

Canadian Children and Race: Toward an Antiracism Analysis

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Psychological research on Canadian children and race has shown that young White and racialized children generally have a pro-White bias. While scholars have utilized developmental or social psychological explanations for this finding, none have used an antiracism lens to interpret children's racial attitudes or to develop an antiracism pedagogy. To address this research gap, this article uses antiracism theory as an analytical tool to explore the social-historical processes that have affected how children evaluate racial differences and White identity. It also briefly proposes antiracism teaching practices specific to early childhood education settings.

Keywords: antiracism; Canadian children; early childhood education; race; racial attitudes; young children

“Race” and racism are fundamental organizing principles of both Canadian and American society, and many scholars have focused on how they influence young children's perceptions of themselves, others, and their social worlds, especially in the United States. A large body of psychological literature focusing on children and race has explored the recognition of racial criteria (termed racial awareness), identification with racial traits and group labels (referred to as self-identification), and in-group and out-group attitudes. Many early studies (e.g., Clark & Clark, 1947; Fox & Jordan, 1973; Hunsberger, 1978) assessed children's competencies in all three dimensions, but more recent studies have tended to focus on racial attitudes, with a new but related inquiry examining children's implicit bias (e.g., Baron & Banaji, 2006; Dunham, Baron, & Banaji, 2006; Newheiser & Olson, 2012; Rutland, Cameron, Milne, & McGeorge, 2005). In both the American and the Canadian context, some research on children's racial attitudes has explored how children in Euro-dominated societies engage in the racialized discourse of their specific social context by using socially constructed meanings

of difference to interpret and evaluate (positively and negatively) White and non-White racial identities. For example, psychological research asserts that young White children, especially between the ages of 3 and 5, prefer, and have more positive attitudes about, the dominant White group; conversely, data on minority children (and Black children in particular) reveal a pro-White bias, while other studies indicate more positive in-group attitudes (Aboud, 1987, 1988).

It is important to note that the finding of a pro-White bias, for example, among racialized children, has been critiqued in the scholarly literature. For example, researchers (e.g., Banks, 1976; Cross, 1985; Spencer, 1984) have cautioned against conflating African American children's pro-White bias with low self-esteem. Stated another way, an African American child can exhibit a positive attitude toward White identity and yet still hold or maintain a positive self-concept (Spencer, 1984).

Scholars have also highlighted the methodological limitations of Clark and Clark's (1947) “doll study” technique (e.g., Baldwin, 1979; Brand, Padilla, & Ruiz, 1974; Byrd, 2012). In light of these criticisms, Canadian researchers developed a multiresponse measure (e.g., Doyle & Aboud, 1995), while other Canadian scholars (along with scholars from Australia, the UK, and the US) have moved away from the quantitative study of racial attitudes and from developmentalist and positivist approaches altogether. They have instead taken up critical and postfoundational theories and qualitative approaches to rethink children's understandings of race by exploring

children's lived experiences with race and, by extension, racial discourses (e.g., see Brown, Souto-Manning, & Laman, 2010; MacNaughton & Davis, 2009; MacNaughton, Davis, & Smith, 2010; MacNevin & Berman, 2016; Pacini-Ketchabaw & Berikoff, 2008; Rosen, 2015).

A key researcher in the area of children's attitudes about race in Canada, Frances Aboud (1988, 2008), used a socio-cognitive developmental framework to argue that racial attitudes among White children younger than 7 derive from primarily age-based cognition, which restricts their ability to attend to internal characteristics, thereby giving rise to negative attitudes about persons who are racially different from themselves. Other researchers have applied different frameworks, such as social psychological approaches, to clarify the meaning and development of racial attitudes among White and racialized children, but to date, none have used an antiracism lens to explore the socio-political nature of children's racial attitudes in the Canadian context. In other words, an antiracism exegesis continues to be sorely lacking in the extant literature on Canadian children's racial attitudes. As well, few scholars have conceptualized or offered a clearly defined antiracism teaching pedagogy for early Canadian childhood educators. Therefore, this paper accepts the findings that a pro-White attitude bias exists and addresses this research gap by situating children's racial attitudes within an analysis of key antiracist principles.

