough discussion about the importance of professionalism in progressing one's career, and how focus on race as opposed to execution of tasks has hindered the ability of Black people to fully participate and reach their maximum professional potential. Furthermore, the speaker spoke on the importance of communication, emphasizing the need for mentees to speak up when they have something to say irrespective of how different they look, or sound, compared to everyone else around them.

Second, the on-campus manager of RBC delivered a talk on why branding matters. This presentation mainly focused on how to create and maintain a positive brand, and how to relay your brand to potential employers in a sophisticated and timely manner.

Mentees were given the opportunity to practice an "elevator pitch" by answering the questions, "Who are you?", "What is unique about you/what do you have to offer?", and "suggestion of a next step". Additionally, a few of the youths volunteered to share their pitch with the rest of the group and feedback was provided by the presenter.

The day concluded with a session by Dr. Sophie Yohani, an Associate Professor of Counselling Psychology, who delivered a presentation on the mental health of Black youth. She gave a clinical definition of mental health and how it is perceived in the Black community. The session was interactive and mentees were able to ask questions and also make suggestions based on personal experiences or experiences of people that are close to them.

This session was very interactive and it was evident that mentees could relate to many of the issues discussed around mental health. Some mentee comments are highlighted below:

SUMMARY OF EACH DAY

OCTOBER 10 – BRAND AND INTERVIEW, PUBLIC SPEAKING, MENTAL HEALTH PROMOTION CONT.

“I have experienced disregard to my mental health.”

“The speaker for the first session was very lively and had a great energy about her, she related to topics that are happening in our current lives, which I don't believe any other speaker has done and that made the whole presentation much more enjoyable and interesting. The topic of mental health in the breakout rooms was very interesting because I got to hear the opinions and thoughts of kids my age and colour on topics that have happened in my life or may happen in the future.”



SUMMARY OF EACH DAY

OCTOBER 17 – LEADERSHIP AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

This workshop was attended by 33 mentees. The purpose of this workshop was to learn about leadership and the skills required to be a leader. Mentees were encouraged to reflect on their own leadership journeys, as well as identify goals and necessary actions needed to strengthen their abilities and potential as leaders. The presentation was a full-day workshop, and covered a variety of topics, including the different styles of leadership, the characters of leaders, goal setting, leading in times of conflict, and key pieces of advice to take on a leadership role.

The presentation was broad enough to appeal to the diverse interests of the mentees. Some mentees were more interested in discussing the characters of leaders, while others were more interested in key pieces of advice for their leadership journey. Many of the mentees, however, engaged with the goal-setting activity in the presentation, in which they were asked to set 25 leadership goals they would like to achieve in the next five years. This workshop provided experiential and work-integrated learning opportunities as well as facilitated the development of technical and soft skills required for success as a leader.

Overall, mentees enjoyed the interactive nature of this workshop and reported on how it will help them to identify resources to improve their leadership skills as a Black youth. Some comments are highlighted below:

“I feel that it really hit me there since it was speaking directly to me as a Black Person and it mentioned stuff that were rather significant, especially in today's world.”

“Gave a lot of wisdom.”

SUMMARY OF EACH DAY

OCTOBER 22 – VIRTUAL CAMPUS TOUR

The virtual campus tour consisted of two undergraduate students guiding the youth throughout campus. The presentation began with each of the guides giving a brief background about why they chose the University of Alberta and involved them giving the youth tips about choosing a school that best fit them. They systematically went through the buildings on campus and highlighted important things such as which faculties each building was associated with, resources available, study spaces, and so on. The tour guides emphasized places on campus such as the Administration Building, and specific areas in the Students' Union Building such as the Academic Support Centre. Additionally, the students introduced the youth to the vast number of clubs and associations on campus, and how to get involved. They each touched on how participating in these activities has given them the opportunity to make new friends and enjoy a full university experience. Lastly, the guides spoke about how they each financed their education. They gave the youth resources for locating scholarships, bursaries, grants, and provided information about the costs associated with university outside of tuition.

The campus tour was detailed and certainly gave the youth a thorough glimpse of the space they may soon be navigating. It provided the youth with insight into university life that is often overlooked or not mentioned by administration during the typical high school tours. Furthermore, it gave the attendees a head start in thinking about which clubs and organizations they may want to get involved with once they reach university. It was a very authentic presentation that included both the pros and cons of university life. The tour guides also responded to questions from the youth that they may be uncomfortable asking in other circumstances, such as high school presentations. Overall, this presentation gave the youth the opportunity to be a university student for a day and better prepare them for the next chapter of their lives.



SUMMARY OF EACH DAY

OCTOBER 24 – THRIVING IN THE WORLD OF WORK, DEVELOPING A RESUME, PROFESSIONAL PORTFOLIO, AND INTERVIEW SKILLS

This workshop was attended by 34 mentees and included a panel of Black professionals who spoke to mentees about their individual careers and what a typical day looks like for them. The panel included doctors, lawyers, policy makers, engineers, business professionals, and nurses. The speakers were from across Canada, and this enabled the mentees to learn about career opportunities within and outside of Alberta. This was a very engaging session, as the speakers answered a variety of questions from mentees regarding professional advancement. Additionally, there was a session facilitated by speakers from “Careers: The Next Generation”. This session focused on showing the mentees how to prepare a resume and tailor their resume to a specific job opening.

The main aims this session addressed were increasing leadership skills of Black youth, fostering a sense of community, creating a positive cultural identity for Black students, and increasing the post-secondary entry and completion rate for Black youths. Feedback provided by mentees at the end of this workshop is highlighted below:

“This helped me to better my resume and gave me a greater understanding of the entire topic.”

“It felt extremely useful with university applications coming up which are more or less rather similar.”

“I've been wondering how I could touch up my resume/cover letter for a while because I haven't been very successful with job interviews. So now I know where it is I can improve and where to improve.”

“I really liked the information they told us about cover letters and resumes.”

“It was extremely informative. This presentation is also something that I can use throughout my lifetime and the tips on interviews were extremely helpful.”

SUMMARY OF EACH DAY

OCTOBER 31 – WORK ON GROUP PROJECTS

The youths spent the day working in groups to complete their assigned literature search/review topics. Research assistants supervised and provided guidance and feedback as mentees worked on their assignment. At the end of the project, students were to submit a report based on their assigned topic. This session provided youths with the opportunity to utilize the skills they learned in previous sessions relating to literature reviews, how to conduct literature searches, and improving writing skills. Mentees were engaged in discussions around the importance of Black students getting involved in research.

Mentees' work sessions aligned with goals of the program because they were being equipped with skills required for success in a post-secondary setting.



SUMMARY OF EACH DAY

NOVEMBER 7 – TACKLING RACISM IN CANADA

The Centre for Race and Culture presented an anti-racism workshop to mentees with the aims of developing a common language around anti-racism, building an understanding of key concepts related to anti-racism work, and exploring ways to improve skills in anti-racism practice.

The workshop started with the presenters introducing a list of important terms related to racism. They also delved into the idea of bias. The presenters explored racism through a historical lens. They discussed the effects of colonization globally before focusing specifically on Canada's past of colonization and overt racism. They touched on the idea of phrenology and how it was used as a basis to continue racist practices and policies. Rather importantly, this presentation involved the discussion of intersectionality. Within this second part of the workshop, the presenters introduced additional terminology including interpersonal racism, institutional racism, internalized racism, and systemic racism. An interactive activity was carried out in which the youth were presented with a few scenarios and asked to discuss in breakout groups which dimension of racism they believed was the most prevalent in the scenario and why.

This workshop targeted a few of the primary objectives of this program. First and foremost, it gave tangible tools that will surely increase the ability of the youth to tackle issues of racism. Additionally, it created awareness of issues affecting the full participation of Black youth in society by providing examples of racially based systemic and institutional practices. Lastly, it served to create a positive cultural identity for the youth, as the presenters highlighted the success of Black people in our country despite these barriers, validated the stories and experiences shared by the youth, and reassured them of their worth.

Overall, everyone was very engaged in the discussions and the facilitators received a positive response.

SUMMARY OF EACH DAY

NOVEMBER 14 – BLACK HISTORY, AFRO QUIZ

This workshop was attended by 29 mentees. Professor Emeritus Jennifer Kelly aided by Alleson Mason delivered a presentation on Black history in the field of education. Mentees analyzed political images published in the Edmonton Journal in 1911. These images depicted the unwelcome attitudes Albertans had towards Black people trying to work in Alberta. Mentees engaged in discussions around the Alberta school curriculum and how certain topics are not taught in high schools, and how they wanted to change this.

Later during this session was a presentation by the Council of Canadians of African and Caribbean Heritage. The discussions were based on intersectionality and the multiple identities that one has as a youth living in the diaspora. This session was very comforting for the students as they shared similar struggles of being a Black student in Canada with each other and were consoled to know that others understood what they were going through. The day ended on a fun lighter note as the students participated in “Afro Quiz,” a jeopardy-style game based on Black history.

The main aims this session addressed were increasing knowledge on Black history, fostering a sense of belonging based on shared Black experiences, and understanding the complexity and intersectionality of Black identity. The success of this session was evident through the positive feedback received from mentees. All mentees found this workshop informative, empowering, and educational.

SUMMARY OF EACH DAY

NOVEMBER 21 – DIVERSITY IN CANADA: INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

This workshop was attended by 30 mentees. Earlier in the Black Youth Leadership and Mentorship Program, youths were tasked with designing an official logo that accurately represents its tenets; the best logo would be used as the official logo of the program in the future and the winners would receive a prize. Youths started working on their designs in September. At the beginning of this session, the winners of the logo design competition were announced.

The creation of the logo, as well as the development of the description explaining the logo's thought process, is a clear example of how the program facilitated technical and soft skills development. The process of developing the logo was an experience that encouraged youth to reflect on their communities and what the BYMP program represents. The logos and their explanations are given below.

Logo 1: The Winning Logo



CREATORS:
SAFIYYAH ONI AND NASRINA OMER

Explanation:

We chose green as our main color as it represents ambition, growth, financial prosperity, and successful advancement in life. We believe that all of these ideals are what the Mentorship Program represent and strives to inspire within the Black Youth. The maple leaf in the background serves to represent the youth as being Canadian and its Black color to show our connection with the Black community. The figure in the center shows the Black youth developing into better leaders. The graduation cap is added to show that the youth has graduated or are going to graduate. Both leadership and higher graduation rates are both core objectives of the BYMP which we both thought should be represented in our logo.

SUMMARY OF EACH DAY

NOVEMBER 21 – DIVERSITY IN CANADA: INDIGENOUS PEOPLES CONT.

Logo 2: Second Place



CREATOR(S):
ANONYMOUS

Explanation:

The logo I created was inspired by what I have learned throughout my days in the program and also learned about myself as a Black individual. The title of being a Black individual in society is weighed heavily, sometimes in a negative form. During this program, I was able to learn and acknowledge the brighter aspects of being a person of color rather than from the perspective of society's standards as a person of Black ethnicity. In my logo, I wanted to truly highlight that idea. That is why I created more detail and style to the acronym letter B, which stands for Black. I believe that this program provides more than just advice for future goals and ideas, or address certain issues in our society related to our race. The BYMP provides us with advice and inspiration so we can grow as our own unique individuals and have greater success in a brighter future. This why I created the graduation cap with different cultural flags on top of the "B" and having the letter "B" filled with plants emphasizing the thought of growth. In summary, the logo is an expression that all Black youths have a great chance at success no matter their background. We all wish to reach success and we are sometimes on sure where to start, this program is a great place to begin, filled with encouragement and wise words. The Black Youth Mentorship Program really helps all individuals grow as their own unique selves, not just based on ethnicity.

SUMMARY OF EACH DAY

NOVEMBER 21 – DIVERSITY IN CANADA: INDIGENOUS PEOPLES CONT.

Logo 3: Third Place



CREATORS:

JEWEL CHIDIEBERE, SEDIO OMATLA,
DAVION COHOON, AND RAMADAN
MIELERE

Explanation:

The Black Youth Leadership and Mentorship Program has become a staple in my life, filled with wisdom, incredible stories, inspirational speakers, and amazing like-minded youth. For these two logos, I used five colours that I feel encompasses some of the key achievements of this program. The first colour is red. I chose that colour as it represents self-confidence. Personally, this program has really helped me come out of my shell, speaking to people I would not have ordinarily piped up to speak to, making friends and being inspired, being told and shown by impactful teachers and professionals that I can achieve what I want, that I can succeed no matter the discrimination or odds stacked against me. I can only imagine how my fellow mentees and RAs feel as well. Green, the next colour, is for health. The speakers you brought helped us build healthy habits and patterns not just for high school, but for beyond. Skills like how to write a resume, manage credit and finance, studying and writing skills, and saving skills, all of them critical to a healthy and positive lifestyle, all of them a stamp of success. Not every youth is exposed to these lessons, and we all as a collective are blessed to have such experts and academics guiding us. Next, yellow, for the deep well of knowledge that this program has exposed us to. Teaching and training us simultaneously is quite a feat, and I cannot articulate the extent of what I have learned, and the impact it will forever have on my life and the lives of my fellow mentees and RAs is pretty much immeasurable. Brown represents practicality and security, clearly for the way the knowledge and assorted benefits of this program makes us more adept in our practical skill sets and results in more security in our futures. Lastly, orange, for the joy and energy of our RAs, mentees, professors, experts, and assorted visitors have brought. We have had so much fun, spread so much energy and kindness. It really has created a community among us.

SUMMARY OF EACH DAY

NOVEMBER 21 – DIVERSITY IN CANADA: INDIGENOUS PEOPLES CONT.

Logo 4



CREATOR(S):
ANONYMOUS

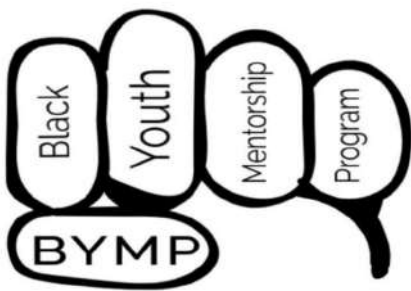
Explanation:

Brown Squares: The brown squares represent the different shades of Black youth that could be in the program. It is to show that no matter how dark or light you are you are still Black and will be able to find that representation. My motivation for this design was colorism and prejudice towards darker skinned people. It is a very prominent thing in our society; the different colours standing together with the white letter represent how we are all equal, and are able to find a place together harmoniously, because we are the future.

SUMMARY OF EACH DAY

NOVEMBER 21 – DIVERSITY IN CANADA: INDIGENOUS PEOPLES CONT.

Logo 5



CREATOR(S):
ANONYMOUS

Explanation:

Fist/Fist bump - Depending on your perspective, the logo can either look like a fist or a fist bump to you. I chose to have the fist/fist bump represent the BYMP because the Black fist represents solidarity and unity among Black people and the fist bump represents friendship and respect. The fist/fist bump represents what I and many others are experiencing in the BYMP. We feel like we belong in the program because of our shared life experiences, we are being represented, we are given the opportunity to make new friends and possibly form lifelong connections.

Shape - Another cool thing about the logo is that the logos shape spells BYMP.

SUMMARY OF EACH DAY

NOVEMBER 21 – DIVERSITY IN CANADA: INDIGENOUS PEOPLES CONT.

Logo 6



CREATOR:
DAVION COHOON

Explanation:

The logo represents the diversity of the bymp to the right showing multiple countries with majority Black population and home countries to many of the young leaders in the program. Through all the flags there is a graduation cap that we used to represent the group's drive to succeed. On the right is a basic style of the BLM fist in the air under the Canadian flag basically showing the Black population of Canada fighting to be over achievers in Canada.

SUMMARY OF EACH DAY

NOVEMBER 21 – DIVERSITY IN CANADA: INDIGENOUS PEOPLES CONT.

Logo 7



CREATOR(S):
ANONYMOUS

Explanation:

This logo represents the power and strength that education provides. The fist in the logo represents Black power and the pride that we have in our race. The book at the top represents the influence that education has and how we are uplifted through it. I chose the University of Alberta coat of arms to represent the Black faculty of the UofA community leading this program. I also chose the various doodles as a representation of what we are receiving through this program. This program is giving us many skills to succeed in post secondary education.

SUMMARY OF EACH DAY

NOVEMBER 21 – DIVERSITY IN CANADA: INDIGENOUS PEOPLES CONT.

Following the announcement of the logo winner was a talk about Diversity in Canada, particularly pertaining to the Indigenous population. Topics discussed involved the importance of land acknowledgements, sharing the stories and histories of Canada's many Indigenous nations, explaining treaty and what it means to be a treaty person in Canada, as well as debunking misconceptions held about Indigenous peoples and Indigenous cultures.

Mentees were thoroughly engaged throughout the presentation. Many questions were asked and comments made, indicating an interest in learning more about the content and knowledge the facilitators were sharing. The session piqued the interest of participants, particularly when noting the parallels between Indigenous cultures and customs and African and Caribbean cultures and customs.

SUMMARY OF EACH DAY

NOVEMBER 28 – FINAL DAY AND GROUP PRESENTATIONS

The Black Youth Leadership and Mentorship Program concluded on November 28, 2020 with a series of presentations by the mentees. This session was attended by faculty members and speakers from past workshops and events that fostered a feeling of community. Provost Dr. Steve Dew was also in attendance. He spoke about the University of Alberta, encouraged the mentees to enroll in post-secondary education, and highlighted the importance of the BYMP at the University of Alberta.

Each group delivered a 10-minute presentation to share with the group the findings from their research papers. The nursing and psychology group discussed mental health and how it affects the Black community, and also touched on issues that affect the mental health of the LGBTQ+ Black community. The engineering group discussed issues pertaining to plastic waste disposal and its effects on the African community and suggestions on how to solve the problem. The business group discussed the issues of racism in organizations, how racism occurs, and what those in charge can do to change it. The medicine group discussed sickle cell disease and its treatment. Lastly, the social science group discussed issues affecting Black students in the education system.

At the end of this event, mentees agreed to write an opinion editorial to highlight the challenges faced by Black youths in the education system. The opinion editorial was written and published online

[.\(<https://edmontonjournal.com/opinion/columnists/opinion-its-time-to-address-systemic-inequities-faced-by-Black-youth-in-school>\)](https://edmontonjournal.com/opinion/columnists/opinion-its-time-to-address-systemic-inequities-faced-by-Black-youth-in-school).

Overall, 96% of mentees reported that the program met or exceeded their expectations.

EVALUATION OF SHORT- AND MEDIUM-TERM GOALS

SHORT-TERM GOALS

- i. Increased knowledge on the issues facing Black youths' full participation in the society and economy.

Mentees were enthusiastic about learning about how racism and discrimination negatively affect economic outcomes for Black youths and their participation in society. The majority of the mentees expressed increased knowledge about these issues and how to navigate them. Some of the responses of the mentees to the question “Describe how the mentorship program has changed your views about racism, Black youth empowerment and other issues facing Black youths” are highlighted below:



“The interesting presentations taught me about the historical part of racism in Canada, which isn't talked about as much as it should be, and it showed me how to become more financially literate and other forms of empowerment to Black youths. Also taught me more about the struggles facing Black students in schools.”

“This program has changed my views about racism in the sense that before this program I was pretty ignorant when it came to identifying racism. I never really thought about it much because I thought I had not experienced it in my life. Being a part of this mentorship has shown me that I have experienced forms of racism including self racism: in the way I choose to be addressed or change the way I talk to be more accepted in certain situations. These are things that I never identified before.”

“The program truly opened my perspectives on racial issues and stereotyping in my community and ways to handle it. It is truly helpful especially when getting into an environment where I am more likely to come across such matters.”

“Before the program I believed that racial inequality was a small issue in contemporary times and people have worked beyond that. However, in this program I have learned that this is wrong, racial inequality is still present and is something we need to work on. I also learned that it is many different sectors as well such as education and in hospitals. Because of this program I have changed my view on this topic and will work to become a more active member in my community.”

“I think I've learned a lot on how to deal with racism, and how to deal with the financial burdens that disproportionately impact Black youths.”

“The program allowed me to realize the different forms of racism that was around me. Some of these forms I had not realized was racism until it was discussed within the program, and I realized that it was a more subtle form. I think that the program really opened my eyes to what the world is like whilst also providing me ways that I could combat racism and remain standing strong.”

EVALUATION OF SHORT- AND MEDIUM-TERM GOALS CONT.

ii. Increased knowledge of resources to support post-secondary education, including finances, writing support and study skills

At the beginning of the mentorship program, 14 of the 28 youths (50%) that completed the evaluation survey correctly mentioned resources to support post-secondary education (including finances, writing support, and study skills). This number increased to 14 of the 18 youths (77%) who completed the survey at the end of the mentorship program.

In addition, some responses by the mentees to the question “Describe how this program has contributed (or not) to your plans towards your education and career?” are highlighted below:



“The program has introduced me to different ways that I can support myself financially, as well as taught me how to better budget and handle my money. To me this was extremely beneficial as most of what I learned I hadn't known prior to being told about it. I believe that what I learned will greatly support me in my future when I apply for scholarships, and how to handle the money should I receive any.”

“It has taught me important research and writing skills I'll definitely need in my education and career.”

“This program has contributed to my plans towards my education and career because it has given me many tips and pieces of advice on not only what to do when I go into post-secondary but when I eventually start working. It has given me a clearer view on how my life will be in post-secondary and that was extremely helpful.”

“Organization, juggling this and school helped me to organize my schedule better, because while in university I will have a job and be in clubs. I’m also more organized with my money, the RBC presentations were SO GOOD. As well as understanding that no matter the colour of your skin you are capable.”

EVALUATION OF SHORT- AND MEDIUM-TERM GOALS

cont.

iii. Increased knowledge of resources to promote and strengthen leadership skills

When asked on the first day of the program to list resources that can help to develop leadership skills, seven of the 14 mentees (50%) who responded to the question correctly listed such resources. On the final day of the program, 11 mentees provided responses to the question and nine (82%) successfully itemized specific resources. Additionally, mentees were asked on the final day of the program to describe how the program contributed to increasing their leadership skills. Some of their responses are highlighted below:



"It has given me skills that will be useful when coordinating a team later in life."

"Knowing that there are different kind of leaderships and roles out in the world and a lot of Black individual are excelling at them."

"I believe this program gave me a chance to strengthen my confidence in my roles as a leader and team worker. As well, I was able to develop my academic writing with guidance and build a base of people I can discuss with on various subjects."

EVALUATION OF SHORT- AND MEDIUM-TERM GOALS

cont.

iv. Increased knowledge on strategies to tackle racism and discrimination

Mentees learned strategies and mechanisms to tackle racism and discrimination during this mentorship program, and this is evident in the following statements:

“It has made it clear that there is a lot of racism and made it clear that there is still a lot of work to be done throughout society and Black youth empowerment is such a strong thing that every Black youth needs to feel like they belong to something.”

“Before the program I believed that racial inequality was a small issue in contemporary times and people have worked beyond that. However, in this program I have learned that this is wrong, racial inequality is still present and is something we need to work on. I also learned that it is many different sectors as well such as education and in hospitals. Because of this program I have changed my view on this topic and will work to become a more active member in my community.”

“It has given me the knowledge to assess situations and understand where the discriminations stem from and how to combat it. The program has made me also really aware of all that Black Canadians have done for Canada”

“I think I've learned a lot on how to deal with racism, and how to deal with the financial burdens that disproportionately impact Black youths.”

“The program allowed me to realize the different forms of racism that was around me. Some of these forms I had not realized was racism until it was discussed within the program, and I realized that it was a more subtle form. I think that the program really opened my eyes to what the world is like whilst also providing me ways that I could combat racism and remain standing strong.”

EVALUATION OF SHORT- AND MEDIUM-TERM GOALS

cont.

MEDIUM-TERM GOALS

i. Increased number of Black youths who begin and complete post-secondary education.

At the beginning of the BYMP, 75% of youths reported they were very likely to begin post-secondary education. By the end of the program, this proportion increased to 84%. Similarly, the proportion of youths who reported they were very likely to complete university increased from 61% at the beginning of the mentorship program to 84% at the end of the mentorship program.

ii. Increased number of Black youths targeting issues of racism and discrimination in the community

The proportion of mentees who reported they were willing and interested in leading projects related to tackling racism and discrimination increased from 89% on the first day of the program to 100% closer to the last day of the program.

iii. Improved cultural identity of Black youths

On the last day of the program, mentees were asked to select one of the following options in response to the statement “I feel proud to be a Black youth”: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, or Strongly Disagree.

A total of 24 of 25 youths (96%) selected “Strongly Agree” and 1 youth selected “Agree”. Overall, it was evident that mentees benefited enormously from the workshops throughout this program and felt a sense of community belonging by interacting with colleagues, mentors, speakers, and professionals who shared a similar heritage.

COMMENTS, SUGGESTIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Black Youth Leadership and Mentorship Program involved Black youths selected from across Edmonton, Alberta. This program successfully achieved its short- and medium-term goals as evaluated via online survey.

Feedback was sought from mentees as well as project personnel to help understand the strengths, challenges, and opportunities for improvement in a future version of this mentorship program. The strengths and challenges of the program are highlighted below.

STRENGTHS

- Grouping youths based on their subject of interest allowed them to easily communicate and work collaboratively amongst themselves.
- Opportunities for youths to relate to professionals/professors, especially in new emerging professions, was very empowering and eye-opening.
- The program also gave youth a unique networking opportunity to get in contact with a wide range of professionals in different fields and people in senior roles.
- Sessions with master's students and professors gave youth the opportunity to ask questions and learn about possible career paths.
- Pairing youths with mentors who had similar ethnic backgrounds provided a safe haven and had a profound effect on the youth.
- Undergraduate mentors were able to connect with students and provide peer support.
- The youth acquired skills that will help them prepare for university and beyond, including literature review, research, critical thinking, group engagement, resume writing, and self confidence.

COMMENTS, SUGGESTIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS cont.

CHALLENGES/RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

IN-PERSON PROGRAM

- Virtual media made it difficult to create a traditional teaching environment, and very challenging to provide support to youth who needed more help than others, e.g., with writing. This program was originally designed to be held in-person. However, restrictions related to COVID-19 did not permit the program to proceed as planned. Therefore, alternative arrangements had to be made for the program to be conducted virtually.

EVALUATION COMPLETION

- The completion rate of evaluation survey declined significantly over time and holding mentees accountable was difficult because the surveys were anonymous. Surveys should not be anonymous in future sessions. It is hoped that this will assist in holding mentees accountable and increase survey completion/return rate.

WORKLOAD

- Future mentorship programs should be held during summer months when they would not compete with mentees' school workload.

TIME MANAGEMENT

- Less time should be allotted to some workshops that were less interactive and more time allocated to other activities such as group projects, academic writing, literature searches, and reviews.
- More time should be assigned for discussions in breakout rooms.

COMMENTS, SUGGESTIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS cont.

CHALLENGES/RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

CONNECTION WITH SPEAKERS

- Access to information presented during sessions and sharing contact information of speakers should be done in case mentees need more information from them later or in the future.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND MOTIVATION

- Interviews should be conducted when selecting participants for a future program in addition to school grades. This will further assess their level of motivation and likelihood of completing the program.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the short- and medium-term objectives of this mentorship program were met. Despite a few drawbacks, especially relating to change of program from in-person to online due to COVID-19 restrictions, feedback received from participants and project personnel strongly suggest this program should be extended across a larger group of Black youths to improve outcomes relating to cultural identity, economic outcomes, and full participation in society.

Overall, this mentorship program was successful, and mentees expressed how well rounded it was, that it exceeded their expectations, and that they would recommend it to their friends and families. The program created a sense of community among the mentees as well as the Black professors and graduate students who were involved. It was empowering to see 17 Black professors across the different faculties at the University of Alberta. The program has garnered public recognition and has been featured as number six of 20 stories that defined the 2020 year at the University of Alberta by Folio, the University's journalism medium.

PUBLISHED ARTICLES RELATED TO THIS PROJECT INCLUDE:

- U of A mentorship program helps Black high-schoolers succeed in university.
<https://www.ualberta.ca/folio/mentorship-program-helps-Black-high-schoolers-succeed-in-university.html>
- U of A leadership mentorship program for Black youth 'eye-opening'.
<https://edmontonjournal.com/news/local-news/u-of-a-leadership-program-mentors-Black-youth>
- Opinion: It's time to address systemic inequities in schools for Black youth.
<https://edmontonjournal.com/opinion/columnists/opinion-its-time-to-address-systemic-inequities-faced-by-Black-youth-in-school>

The following documents are students' essays that have not been corrected therefore errors may be present.

**Factors Affecting the Mental Health of Black Canadians and the Role of Health
Professionals in Addressing Them: A Literature Review**

Ogheneruona Chris – Oberiko, Mielere Ramadan, Jewel Chidiebere, Davion Cohoon, Omatla
Sedio, Marwa Salah, Marwa Adam
Olga Loggale

Factors Affecting the Mental Health of Black Canadians and the Role of Health Professionals in Addressing Them: A Literature Review

Mental health can be defined as the psychological and behavioural state of the mind and body (Waqas et al., 2020). A compromised mental state may produce conflicts within an individual's everyday life, impacting their thought processes and cognition, and thus interfering with their quality of life. While mental health is often associated with pathological states and negative connotations, largely due to societal pressures and stigma which may both contribute to mental illness, it can also be viewed in a positive light. Through individualized self-care practices, one can positively contribute to their mental health and overall well-being.

In continuation of the discussion on pathological mental states, it is noted that mental health is an umbrella term that encompasses a wide array of diseases and conditions. For example, some unfavourable mental states include depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and schizophrenia. Moreover, the attainment of some of these illnesses may occur following an experiences of prolonged and intense levels of stress and trauma, while other illnesses, such as bipolar disorder, can be genetically inherited and are highly prevalent within a family (Waqas et al., 2020). Bipolar disorder is well known and has been observed as a prevalent disorder worldwide. Additionally, some mental illnesses such as obsessive-compulsive disorder are harder to detect than others (Waqas et al., 2020) and increase the likelihood of incorrect diagnosis and likewise, incorrect treatment. Unfortunately, incorrect diagnoses either by an individual or a professional is not a rare occurrence and contributes to the lack of adequate treatment many are subjected to (Waqas et al., 2020).

The experiences that may lead to mental health problems are often heavily impacted by factors such as ethnicity, race, sex, and gender. Furthermore, these different groups of people can

have various definitions of what adverse mental health is based on how the experiences they share have affected them. A prominent example of this is the traumatic and negative experiences that Black people across Canada endure. For instance, the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) completed a thorough examination of inequities between Black Canadians and their counterparts and found that only 64% of Black women report good mental health as opposed to 77% of their white counterparts (Abdillahi & Shaw, 2020). In recognition of these mental health inequities, the PHAC has taken it upon themselves to launch an initiative geared towards promoting the mental health equity of Black Canadians (PHAC, 2020). Specifically, the government of Canada has offered funding to Black led community organizations, researchers, and other individuals alike to create culturally relevant programs that target determinants of mental health for Black Canadians. There is, of course, an extensive list of possible factors that can be targeted through this initiative. Likewise, there is a substantial number of factors that contribute to these negative experiences, and thus mental health, discussed in the literature. This review will focus on four specific factors that were consistently found within the literature. Here we will discuss the effects of immigration, racism, representation in the media, and lack of acceptance by others in the Black community on the mental health of Black Canadians. Following this, we will touch on the barriers that exist for Black Canadians who wish to gain access to mental health services. We will end our discussion with suggestions for how healthcare workers can aid in diminishing these barriers and improving the mental health of Black Canadians.

Immigration

Refugees

Although a large group of Black people in Canada were born here, a significant number have immigrated from various source countries and thus it is essential to understand how the immigration experience has affected them. There are three major immigration routes to Canada: economic class, family class, and refugee (Beiser & Hou, 2017). Although there are some similar factors influencing the mental health between all three categories, refugees tend to have a greater mental health disadvantage. Moreover, the percentage of African refugees admitted to Canada has been increasing (Simich et al., 2006). For example, in a study done on Sudanese newcomers, 84% of the sample population were refugees, whereas only 10% and 6% were family class or economic class, respectively. As a result of being uprooted from their homes due to violence or other devastating affairs, refugees tend to experience pre-migration trauma that may result in long-lasting PTSD, among other mental health issues (Beiser & Hou, 2017; Simich et al., 2006). Additionally, economic hardship faced by refugees post-migration serves to exacerbate their compromised mental health. In the sample of Sudanese newcomers, many expressed economic concerns, claiming that the Canadian government was not providing the monetary assistance they had expected (Simich et al., 2006). In fact, this contrast between expectations of life in Canada and the experienced reality are well associated with declining mental health. A large proportion of the Sudanese migrants who admitted to loss of sleep, depression, constant strain, and overall unhappiness also confessed that they were facing unemployment and economic hardships in Canada that they did not expect (Simich et al., 2006).

Acculturation Strategies

Another method to gain insight to the experiences of Black immigrants is to observe their level of integration. In particular, studies have looked at acculturation strategies, and associated social and demographic factors, to examine the mental well-being of immigrants in Canada.

Acculturation can be defined as the psychological and cultural changes that occur following contact between different cultural groups and their members (Berry & Hou, 2016). Four acculturation strategies have been identified based on the sense of belonging to both the home country and the receiving country. These strategies – integration, separation, assimilation, and marginalization – accommodate for the level of belonging felt by the immigrants, that is, either high or low. Integration, which is a high sense of belonging for both the source country and Canada, is the preferred strategy of many immigrants and is highly correlated with greater life satisfaction. Which strategy is adopted by immigrants is dependent on demographic and social antecedents. These include age at immigration, years since immigration, economic status, perceived discrimination, immigration class, and social capital. Of these factors, perceived discrimination, particularly as characterized by racism, has been found to be a strong predictor of poor life satisfaction. Discrimination leads to immigrants feeling rejected by the receiving country and may cause them to become more closely attached to their source country, forcing them into the separation strategy (Berry & Hou, 2016). Conversely, immigrants may attempt assimilation strategies to compensate for their lack of fitting in or find themselves marginalized while trying to decide which cultural group to identify more with. As Black Canadians are often subjected to discrimination based on their race or ethnicity, many occupy the separation category, and some eventually adopt assimilation and marginalization strategies. Unfortunately, separation strategies are associated with lower ratings of life satisfaction, and marginalization has a significantly lower mental health rating than any other strategy (Berry & Hou, 2016). These findings demonstrate how the difficulties experienced by Black people who immigrate to Canada may be worsened due to hostile and unwelcoming communities.

Racism

Internalized Racism

As mentioned above, the Black population, both in Canada and around the world, experience persistent and overwhelming racial discrimination. This nationally experienced racial discrimination has been found to be highly correlated with the increased rates of mental health issues seen within the Black population in Canada (Manuel, 2018). Furthermore, recent research has exhibited the effects racism has on the mental health of Black youth. A cafe conversation with Black Canadian youths demonstrated how over time, racial discrimination may lead to internalized racism (Salami, 2020). Internalized racism can be defined as the belief of one's own race as inferior because of experienced racial oppression (Centre for Race and Culture, 2020). This internalization is extremely harmful as it usually involves the individuals believing they do not belong within their community as their racial identity is not accepted or embraced. The low self-esteem and increased loneliness that may stem from this play a large role in the reduced mental health of Black Canadians.

Institutional Racism

Regrettably, it is often rare to come across a Black Canadian who has not experienced racism in a healthcare facility. Anti-Black practices are still visible and relevant in today's world and have affected how the Black population receives healthcare (Manuel, 2018). The branch of mental health care is situated within the broader healthcare system, and thus, the systemic racism prevalent in Canada's healthcare system has led to the Black demographic being disadvantaged and overrepresented in mental healthcare facilities. In an effort to examine health inequities between Black and White individuals, Veenstra & Patterson (2015), collected and reviewed data from the Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) and explicitly discussed the disparities within the healthcare system that they found. This research investigated how socio-economic

status, health behaviors, and body mass index affect the black-white disparities across the country. With support from the CCHS, the data in this study exhibits how a patient's race dictates their healthcare treatment. Further, this data showed that Black women were significantly less likely to report poor mental health than white women. The tendency of Black respondents to refrain from communicating mental health strains was tied to the lack of trust felt towards healthcare workers resulting from previous hostile encounters (Veenstra & Patterson, 2016).

Another study discussing why Black Canadians are unlikely to report mental health illnesses focuses on the role of institutional racism (McKenzie & Bhui, 2007). As the name suggests, institutional racism is that which occurs within institutions. It involves discriminatory treatment, unfair policies and practices, and inequitable opportunities and impacts based on race (Centre for Race and Culture, 2020). This study found that 19%-39% of Black Africans, Caribbeans, and Black-White mixed Caribbeans were involuntarily admitted into a mental health ward. Additional evidence suggested that Black and minority groups were less likely to be treated with psychotherapy and more likely to be coerced into using a medicated treatment. Black Canadians are often considered to be exaggerating the racial discrimination experienced within healthcare institutions. However, as this study has demonstrated, institutional racism has made it difficult for Black individuals to receive adequate mental healthcare. These racial experiences are prevalent and have been detrimental to the mental health of Black Canadians.

Representation

In our contemporary society we have access to social media platforms with a push of a button. How one sees themselves represented on those platforms is a key factor in mental health. Various studies have shown that representation in media through stereotypical themes and tropes

is one factor responsible for mental distress in Black Canadians. Specifically, representation in the beauty industry, mainstream media, and the news have been a focus in the literature and will likewise be the focus here.

Beauty Industry

The largely unpleasant portrayal of Black people in the media contributes both to the diminishing self-esteem and mental health of Black Canadians. Body image (BI) is defined as the “subjective sense of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with one’s body or physical appearance” (Chard et al., 2020). Body image involves a variety of concepts including weight, size, appearance and the satisfaction with these areas (Walker, 2020). These are interlinked with mental health issues that range from low self esteem, to anxiety, depression and even eating disorders. The beauty industry preys on the insecurities held within society through the countless images of picture-perfect models dispersed through the media. These images hold minuscule amounts of Black representation, with Black models being 6% of those involved in famous events such as New York Fashion Week (St.Philip, 2010). Furthermore, the favoured body type for female models has become thinner overtime (Walker, 2020). This brings forth an issue within the Black community as the natural body type for many Black women is curvy, and these body types are being disregarded in the fashion industry. Images and videos depicting these models as the standard are inescapable to Black Canadians due to the power of social media (Chard et al., 2020). This exposure has led to constant comparison and increased instances of body dissatisfaction.

Sociologists and psychologists have developed multiple theories to help describe the effect of media images on an individual’s self-image; self-discrepancy is one of the dominating theories (Walker, 2020). Self discrepancy theory explains how when an individual has an

idealized image of beauty and acknowledges the discrepancies between this ideal image and themselves, low self esteem and mental health related issues ensue (Walker, 2020). As a result of lingering colonial beliefs, the ideal standard of beauty displayed in media reflects Eurocentric features; features that many Black people do not possess. However, as a sort of loophole, media that chooses to represent Black people in the beauty industry will often employ those who have “white attributes” such as a small nose, and a thin figure without wide hips. These individuals have been labeled as “white people dipped in chocolate” (St.Philip, 2010). Thus, many Black Canadians are exposed to both White and Black models that they do not share similar appearances with, and often internalize these discrepancies. The internalization of Eurocentric beauty ideals by Black Canadians is further exemplified through harmful practices such as skin bleaching and hair perms or relaxers that aim to minimize the discrepancies felt by Black people. This is one reaction to the media consistently highlighting the desirability of features associated with White people such as fair skin and silky hair (Harper & Choma, 2019). The ideology of beauty that is centered around white features has been ubiquitous throughout the lives of Black Canadians.

Mainstream Media

An additional component that intrudes the mental well-being of Black Canadians is the film industry and the distorted Black characters broadcasted. Black consumers, including Canadians, watch television at a higher rate than any other demographic (Staton, 2019) yet, they are not properly represented in the film industry. Stereotypes are a key method of how the media expresses Blackness in television shows and films. Stereotypes are defined as “the cognitive derivations that people construct to help interpret their environments” (Vejar, 2019). Most films and television shows that Black Canadians consume originate from America. Although Black

Canadians can relate to some of the challenges that African Americans are facing, there are differences that exist between Canadians and Americans that are not portrayed on the tv screen, eliciting a false sense of identity. Stereotypes are considered as an extension of group identity (Vejar, 2019), and these false narratives affect Black Canadians mental state. These generalizations have been exhausted to their audiences to the point that these performances are internalized as how Black Canadians are. Black peoples also internalize some of these stereotypes making it hard to discern fact from fiction. Historically, Black females have been depicted as these caricatures, “often represented as unintelligent, in roles of servitude, or behaviorally and/or deviant” (Staton, 2019). The long-term exposure to the negative portrayal of Black characters alters Black Canadians self-image. The film industry is another platform used to indoctrinate beliefs of white superiority, with tropes like the white saviour being very common in films centered around the lives of people of colour (POC). Furthermore, themes of colourism arise when most of a cast is Black. Female lead roles in romantic movies are often light skin with a bouncy curl pattern, emphasizing the desirability of those traits.

News Media

Lastly, the portrayal of Black people showcased in news media can also diminish the mental health of Black Canadians. The news media tends to explicitly cover stories of Black Canadians with horrific videos and images that can be challenging to view and disturbs mental stability. Furthermore, as many newspapers in Canada are privately owned by wealthy white people, concerns about the dehumanization of Black victims and validity of stories involving Black people often arises (Hastings et al., 2020). To make matters worse, Black peoples are exposed to a different type of grieving called disenfranchised grief which results when grief is not “openly acknowledged, socially validated, or is publicly mourned” (Lawson, 2014). Due to

the media using language that reproduces negative stereotypes of Black people when reporting acts of violence, (Hastings et al., 2020), the process of grieving is tainted with the media's illustration of the events surrounding the death of the deceased person. Overall, this makes it more difficult for loved ones to peacefully grieve, as the process of grieving is often elongated, inducing mental tolls, and causing acute stress disorder. A prominent example of news media's influence is the testimony of a young Black Canadian when speaking about the aftermath of seeing his friend shot and killed. As many would, this young man suffered from sleepless nights, weight loss, and severe anxiety (Lawson, 2014). However, because he was one of the few to witness this death, this man was considered a suspect of this crime and was broadcasted in the media as one. Instead of being a tragedy, the story had become another statistic of Black on Black crime. Not only was this young man now viewed by his community as a criminal, but his grieving stage was prolonged, and the publicity caused him to fear for his life. This scenario is not uncommon in the Black community and can take a toll on the mental health of the individuals involved.

Lack of Acceptance

Anti-LGBTQ

Anti-LGBTQ+ attitudes within the Black community significantly contribute to the decline of mental wellness for thousands of Black Canadians. There are multiple roots and causes for the lack of acceptance for those a part of the LGBTQ+ community whose sexual identity intersects with their race. However, religiosity and the extremity of consequences for identifying as LGBTQ+ in largely Black populations stands out amongst other reasons.

Prejudice against gay people can be influenced by strong religious beliefs (Hill, 2013). This is supported by a study done on African American men resulting in the presumption that the

most significant reason for this prejudice is their religiosity, which was calculated by mass frequency of church attendance (Guittar & Pals, 2014). Although the specifics of how this conclusion was drawn is unclear and vague, the study ultimately suggests there's a stark connection between the strong influence of religious practice and the negative attitudes that have been developed towards LGBTQ+ individuals in the Black community.

This prevalence of the rejection of varying sexual identities in relation to religiosity are also presented by the stories of LGBTQ+ Black Canadian Refugees, Janine and Odu. Janine was born into a single-parent working-class family in Kingston Jamaica (Murray, 2014). "Janine said she could never come out to her family, as they're very religious and wouldn't accept it, 'it would be World War III'"(Murray, 2014). Similarly, Odu, who was born in Lagos, Nigeria was brought up as an avid Christ follower by his strictly religious parents (Murray, 2014). Odu fled Nigeria to escape possible persecution and death for his sexual identity. Unfortunately, Odu's story embodies the threat of violence against many LGBTQ+ people in Africa. There's little to no support for LGBTQ+ individuals in several parts of Africa, with 37 of 54 African countries maintaining laws that criminalize homosexuality (Jonas, 2012), or denying the existence of their LGBTQ+ members. Although there are laws in Canada to protect the wellbeing of LGBTQ+ members, Black Canadians who immigrate from an African country that upheld these laws still abide by these practices and treat the Black LGBTQ+'s within their local communities poorly. Canadian healthcare workers being unaware of this cultural transfer has led to the lack of effective, safe, anti-oppressive and culturally responsive mental health programming for LGBTQ+ Canadians. ("Promoting Health Equity: Mental Health of Black Canadians Fund - Implementations Stream - Black LGBTQI+ Canadians", 2020) Furthermore, there has been

failure to collect meaningful evidence and experiences to aid in mental health program design for these populations.

Branching out on the psychological impact of anti-LGBTQ+ attitudes within the Black community in relation to Black Canadians, it is important to highlight internalized homophobia. Internalized homophobia is a considered factor in understanding an integration of negative feelings towards oneself contributing to negative individual psychic consequences (Hill, 2013). Hence, the continuous invalidation and rejection of the Black LGBTQ+ experience has over time led individuals to encounter internalized homophobia, therefore negatively affecting one's mental health. All forms of homophobia are destructive, not just for the targeted individual but also for society at large. The psychological stress of living in such an existence cannot be ignored (Hill, 2013).

It is apparent that due to the lack of acceptance in largely Black populations of Black LGBTQ+ individuals, Black Canadian's mental health is overall negatively impacted. This conclusion is reinforced by the general absence of anti-oppressive and culturally aware mental health support for LGBTQ+ people in Canada.

Mental Health Care Barriers and the Role of Healthcare Workers

Barriers

Amidst reviewing the factors contributing to the decline of mental health within the Black Canadian population, the barriers to seeking adequate mental health care must also be considered. A systematic review of emotional and behavioral problems in migrant children and adolescents done by Kouider et al. (2015) claims that Black Canadians demonstrate a higher chance of struggling with mental illness while also receiving a lower quality of care in mental health institutions within Canada when compared to their white counterparts. The higher rates of

mental health by itself generates a negative impact within African Canadian communities, and the poor mental health aid serves to exacerbate this impact. Additionally, this research, which consisted of a series of thirty five studies on migrant youth and ethnic minorities in Canada ranging from 2009 to 2013, indicated that Black people have been shown to display a higher risk factor for conduct disorders, displaying negative behaviours like cruelty, bullying, theft, and vandalism, among others. The DSM 5 states that conduct disorders in childhood can lead to further mental problems, such as adult antisocial behaviour (AAB) and antisocial personality disorder (ASPD) (Reynolds & Kamphaus, 2013). There is also a higher risk factor for hyperactivity and externalizing disorders, internalizing disorders such as depression and anxiety, and ADHD. These problems are not only harmful to the current individuals, but can cause generational harm (Weissman et al., 2016). The mental complications mentioned in this study, namely hyperactivity, externalizing disorders, internalizing disorders, and ADHD, are found in predominantly Black households, which appears to be contributing to the high rates of mental illness observed in Black communities. With the higher risk of conduct disorders and negative behavioural issues, Black Canadians require more than the currently inadequate care offered by Canadian health services.

An editorial written by Egede (2006) states that studies have shown that racial and ethnic minorities receive a lower quality of healthcare than non-minorities or white people. Here, he refers to the Institute of Medicine (IOM) which concluded that “racial and ethnic disparities in healthcare exist and, because they are associated with worse outcomes in many cases, are unacceptable” (as cited in Egede, 2006). Moreover, evidence has also shown that socioeconomic position can be a stronger determinant of health-related outcomes. When socioeconomic position is controlled, racial and ethnic discrimination become significantly diminished (Egede, 2006).

Another study done by Thomson et al. (2015), illustrated that racial discrimination contributes to the underutilization of health services provided, and there are clear challenges in the provision of mental health linked to racial discrimination. Racial minorities are underrepresented in mental health services which contributes to under utilization. Additionally, underutilization by a population can be caused by other factors, such as gender, possible language barriers, the threat of discrimination, and acculturation stress, which is aforementioned in the discussion on immigration and reiterated by Thomson et al. (2015). However, the most important factor of the underuse of healthcare and mental health services is the attitude of healthcare workers. This creates a feedback loop, as mental health professionals are under trained in dealing with Black mental issues because of the lack of Black people using these services, which then causes Black people to underuse these necessary services even more as they feel like their needs are not being met by these professionals. This article reports that most Black Canadians have reported alternate health beliefs and other non- pharmacologic and alternative healing practices (Thomson et al., 2015).

How Mental Healthcare Workers Can Help

A few changes have been suggested to overcome the barriers experienced by Black Canadians in accessing mental healthcare. For instance, Corneau & Stergiopoulos (2012) propose that mental health professionals can be further trained in cultural and ethnic diversity. Conversely, mental health professionals also need to be an ethnically and culturally diverse population themselves. These authors recommend that Canadian mental health services utilise strategies like empowerment, education, alliance building, language, alternative healing strategies, advocacy, social justice/activism, and fostering reflexivity to aid in supplementing the gaps created by underutilization. The article further states that empowering service users by

including them in decisions made concerning them and the components of mental health and assistance could promote utilization rates. Within the workforce, increased research with and on Black people and Black mental health could help empower others and create a healthier workplace for mental health professionals. It is critical that mental health service workers, especially Black professionals, feel like they are in a safe and secure workspace as changes are enacted. In order to foster anti-racist environments and lessen discriminatory actions against Black people by Canadian mental health services, alliances between white and Black mental health professionals must be encouraged. This can provide support and political visibility to efforts to challenge discrimination and will prove crucial in the journey to a discriminatory-free workplace. By working to change the perceptions and representations of Black people through communication and collaboration, racist discourse and biases within mental healthcare environments can be alleviated, and Black Canadians can receive the health care they deserve.

Conclusion

In examining the literature on the mental health of Black Canadians, immigration, racism, representation in the media, and lack of acceptance in the Black community have all been found to be influencing factors. Although these factors are discussed as separate entities here, the interconnectedness amongst these factors, and the array of others that contribute to the mental health of Black Canadians, is evident. The effects of racism and discrimination bleed into multiple aspects of the lives of Black Canadians, including their immigration experience, media intake, sexual preferences, and healthcare. Thus, in order to provide effective mental health care, healthcare workers must take into consideration how these factors adversely affect Black Canadians. Furthermore, healthcare workers must be prepared to listen to the needs of the Black community and respond accordingly so that a feeling of trust may ensue between the two groups.

It is up to healthcare workers, Black Canadians, and Canadian society at large to address and remedy the mental health of Black Canadians. Through education, advocacy, activism, and empowerment of Black communities, enduring solutions can be established.

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Black Youth Mentorship Program Final Paper

Business Stream:

Evidence indicates that Black populations experience racism within organizations. What factors contribute to racism within organizations? What is the role of leadership in addressing racism within organizations?

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Racism in itself has several meanings; One of them being prejudice towards a specific group and/or believing that an individual is superior when compared to others. According to this article written by the Anti-Defamation League in 2020, racism can be defined as “...*The marginalization and/or oppression of people of color based on a socially constructed racial hierarchy that privileges white people.* This definition is especially relevant when we examine how racial discrimination affects millions of minorities worldwide. A real life example of racism in the workplace is how many minorities have to work twice as hard when compared to their white counterparts just to make ends meet. Racism within businesses is also seen quite frequently. An example of this is how minorities with ethnic-sounding names have a higher rejection rate when applying for traditionally ‘white’ jobs. Despite the fact that Canada is one of the most diverse and multicultural countries worldwide, systematic racism has been a long-standing issue. Systematic racism is when racism has been systematically ingrained in many parts of a society that some people won’t even turn their attention to. For several years, systemic racism has been evident within businesses, especially when looking at treatments towards minority groups- more specifically people of African descent. This discrimination can be targeted at them through their skin color, religion and background e.t.c. Fortunately enough, there are laws that have been enforced and put into place to prohibit such acts of blatant racism and discrimination that minorities often face in the line of work. An example of a law put into place to combat this problem would be: **‘Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964’** that was

enforced on July 2 1964. The 'Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964' is a Human Rights Federal law that was put into order to provide employees with the right to be free from any situations that have tendencies of racial discrimination or hate crimes based on their gender, race or religion. Even though the Canadian government enforced several Civil Rights laws, there are still moments where many individuals are subject to being judged based on the color of their skin. To sum it up, racism is still an issue in culturally diverse societies like Canada. While this is still an issue, we must recognize that it takes more than cultural plurality to fix systemic racism in Western countries, when their foundations were built on discrimination towards non-white members of society.

"Company leaders and workers may be reluctant to talk about racial inequality because they fear of saying the wrong thing" (Liu, 2020). The preceding quote talks about how businesses and company leaders acknowledge the fact that racial inequality is evident and still occurs. Despite the acknowledgement, many leaders/ people in higher up power believe that if they were to publicly discuss the issue, or at least try to put an end to racial inequality, it might hurt the organization's reputation, or even get themselves fired.

There are many stories about people experiencing racism within organizations due to their skin color and their background. For example, in "Doctors on their own when dealing with racism", a patient refused to see a doctor because she's Indigenous, and the doctor said she tried to explain everything to the patient by saying "I tried to talk to them, explaining I was

qualified, but the patient was adamant and refused despite my explanation” (paraphrased quote). People who are Black experience racism in the society. They may be called bad names. These people may feel more stressed and end up with lack of motivation to do their job. Institutions would rather deal with the issue of racism individually and quickly because they want to avoid any litigious situation, and according to researchers, despite the law the deep structures forming an undemocratic foundation has not been fundamentally altered. In this case the privileges with “whiteness” and all the disadvantages associated with “colors” have continued to adapt and grow more and more. Going back to our previous example, doctors in Ontario have to treat patients whether they want to or not though they feel at risk, are harmed or are racially abused. This might lead to doctors experiencing a lack of confidence, which may result in them feeling pessimistic about themselves and who they are. Whenever this happens they won’t be able to do their jobs properly because they just don’t think they have the mental strength to deal with racism.

Factors that contribute to racism in organizations are a person's color, religion, culture or ethnic group. In these cases people experience inequalities in society like lack of good services, personal health and social services. Those who experience racism in Canadian organizations end up with negative mental health outcomes and lack of good condition (negative physical health conditions).

Despite the fact that racism within organizations is a major issue, there are many organizations that are looking for multiple ways to diversify their workplaces. However, there are some shortfalls. The article, “*Bias-Free or Biased Hiring?*” communicates that although

Ontario has put many policies in place that promote inclusion and diversity in relation to hiring practices, it is difficult to see actual progress in real life (Abawi & Eizadirad, 2020, p. 18). The article specifically talks about hiring practices within the teaching community, but it does mention that non-diverse hiring practices in general are still prevalent across Canada as of 2019. This article makes it clear that the issue of biased hiring practices is very prominent in Ontario. They use the example of the “teacher diversity gap” to illustrate this point, which is explained as a discrepancy in the proportion of racialized teachers to racialized students. This is referenced throughout the article in order to solidify the argument that despite the presence of policies designed to combat biased hiring practices, these practices still persist. As a result of this, teachers across the province of Ontario do not meaningfully reflect the identities and demographics of the student population. In order to convey differing opinions on racism within the workplace, racist hiring practices and the teacher diversity gap, the authors of the article conducted interviews of 10 Ontarian educators whose teaching ranged from elementary to secondary school. The findings from those interviews presented varying beliefs. These different beliefs all depended on social location, including race. The data collected from these interviews revealed that the people of colour who were interviewed could attest to being treated differently than their non-racialized counterparts in regards to hiring and treatment by colleagues. It was apparent to them that race definitely has something to do with hiring, especially in the case of a Black teacher named Christine, who revealed that throughout her

teaching experience, she had only ever come across one other Black administrator (Abawi & Eizadirad, 2020, p. 22)

This article also discusses the topic of colour blind racism. This occurs in various forms, including when organizations claim to hire candidates based on their merit and ability while simultaneously neglecting discussions regarding systemic racism embedded within their educational practices and policies. In order to justify their notion of meritocracy, most white people ignore the effects of past and current discrimination against black people as well as the immense inequalities that black people face in relation to white people. By adopting this point of view, white people are able to blame blacks being worse off than whites on individual ability and effort, rather than discrimination and racial unfairness (Bonilla-Silva, 2003, p. 31). The authors of "*Bias-Free or Biased Hiring?*" noticed a perfect example of colour-blind racism while conducting their interviews (Abawi & Eizadirad, 2020). When asked about the lack of diversity in the workplace, two white participants placed an emphasis on the idea that they believe an individual should be hired based on their quality rather than their race. This is an example of colour blind racism because the white participants were trying to justify the lack of diversity among teachers as a result of their individual ability rather than due to systemic racism (Abawi & Eizadirad, 2020, p. 22).

The premises of the teacher diversity gap and colour blind racism relate to organizational culture, which is discussed in the article, "*Systemic Racism In Employment In*

Canada” (Agocs & Jain, 2001). Organizational culture is defined as values and behaviors that contribute to the environment of a business. Organizations that are constructed by dominant groups typically reflect the views of organizational members who are white, male, heterosexual and able-bodied. This usually leads to people of colour within the workplace to feel as if they are in a hostile, humiliating or offensive environment. The article “Systemic Racism In Employment In Canada” (Agocs & Jain, 2001), recognizes that in workplaces that have normalized whiteness to be the standard, minority groups end up being harassed, marginalized, and made to feel invisible.

The role of leadership in addressing racism within organizations is that people should stand up for what’s right because no life is superior than the other. So a way that we can bring awareness and to inform our leaders that change must happen is by standing up for what’s right which is equalities because these days white supremacy (white people have the mentality that they are better than others) is growing more over the years because in some countries like U.S.A white supremacy is growing every single day for example, cops will rather shoot an innocent black person rather than shoot a white person with any weapon.

To respond to racism within organizations, it is necessary to examine the role of leadership. Demonstrations of leadership display strength and tolerance. Leadership also carries the responsibilities of eliminating racist practices in the workplace and having the capability of creating new opportunities for marginalized groups “who previously didn’t have access to them”. (Waltera et al., 2016). The Canadian Human Rights Act of 1985 ensures that

employees have the right to be treated fairly in workplaces, specifically, they have the right to not be discriminated due to their sex, orientation, race or heritage. Because any type of discrimination is prohibited, the responsibility of reinforcing these rules falls onto leadership within organizations. Measures that some organizations have taken include organizational assessments and, more recently, diversity training. Before discussing these options, it is first necessary to state that organizations should not simply aim to be “not racist”, but are instead, “anti-racist”(Liu, 2020). This means that leadership is not only against racism, but they are actively working to dismantle racist practices. This requires acknowledging and condemning racism in the workplace and racist work practices. Leadership can be seen as role models for employees, so their expressed values, practices, and tolerance can shape their organization and what workplaces look like (Waltera et al., 2016).

As previously mentioned, measures that organizations have taken to combat racism in the workplace include organizational assessments and diversity training. In workplaces, organizational assessments are being used less to work against racism (Trenerry and Paradies, 2012). A flaw of these assessments is the explicit focus on the systematic issues within an organization. Some organizations might view racial issues to be an individualized problem, ie. coming as a result of specific employees. This is known as individualized racism, which is a form of discrimination that comes from only one person, without systematic contributions. Consequently, though racism is a systemic issue, the inability for organizational assessments to properly address individualized racism render it unappealing to many workplaces. Because of this, other methods such as diversity training and cultural competency assessments have “become the dominant approach to dealing with these issues” in the workplace (Schmidt,

2004). Cultural competency assessments are assessments targeted to identify cultural gaps and find what is needed to “know to work more effectively together (*What is Cultural Competence & How is it Measured?*, n.d.). This can be done by surveying minority groups in the organization and analyzing results. Diversity training has existed in workplaces for the past few decades. Its focus is to minimize the disadvantages of minorities. With its intended purpose to create a safe working space for everyone (without an explicit focus on race), it can also avoid critiques regarding affirmative action (Dobin and Kalev, 2016). Diversity training can be described as gathering data concerning “strengths and weaknesses convincing managers that problems exist” (Liu, 2020) These explanations could be taken as attempts to establish accountability within employees, but there are multiple drawbacks. Just the fact that diversity training in most organizations is mandatory hurts the progress of the cause (Dobin and Kalev, 2016). Evidence shows that although it may backfire, almost all of the *Fortune 500* implement and use these measures. Diversity training can antagonize employees and make them feel resentful, thus hurting the progress of diversifying workspaces. As well, in contrast to organizational assessments, diversity training fails to address structural and institutional faults in racism.

Rather than methods that can antagonize workers and lack vital aspects, it could be more efficient to use multiple steps and methods towards being an “anti-racist” organization. One practice could be employee and customer surveys to detect issues regarding race within the workplace. Using this, leadership can further address specific issues within the organization and take the needed steps. Having a diversity council ensures that issues are handled, and demographics are monitored. Leadership within organizations must ensure safety for everyone in the workplace and the measures taken over the years have changed becoming

more and more efficient. With more research in this topic, more effective methods will come to light.

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Sickle Cell Disease & Bone Marrow Transplant

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Introduction

Sickle Cell Anemia (SCA) is an inherited disease which causes erythrocytes (Red Blood Cells or RBCs) to form a crescent shape, unlike the concave circle shape of a normal Erythrocyte. Because the erythrocytes of a person who suffers from Sickle Cell Disease are generally smaller, this means that each individual Blood Cell can carry less haemoglobin ([Rees, 2010](#)).

Prevalency

Sickle Cell Anemia is one of the most common of all hemoglobinopathies that are inherited through genes ([Jain, 2019](#)) and approximately 305,000 children are born with the disease annually ([Piel, 2013](#)). According to the same article, the countries that produce the most children who have Sickle Cell Anemia will be the countries that are weakest off, the ones with dysfunctional medical infrastructure ([Piel, 2013](#)). That's why when looking at the countries, Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, marked by the researchers as "the countries most in need of policies for the prevention and management of [Sickle Cell Anemia]", these are the same countries on the HALE index score at 48.9 and 52.5 respectively in 2016 ([WHO, 2020](#)). For reference, the United Kingdom scored a 71.9 and the United States of America scored 68.5 ([WHO, 2020](#)). This makes it reasonable to assume that one way that Sickle Cell Disease and its effects could be dulled down, is with proper medical infrastructure.

Genetic Background

For an individual to be confirmed as having sickle cell disease (SCD), they must receive some combination of two “S” genes from their parents, or the “S” gene paired with another abnormal type of hemoglobin. As sickle cell trait is a recessive gene it must be present in both parents to affect a child. The two most common types of sickle cell are HbSS and HbSC ([CDC, 2019](#)). HbSS is the more severe of the two forms of sickle cell ([CDC, 2019](#)). HbSS is caused when a child receives two sickle “S” genes ([CDC, 2019](#)). The second most common type of sickle cell is HbSC, where a sickle “S” from one parent, and an abnormal hemoglobin C gene from the other ([CDC, 2019](#)). This is a milder form of SSD. When these traits are combined, the structure of red blood cells (RBC) change. The changes that occur within the membrane which causes the RBC’s to become “sticky” and stiff, along with the sickling “S”, this causes blockages in blood vessels when abnormal and sickled RBCs begin clumping together. Sufferers of sickle cell are prone to bouts of acute pain that are the result of a vaso-occlusive crisis ([Yale et al., 2000](#)). These crises can occur anywhere in the body, but they are most commonly found in the chest, abdomen, and bones of the spine, arms, and legs.

Treatments

5% of sickle cell patients experience 3-10 crises a year and the length of crisis ranges from days for minor crises, while severe crises could last months which could lead to even graver injuries ([Yale et al., 2000](#)). Most treatments that are available now are aimed at avoiding and treating pain involved in crisis, and not actually curing the disease. Medications such as Hydroxyurea, L-glutamine oral powder, Crizanlizumab and Voxelator are used to treat pain ([Mayo Clinic, 2020](#)). Hydroxyurea increases the production of hemoglobin F which also reduces

the severity of sickle cell disease ([Yale et al., 2000](#)). It does this by preventing hemoglobin S polymers from forming. Hydroxyurea should be used only in patients who have severe complications and are able to follow the regimen reliably ([Yale et al., 2000](#)). L-glutamine oral powder helps reduce the frequency of pain crises ([Mayo Clinic, 2020](#)). Crizanlizumab is given through a vein and also helps reduce pain crises ([Mayo Clinic, 2020](#)). It helps prevent blood flow blockage by preventing blood cells from sticking to blood vessel walls ([NHLBI, 2018](#)). Its side effects include: nausea, joint pain, back pain and fever ([Mayo Clinic, 2020](#)). Voxelator is an oral drug that improves anemia in patients with SCD ([Mayo Clinic, 2020](#)). This drug helps decrease destruction of some red blood cells which lowers the risk of anemia as well as improves blood flow ([NHLBI, 2018](#)). It also prevents blood cells from forming the sickle shape and also prevents them sticking together ([NHLBI, 2018](#)). Side effects of this drug include headaches, diarrhea, abdominal pain, nausea, fatigue, and fever. Some rare side effects include allergic reactions, rashes, and mild shortness of breath ([NHLBI, 2018](#)). Blood transfusions and stem cell transplants (also known as bone marrow transplants) are surgical procedures involved in treating sickle cell disease (SCD) ([Mayo Clinic, 2020](#)).

With blood transfusions, red blood cells are removed from donated blood supplies and given to the person with sickle cell anemia (or sickle cell disease) through a vein ([Mayo Clinic, 2020](#)). This procedure increases the normal red blood cell count helping reduce the symptoms and complications caused by the disease. The risks include immune responses to donors, excess iron buildup in the body and infection are also common risks ([Mayo Clinic, 2020](#)). This makes it hard to find future donors, and excess iron can damage your heart and other organs, so if regular transfusions are being done, treatments to reduce iron levels would also be needed. Bone marrow

transplant (BMT) is a newer treatment that has been introduced to patients with SCD. This is when the existing bone marrow is replaced with healthy bone marrow from a donor ([Mayo Clinic, 2020](#)). Due to the risks of this procedure, it is recommended for individuals, usually children, who have serious symptoms and complications of the disease ([Mayo Clinic, 2020](#)). A long hospital stay is required after the procedure ([Mayo Clinic, 2020](#)). Drugs are given to the patient to help prevent the stem cells from being rejected. Even with the drugs the body might still reject the transplant which can lead to life-threatening complications ([Mayo Clinic, 2020](#)).

BMT is a complicated but necessary process, with an extensive history, for those with sickle cell anemia and other diseases that require hematopoietic stem cell transplantation ([Morena & Gatti, 2011](#)). It has side effects such as susceptibility to infection, excess bleeding and more, that are not favorable ([Henig & Zuckerman, 2014](#)). Some of those are generally preferred over the effects of the disease. BMT was first successfully completed sometime between 1956 and 1984, sources are inconclusive and conflicting about this fact ([Henig & Zuckerman, 2014](#)). One of the biggest issues, then and now, is an effect of BMT called Graft versus Host Disease (GvHD). When this occurs, the donor's bone marrow attacks the body of the recipient, because it views this new body as foreign ([American Cancer Society, 2020](#); [Cleveland Clinic, 2020](#)). GvHD is hugely uncomfortable as it leads to a series of other problems such as nausea, yellow skin discoloration, fatigue and muscle weakness, to name a few ([Cleveland Clinic, 2020](#)). Because of all these issues, only a select few people are actually permitted to undergo BMT when it comes to sickle cell patients. Usually, BMT is limited to sickle cell patients who also have other health complications like strokes, recurrent vaso-occlusive crisis, renal damage, and more ([Ashorobi, 2020](#)). Since there is no cure that has yet been discovered for

diseases that require hematopoietic stem cell transplantation, research has determined that BMT is currently the best way to treat hematopoietic diseases at the root cause. Other treatments generally tend to offer pain relief and are not a cure ([Mayo Clinic, 2020](#)). In the long term, BMT offers a bit more security even with the risks that come with it because it treats the root cause, versus the medications that offer relief which only treat symptoms.

Historical Barriers to Treatment

When Sickle Cell Anemia was first discovered, it affected people of African descent, and from malaria-epidemic regional ancestry. As of recently, the disparities in funding between Sickle Cell Anemia have been highlighted ([Guo, 2020](#)). These disparities are driven in large part by structural violence ([Guo, 2020](#)). The treatment and hospitalization of Sickle Cell Disease patients costs approximately \$475 million each year in America alone ([Smith, 2006](#)). A study done by Dr. Lauren Smith, illuminates the fact that the majority of people affected by Sickle Cell Anemia lack the funds and the education to receive or pay for the help required ([Smith, 2006](#); [Stone, 2015](#)). Emergency room staff have a documented history of being dismissive and erroneously assuming opioid addiction for Sickle Cell Anemia patients experiencing pain crises, exacerbating the racial bias in pain management Black patients experience across the board ([Guo, 2020](#)). As observed by Dr. Carlton Haywood, people of African descent suffering from Sickle Cell Anemia face higher rates of medicine refusal as well as longer wait times to see specialists and receive emergency care ([Haywood et al., 2013](#)). These racial and monetary disparities are observed to have a large influence on the recovery rate of people with Sickle Cell Anemia.

Conclusion

Sickle cell is a recessive autoimmune disorder, but it affects a great number of the world's population today, most especially those of African descent ([Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019](#)). Bone marrow transplant has a rich background that the general public is very much unaware of. The progression in the successes and failures of this procedure in the medical industry is part of recent history, though it has been long and arduous. Sickle cell disease, with all its negatives, has a bit of a silver lining. Although it tends to affect mostly people of African descent, it offers immunity to malaria for its carriers (i.e., they have the trait and not the disease), which is helpful for those living there ([Wadman, 2011](#)). Bone marrow transplant as a treatment for sickle cell disease is something that is appearing to be highly favored despite its repercussions, like Graft versus Host Disease ([American Cancer Society, 2020](#); [Cleveland Clinic, 2020](#)). Because of said repercussions, Bone marrow transplant is limited to few people, and with that, there is difficulty finding matching donors. However, the procedure is the only procedure so far that is able to cure the disease itself, and not just treat its symptoms.

Recommendation to Physicians

There may be a fine line between safe and dangerous administration of drugs that aid in reducing the pain experienced during a sickle cell crisis; the drugs used in treating a vaso-occlusive crisis are highly addictive, physicians must be prepared to curb the fear of narcotic dependency to be able to adequately deal with the crisis ([Yale et al., 2000](#)). Drugs must be administered in a timely fashion to avoid further problems or pain to the patient ([Yale et al., 2000](#)). It is also advised that the drugs be given in the right quantity, not to administer insufficient doses ([Yale et al., 2000](#)). Physicians of SCD patients who are able to undergo BMT

should frequently check up on their patients to ensure their patient is following their medication schedule after their BMT procedure. Physicians can also refer the patient who just received a bone marrow transplant to a physiotherapist or any other specialist to aid them in mitigating any side effects that alter their mobility, in order to help them get back on their feet. Physicians should also consider the concerns of their patients and family members of those patients to better their experience while undergoing such a life changing procedure.

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Measures to Address Plastic Waste Management Problems in Africa

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The lack of proper and efficient means to manage the use of plastics is a problem faced by all countries in the world today. More and more developed countries have ways to limit their production of plastics whereas developing countries' best interest is to increase the production of these plastics to further economic growth. Plastic was introduced in the mid 1990s and since that time it has been used daily. Its ability to substitute other materials like glass and paper have played a role in its global use. Almost all of the objects we use daily have some form of plastic, in our cars, televisions and even little things like straws. [7] Due to plastics being durable, versatile, reusable and their cost efficiency, over 360 million tonnes of plastics had been produced globally in 2018 alone [1]. With the annual production rates of plastics increasing by $\approx 5\%$ [2], the mismanagement of plastics is prevalent in the global community. Despite the alarming rate at which plastics are misused, developing countries (especially those in Africa) do not have the incentive and means to reduce the deleterious effects resulting from the use of plastics. In 2010 an estimated 4.4 million metric tonnes of plastics were mismanaged in Africa [3]. To tackle this issue a series of engineering and economy based solutions will further be explicated to; emphasize the importance of plastic waste management, its effects on black people and the benefits of proper plastic management in Africa.

Appropriate waste disposal methods such as regulated landfills are unavailable, leading to more plastic wastes being dumped in uncontrolled open spaces, roadways, and on the borders of rural residential areas. This leads to detrimental health and environmental effects since the accumulation of plastic waste on land can become a breeding ground for mosquitoes, cause clogged waterways and drainages, limit the sources of drinkable water, increase marine debris and reduce the overall aesthetics of the community. Africa is predicted to add 1.3 billion people to the planet by 2050 [5] This is the equivalent of 3.5 million more people per month, or 80

additional people per minute, thus making Africa the biggest contributor to the future global population growth [5]. The increasing patterns in urbanisation, rising middle class and population growth is worrisome when compared to the lack of proper infrastructure to manage the generation and disposal of wastes. Governments are not intervening as much as they should in this matter, either because they are apathetic since they only want to pursue their own self interests or they simply do not have the financial means to do so. Their most notable contribution is that they put taxes on plastic bags only [6]. Having listed most of the issues regarding the undisciplined and unsustainable ways plastics are being managed in African countries, alternative solutions are required specially for the improvement of the quality of life of Africans. Some notable and effective engineering solutions that can significantly change the future of plastic management in Africa include the design of a plastic waste sorting system [7], conversion of plastic wastes to fuel products such as diesel and kerosene [8] and the use of plastics to reinforce asphalt and soil for geotechnical engineering[9]. These solutions intermingled with economic reward for black people in these countries will further incentivize more people to recycle their plastic wastes [10]. Economic reward is the money profited from the processes of recycling plastics. This process requires a nonautomated technology that uses heat to melt plastics and convert them to fuel products similar in composition to kerosene and diesel [10]. Nonautomated technologies described above are to be implemented in underdeveloped regions, they require little to no electricity, are easy to construct and they are powered by wood fire so that the locals can conveniently operate the machine [10]. Rural communities can benefit from this by selling the acquired fuel products or by using them for their own personal needs.

The decisions regarding waste management in many African countries are centralized [11]. This is an issue since the government's efforts to minimize waste are lacking. This leaves people with the option to burn their wastes and create toxic smokes that are very harmful to them and the environment. A more decentralized approach will empower individuals to invent solutions for their communities rather than wait for government's policies and regulation to address the problem.

For the design of a plastic waste sorting system, three technologies are programmed; One sorts plastic according to their colour and weight only. Another system sorts recyclables such as ferrous and nonferrous metals, glass and plastics through the use of sensors. The plastics are transported using a Direct Current (DC) motor, and are sorted using light sensor, magnets, metal sensor and an ultrasonic sensor. The final Artificial Intelligence (AI) machine was programmed to store the plastics chemical properties so plastics can be sorted more efficiently. The use of these technologies does not fully guarantee a proper way of sorting plastics, since these machines are limited and affected by weight, lighting, speed, and spacing. These drawbacks may cause intermittent movement in these machines [12]. The most efficient of these systems is the (AI) programmed machine because it can remember and store the chemical compositions of the plastics it recycled, which means the machine gets better after each use. However, these are theoretical technologies that will need a lot of support in other places constant electricity will need to be provided and a machine at this level will need constant maintenance.

In the hopes to regulate the levels of plastic waste on the coasts of Africa, the African Marine Waste Network (AMWN) launched the “Zero Plastic to the Seas of Africa” campaign in collaboration with the United Nations Environmental Assembly [14]. However, AMWN must overcome numerous challenges to achieve this goal. For instance, due to the lack of awareness

relating to waste disposal and management, getting Africans motivated to participate will prove to be a challenge. In turn, very little funds are put into the waste management facilities in their cities. Additionally, Africa contains some of the most impoverished countries in the world, considering this information, citizens are more likely to prioritize providing for themselves and their families over spending their time, money, and energy on improving the environment, especially if the rewards do not benefit them directly. A study conducted in Nigeria shows that awareness, cost and availability impact the capacity in which citizens will actively participate in proper waste disposal [15]. Therefore, there are many contributing factors that influence whether Africans decide to take part. Hence, to eventually reach their objective, AMWN must educate the citizens as well as help the governments with funding. One of the countries that had taken part in the campaign was Kenya, which over these last few years has taken many initiatives in hopes to better their plastic situation. The circular economy initiative, for example, works on reducing, reusing and recycling plastic waste [10]. Unlike the linear economy that disposes of plastic after one use, the aim of the circular economy project is to eliminate plastic by repurposing it as many times as possible. The circular economy is more sustainable, considering the plastic would have less of a chance of being thrown into landfills or causing floods. Through a long term perspective, the circular economy will decrease the damaging repercussions plastic may have on the environment, and the health of the citizens of these areas. The plastic waste will be sorted into two groups; pure plastic that can be physically recycled and plastic that has reached the end of its product life. The pure group will produce granules and secondary raw virgin materials that will be remanufactured. An example of a circular economy is converting plastic into fuel [8]. This form of re-use utilizes the polymeric material found in plastic by degeneration. To produce the fuel, this process has proven to be successful at temperatures between 400°C and 500°C.

Other methods repurpose plastic as an asphalt strengthener: by adding 1% of cleaned and shredded polyethylene terephthalate, a material found in plastic bottles, to bitumen [9]. As well as soil reinforcement which is possible by adding 15 by 6 mm strips of plastic to the soil [16]. Furthermore, the circular economy being a sustainable method, the repurposing of the plastic waste will produce many economic rewards. Such as providing jobs and increasing the availability of raw virgin materials, which will in turn increase the government's revenue [18]. This proves to be the best method for developing countries.

Ultimately, the rising numbers of plastic waste is one of the biggest international crises faced in the 21st century, because of its rapid overproduction. Many African countries have not yet developed a sustainable waste management system, hence they are left to deal with the environmental repercussions and its effect on their health. Notably, pollution, floods and ovarian chromosomal damage [18]. Despite these ongoing issues, there is still hope for the future insofar that engineers and international organizations have collaborated to help African countries financially and academically. Furthermore, many African countries, like Kenya and Nigeria, have taken their first steps to remove plastic waste, by instating sustainable waste disposal methods. Hopefully, the global efforts to tackle the consequences of plastic waste are evidence that a long-term dedication to a more environmentally friendly society is in our near future.

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Black Youth Mentorship Project
Social Sciences Group
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The Institute of Race Relations defines institutional racism as, “that which, covertly or overtly, resides in the policies, procedures, operations and culture of public or private institutions – reinforcing individual prejudices and being reinforced by them in turn” Ahmed, N. (1998, October 1). Racism is so deeply embedded into the foundation of Canadian education institutions that it becomes almost impossible for black students to escape. James and Turner (2017) found that black students have a lower graduation rate than their white and other race counterparts, and they were also less likely to complete high school. In another study by Brown and Tam (2017), they found 57.4% of Black students in the Toronto District School Board had a confirmed placement in some form of a post secondary educational program. This is the lowest percentage of confirmed post secondary placement across all of the racial groups studied. As schools tend to act as small, enclosed societies, it emulates the real world through biased systems that enforce institutional racism. In these systems, black students are the underlying victims of racial discrimination. This racism in schools manifests itself in different ways including suspension and expulsion rates, disproportionate placement in non-academic streams and the exclusion of Black history and culture from the curriculum. The goal of this paper is to discuss how black students in Canadian K-12 schools experience racism, leading to poor educational outcomes as measured by low high school completion rates and transition to post secondary programs.

High Suspension and Expulsion Rates

Throughout the Canadian public school system, black students face harsher penalties when dealing with discipline. When faced with disciplinary measures, black students are prone to be suspended or expelled more than their white peers. In Durham, Ontario, an investigation was conducted where it was discovered that black students in the school system were nearly

eight times more likely to experience disciplinary actions than white students (Ontario Human Rights Code, 2017). “Around 42 % of all black students had been suspended at least once, compared with only 18% of white students and 18% of other racialized students.” (Towards Race Equity in Education, 2017). These suspension rates only further pushes black students to favour the “street life” (Gordan and Zinga, 2012). The constant mistreatment directed to black students further disengages the students from their education (TDSB, 2009). Disciplinary measures reaching as far as involving law enforcement, black students are even more likely to have issues that could impact their life (Gordan and Zinga, 2012).

Dating back to the late 1990s, the significant influx of African Caribbean’s attending schools brought about a new policy called “Zero Tolerance”, in an attempt to subdue the culturally diverse black youth (Patrick Soloman, R. & Palmer. H., 2004). The policy in short is a regulation put in place to discipline any misconduct performed on school grounds but tended to be targeted towards black students (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2003). This policy further creates an even larger gap and causes tension between the institutional authority and culturally empowered black youth that leads to the exclusion of the students (Patrick Soloman, R. & Palmer H., 2004). According to Morrison (2002), media outlets like CBC had equally shared their distaste for this policy, “*Although safe school policies are supposed to be non-discriminatory, there is the blatant differential treatment of Black and White students in punishment of behaviours defined by safe school policies as disrespectful, disruptive and violent.*” With such policies in place, this leads to black youths to become ostracized in school settings and making them less likely to pursue further education.

Streaming, and Negative Stereotypes About Black Students

From a young age, many Black Canadian students are victims of racial discrimination which they face at schools. These students are being set up to fail because they have a “poor performance in mandatory courses” needed to graduate (Abdi, 2012). Black children are placed in lower streamed classrooms because they are seen as not competent enough to understand their grade level curriculum. This placement started as early as Grade 3 where some were even moved into non-Gifted streams (Mahamed, 2010). They later entered high school with low grades and gaps in their knowledge which put them at a disadvantage against their peers. Somali speaking students are an example of those who are put in lower streams because of this prejudicial treatment (Abdi, 2012). Research studies by the Toronto School Board District noticed that during Somali student’s senior years in elementary, over half of them were struggling with the core subjects having lower provincial standards when it came to reading and writing(Abdi, 2012). With this, many of them dropped out or later had difficulties in high school. “The root of the problem lies within the education these students receive (Abdi, 2012).” This oppressive act can be detrimental to a growing child’s health and can hold them back from their true potential.

Within these institutions which are known to be as their “second home,” Black youth are often perceived as “naughty,” a distraction in class, or less knowledgeable than their counterparts (Ochieng, 2010). Institutional racism affects a significant part of these students’ lives and their engagement in school. As a result, the rates at which these Black students complete high-school and enter university are low compared to other races (James & Turner, 2017). For instance, the Toronto District School Board recorded that there was a significant difference between Black students and their peers in regards to which program of study they enrolled in. The Toronto District has three “levels of study” which are named “Academic,” “Applied” and “Essentials.”

Their Academic program is commonly taken for those who are interested in going to university.

The Academic program experienced about 28% less enrollment from Black students compared to White and other racialized students. It was also found that Black students compared to their classmates had a lower percentage when it came to graduation from high school, but a higher percentage when it came to dropping out. This is important because these barriers that Black youth face early in their educational careers sets the tone for their future success in education.

Lack of Black History and Contributions in the Curriculum

Curriculums that do not include any form of black history become detrimental to students. It negatively affects the way that white students view other cultures, it also greatly limits their worldview to very eurocentric perspectives. James A. Banks & Cherry A. McGee Banks in the Book *Multicultural Education: Issues and Perspectives* write that a mainstream-centric curriculum is one major way in which racism, ethnocentrism, and problematic nationalism are reinforced and perpetuated in the schools, colleges, universities, and society at large (Banks, J. A., & Banks, C. A. 2010). Essentially a lack of black history in the Canadian curriculum further marginalizes black students' experiences in the education system because the history that they're learning about and the Canada that is being represented to them in their studies is not reflective of their own stories. A lack of inclusion of black history in the curriculum negatively affects black students overall educational experience because it does not reflect their dreams, hopes and perspectives (Banks, J. A., & Banks, C. A. 2010). “ Students learn best and are more highly motivated when the school curriculum reflects their cultures, experiences, and perspectives. Many students of color are alienated in the school in part because they experience cultural conflict and discontinuities that result from the cultural differences

between their school and community” (Banks, 2003). When students are able to see themselves reflected in the material that their learning it better helps them relate to the subject matter, as a result this will positively affect their academic performance. The school can help students of color mediate between their home and school cultures by implementing a curriculum that reflects the culture of their ethnic groups and communities (Banks, J. A., & Banks, C. A., 2010). The school can and should make effective use of the community cultures of the students of colour when teaching them such subjects such as writing, language arts, science, and mathematics (Banks, J. A., & Banks, C. A., 2010). The fact that black history can be included and incorporated into all subject matters proves that this is something that can be achieved. However due to the lack of educational policy reform students are not given this opportunity to further their educational understanding of the subject as well as broaden their cultural horizons. When a black student does not have any cultural similarities with the subject matter it's hard for black youth to not only participate in the class but to relate to what the teacher is teaching, this becomes increasingly difficult the longer black youth are being taught. The culture of power and Eurocentric norms marginalize minority and black students to the periphery of education in institutionalized settings (Delpit, 2006).

Implications and Limitations

Based on the literature studied, conclusions can be drawn that some differences should be made. More extensive research is needed on black student expulsion rates, suspension rates and streaming, as well as the lack of black history into curriculums. Specifically, more research needs to be done in Alberta, as well as many other places in Canada and high income countries to help gather a database that could be used for comparison. In terms of specific strategies that

can be applied, policies should be put into place for each province to include relevant black history into their curriculums. Administrative staff should consider implementing a standardized guideline for dealing with student misconduct to decrease the expulsion and suspension rates faced by black youths.

One of the biggest limitations found in the research surrounding this topic is the lack of studies completed across Canada. The majority of research found was based in the United States of America, and those studies that were conducted in Canada primarily focused around the Greater Toronto area.

In conclusion, institutional racism can be found in many different places, including school systems. Many studies show that black students are at a disadvantage by experiencing an increased rate of suspensions and expulsions. Streaming of black students into less academic courses and the lack of black representation in the curriculums pose negative educational outcomes. Although the majority of studies found were based in the United States and a few in Canada, countries with high black populations should conduct similar research in order to create a database of information about this topic so that the proper steps can be taken to dismantle the institutional racism that affects black students. Canada is a country that values diversity and inclusion, now more than ever decision makers at every level of the education system should be held accountable. Policy makers and school boards need to consider how they will allow for inclusion so that the proper steps can be taken to encourage equality and equity for Black Canadian students.

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**Report: Congenital Muscular Dystrophies (CMDs) Clinical Trial Analysis
Project**

Sohaib Omar

Dr. Ubaka

Ogbogu

Throughout my 3 months working as a research assistant with Dr. Ubaka Ogbogu on a project related to the field of health law, I was able to obtain invaluable firsthand experience in the researching field, while getting insight into researching pertaining to the usage of public databases, such as the database clinicaltrials.gov which was the database used during the project.

When I had begun, I would have considered myself to have had a relatively merger and insufficient experience in the realm of researching, as I had completed the Youreka Edmonton program that takes place in the University of Alberta in the past school year, which was unfortunately halted and altered in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, I hadn't seen myself as a person who I would say had "experience" per say, but I had knowledge of some aspects within the realm of researching. Originally, I had no knowledge of the research assistant opportunity when I had initially applied to the mentorship program during the summer, but after being accepted, I had gotten the email stating that there were available positions that I was able to apply for. I applied as soon as I had read about it, initially being interested in the researching job related to medicine, but ended up picking the project done under Dr. Ogbogu due to personal interest in the field of health law, which wasn't known to me at the time. I applied, pessimistically thinking that this job was too good to be true - a job that pays more than minimum wage for those under 18, where I would with a university professor at one of my first-option universities. I had thought that a job this lucrative would be out of my reach, but I applied because I knew that I had wanted the job more than anybody else. Weeks later, when I received the news that I had gotten the job with Dr. Ubaka Ogbogu, I was ecstatic to starting working as a research assistant for the first time in my life. I had originally thought that such a job was too lucrative for me, especially considering the experience to be gained from working in such a formal environment, but I applied regardless, because I knew that I wanted the job more than anybody else. Weeks later, I received the news that I had gotten the job with Dr. Ubaka Ogbogu, and was ecstatic to start working as a research assistant for the first time in my life. The research assistant job was able to give myself many new experiences that I would consider to be invaluable, giving myself a firsthand look into how it is to work in academia, which is an experience that those who want to be professors and have doctorates would like to have. In addition to the general experience in academia, and

working with a professor, I was able to learn about the process of research in more depth than I would have if I had learned about researching in a classroom. After such, I was given a choice of 2 different assignments that I could choose from, and ended up choosing a project related to the funders of interventional clinical trials for specific forms of congenital muscular dystrophies (CMDs).

It was interesting to see that, in the beginning of the research process, it wasn't mandatory to immediately handpick the specific and relevant clinical trials that were to be analyzed. Instead, the process of finding the relevant trials was by mass-downloading all of the clinical trials for the different names of the CMDs. After that was completed, the next task that was done with the guidance of Dr. Ogbogu was the refining and trimming process, which was so for the longest portion of the researching job. In the refining process, all of the mass-downloaded clinical trials (185) were to be individually evaluated, and if they were not relevant to the project or duplicates of other projects, they were to be omitted, with a short written explanation. The most shocking part of the trimming process was after personally completing the refining, I had only 36 out of the originally 185 potential trials that met the criteria for the next stage of the project, which includes the analysis. After such, the remaining clinical trials were reviewed after being sent from Dr. Ogbogu to another person, who would potentially omit other clinical trials that they deemed to be irrelevant that I didn't. After, I was given back 31 trials that were deemed to be relevant to the project taking place. This gave me a firsthand look in a sort of peer-editing process that is done in order to increase the precision and validity of a project, and it was the first time that I found out that forms of peer editing can be done before the project has been concluded. After returning the trials, I was tasked with making a coding frame to be used for the analysis, which I was incapable of doing unfortunately. This again showed me something I had never known, coding trials to condense the information as much as possible, and can group up different trials into the same category in some ways. After, I am currently doing the task of using the said code frame and the clinical trials, and am to code them appropriately.

I am forever grateful for this opportunity to work with Dr. Ogbogu, and the experiences that I have had and the different aspects of academia and researching that I was able to learn is something that opened me to being interested in working on different projects in the future. If there were to be a

single regret throughout this mentorship and researching program, it is that I feel as though the time flashed by.

Black Youth Mentorship Program and SSHRC Project on Vulnerable Migrant Children

Nasrina Omer

University of Alberta Black Youth Mentorship and Leadership Program

Mentor

Dr. Bukola Salami & Alleson Mason

Throughout the first semester of my last year in high school, I had the honor of being a part of a mentorship program at the University of Alberta for black youth. I also happened to become a research assistant to one of our mentors, Dr. Bukola Salami. From the mentorship and RA position combined, I learned many things that I would have not, had I not been in this program. Through the mentorship, my peers and I met and learned from a variety of individuals, from professors, to graduate students, to those well into their career and those just starting out. We meet every Saturday for a workshop on a variety of different topics. I learned how to properly conduct a literature search, how to find the right scholarships to apply to, how to finance myself for when I enter university, how to write a proper essay, along with a multitude of other life skills. I also learned about black history in Canada and the hardships still faced today because of our skin color. Where I learned the most were the career and student panels; university students and professionals were brought to speak to us about their journey through higher education and in the professional field, with many different backgrounds. We had a chance to ask the questions and gain advice from their life experiences. We also had many fun activities with the presenters like jeopardy games and debates around different topics.

As a research assistant, I learned a lot about research and all the hard work it requires. I learned to improve my teamwork and commitment skills, as well as the many processes that teams need to go through to get their research underway. Before I was given my assignments, I had to complete an ethics course which opened up my eyes to the world of research and how much is really considered when one wants to start a research project. I learned about consent and protection of individuals who want to participate, as well as how detailed the REB is with reviewing every project. Under Dr. Bukola and her team, I was assigned under the Child Migration project. My job was to look through multiple government documents and create data

analysis based on different topics the research was split into. The research gave me the chance to understand Canada's immigration policies and Alberta's education policies better. As a student, it was quite interesting to learn about these policies and how they affected everyone. On top of that I also learned about the struggles of immigrant families; not just the effect on parents, but their children as well. During the course of the internship, we had meetings every two weeks for the teams to update each other on their progress. This experience opened my eyes into the world of what university students are involved in, and the innovations Dr. Bukola has made. It helped me improve my presentation skills, as we presented our work to each other. There were many different aspects involved within Dr. Bukola's research such as getting interviews, contacting companies, creating grant requests and more.

I have learned how to manage my time; the internship coinciding with my school semester has taught me how to block my time for specific tasks so I can finish as much as possible. This internship has also taught me how to take big assignments and break them down into manageable tasks. Although sometimes things become overwhelming, I learned how to manage my time and prioritize my tasks. As I have said before, the speakers that were invited to talk to us also gave me amazing advice that I can't wait to implement. This program has given me insight on many aspects of my future, and I'm very excited to start my path in the coming year. If I had the chance to be a part of this program again, I would take it without hesitation.

African Youth Mental Health Stream

Iruoghene Okerri

Faculty Of Nursing

Mentor: Bukola Salami

The Black Youth Mentorship & Leadership program has been a great program that I am glad to say I was part of and I would highly suggest others to take advantage of the program when they get a chance. The program truly helped educate me as a unique black individual. I discovered my strengths and it helped me work on my weaknesses. There were numerous workshops and presentations we had during the last few 3 months. My favorite was the writing workshops and the RBC presentation. The presentation by RBC was quite insightful on financial management. The leaders of the program, Dr. Bukola, and Dr. Kariwo were excellent mentors filled with kindness and true support for me and my peers as we went through the program. I got a chance to meet some amazing people and hear their experiences, which motivated me to reach for my goal and even have greater standards for myself. It was also nice to make acquaintances and new friends. The program helped with my social networking and I am happy to know that I have different individuals I can turn to for academic advice for post-secondary years and some critical advice.

During the program, I got to hear about different individual's journey towards their careers and where they currently are in life. It was truly inspiring. I loved the breakout rooms where we had discussions about each presentation. Specifically, Robyn's breakout group was interesting and entertaining. Her character and energy transferred to each of us and got us more interested in our discussions allowing us to think more critically. The afro quiz and discussion about black history was truly a memorable aspect of the program as it all showed how truly engaged we were in the program. It also gave us more control in our discussions and opportunities to share our experiences.

Getting an opportunity to work as a research assistant was something I loved and I am grateful that the program gave me a chance to work in a professional environment. Considering this was my first job, I was quite nervous and not as confident in my work. However, over time, I got a better understanding of what I was to do and enjoyed working with others and my mentor, Dr. Bukola. As a member of the Health and Immigration Policies and Practices Research Program, I completed research related to black

youth mental health and implications for service providers. My main role was to compile a list of Africa child wellbeing stakeholders and complete an infographic with information necessary for mental health service providers. These assignments were quite interesting and highlight areas that I need to work on and make myself a better writer for academic purposes and future work experience. After working with Dr. Bukola, I would be interested in working as a research assistant again as it was quite fun and academically challenging which I do not mind enduring.

Through my journey being a research assistant and a mentor in the Black Mentorship & Leadership Program, I learned valuable information about myself and the world that I am about to truly enter once high school is done. For most of my life, I have been used to being noticed as an individual of color, rather than the unique attributes that I have to offer. In this program, there were a lot of things for me to grasp and I learned more about myself and how to handle myself in such situations where I would be viewed in a negative form based on my race. I also got to learn how to handle myself in a professional environment keeping me prepared for my future work experiences. I would like to thank Dr. Bukola and all the individuals that have put their time and effort into making this program possible for me, my peers, and future generations to come. This program has truly been an experience and I am grateful to be a part of an excellent program in the making.

Working as a Research Assistant for Health and Immigrant Policies and Practices Research Program

Mentee: Anjolaoluwa Oyelami

Mentor: Bukola Salami

Black Youth and Mentorship Program

Working as a research assistant for the last three months and participating in the Black Youth Mentorship Program has given me the chance to learn about what it means to be a part of a workplace and more about myself. It has given me many resourceful tools and tips that I will take with me into postsecondary and has opened me to many chances to grow academically.

In the span of these three months I was given the opportunity to do a variety of literature research on social, educational, and economic outcomes of black children and youth in Canada. Research on child welfare, gender relations and peer relations and research on migration and global context for black youth and children in Canada. In addition to doing literature research I also got the chance to develop a list of resources for black parents in Alberta and organize references. Every Saturday I was fortunate enough to learn a different lesson from fascinating speakers that range from financial advice to learning about black identity. One of my favourite experiences throughout this mentorship was being a part of an actual university class through zoom. I got the opportunity to see how teachers and students interact in a postsecondary level course. It was amazing to get a glimpse of how my classes may be in postsecondary.

Through getting this wonderful experience I have learned the importance of prioritising my workload. Balancing school and work gave me the ability to determine what was the most imperative thing for me to do at that moment. I learned the importance of time management, in a day we only have twenty-four hours and I have learned to ensure that I use every hour I have to do things efficiently. I learned the importance of planning ahead. When I planned what I wanted to do for my day or week I found that it made things a lot easier for me and helped me to remain organized. Taking risks is another important thing I learned. It is important because more times than not, taking risks will work out in your favour and you will always learn something from taking a risk, whether or not it goes the way you expected. Lastly, I have learned that asking

questions is more than okay. I found there were times when I was hesitant to ask questions or didn't ask them at all in fear of being overbearing to others. This only led to more confusion and I quickly learned that I am not expected to know everything. Asking questions gives me an opportunity to learn and clarify things I do not understand. It is not something to fear but rather to exercise on a daily basis.

All of this information will help me in the future by preparing me for post secondary. There was one Saturday devoted to post secondary students talking to us and answering our questions about what it means to be in post secondary. I can now take that information and apply it to my life when it comes time to use it. This information will also encourage me in the future to take risks and cooperate in projects that will help my community.

As a result of participating in these projects and learning many useful lessons, I now have a lot more knowledge about not only what it means to be the best version of myself academically and mentally, but what it means to be a person of colour. Being a person of colour is a privilege that I now pride myself in but I have learned that it should not be my main drive for accomplishing my goals. My love for what I am doing should be my motivation. Because as wonderful as it is to be black, my colour is not what defines me as a person, but my actions in my everyday life. One of the most important things that I have learned while being in this mentorship program/ research assistant job is a lesson from Dr. Salami, to always say thank you for every opportunity I get. So to Dr. Salami and to everyone who was involved in this program I would like to say thank you. Thank you for how much you have helped me and prepared me for the future. It is something that I can only repay you back for by going out and using all the tools you have equipped me with to make society a better place for future generations.



E62-67 Gates

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Black Youth Leadership and Mentorship Program

FEBRUARY 2021