Furthermore, unlike previous research conducted in the United States, the present study explores multicultural discourse in Canada to illustrate how the conceptual underpinnings (and social practices) of such narratives are operationalized in Canadian society, allowing young children to construct meanings of White and racialized identities. We deconstruct, interrogate, and analyze the available data on Canadian children and race, drawing on themes from the antiracism literature.

Employing Antiracism to Interpret Racial Attitudes

Our process of using antiracism as an analytical tool can be summarized as follows. In the course of our literature review, we identified patterns in the data specifically regarding the findings about racial attitudes among White and racialized children. Then, we interrogated the main themes in the empirical literature by engaging with specific precepts of antiracism. In other words, while analyzing the data, we posed the following questions:

1. From a more general perspective, how can antiracism explain such findings?
2. What specific feature of antiracism can account for such a finding?
3. In regard to the statistical data, what do these selections signify? Why did the participants ascribe specific features to one racial group and not another? What discourses in the larger societal context enable the child to encode specific meanings to specific bodies?

Building on Pacini-Ketchabaw, Nxumalo, Kocher, Elliot, and Sanchez (2015), we problematized the data further by investigating how the data on Canadian children and race may reproduce dominant social constructions of race. Using a more race-centered analysis, we also considered what "material, linguistic, and discursive elements might come together to shape" (Pacini-Ketchabaw et al., 2015, p. 53) which racialized elements young children value in the Canadian context.

Our approach can be characterized as iterative because it included multiple readings and exegeses of the data. Guided by our research questions and relevant antiracism features, we identified key interpretations which, upon further probing, provided the conceptual basis for articulating an antiracism pedagogy in Canadian early childhood education. In the end, we move beyond a definition of antiracism in early childhood education, proposing a brief list of practical suggestions on how to enact antiracist practices in the early childhood classroom.

Rationale for an Antiracism Analysis

Scholarly investigations on Canadian children and race tend to use a developmental perspective to explain children's racial attitudes. This section explores how antiracism theory provides fundamental tenets that are in stark contrast to such interpretations and can provide new ways to deconstruct and problematize empirical findings related to Canadian children and race. By applying an antiracism perspective, the following discussion engages with and supports the works of early childhood reconceptualists who continue to challenge dominant discourses in early childhood education (e.g., Bloch, 1992; Cannella, Swadener, & Che, 2007; Swadener &

Kessler, 1991; Yelland, 2005) and have advocated for antiracism pedagogy in early learning contexts (e.g., Pacini-Ketchabaw, Berikoff, Elliot, & Tucker, 2007).

We will demonstrate that specific precepts of antiracism can be applied to clarify how children in the Canadian context construct meanings of their identities and those of others through the process of racialization. Specifically, we will focus on the “saliency of race,” whereby race plays a role in perpetuating inequities among dominant and racialized groups while also legitimizing the lived experiences that derive from one’s racial positioning in the social order (Dei, 1996, 1999, 2017). Antiracism theory can also help clarify and critique the power relations that are embedded in Whiteness and knowledge production (Dei, 2000), as well as the historical processes, such as colonization, that have contributed to present-day White power and privilege (Dei, 1996, pp. 28–29).

We will demonstrate that an antiracist analysis of White power, privilege, and knowledge production in the context of children’s knowledge of and experience with racism is a counter-hegemonic approach to early childhood theory and practice. This kind of analysis can reveal how the dominant perspectives of children, especially “developmentally appropriate” practices, frame not only the interpretations of children’s racial understandings, but also pedagogical approaches to addressing issues of race and racism in the classroom. Therefore, we will apply an antiracist analysis of Canadian children and race as a counter-narrative to the prevailing theoretical orientations and assumptions that currently constrain antiracism pedagogy in the early years. We will focus on the specific dimensions of antiracism theory and show how its precepts can offer a more nuanced and critical perspective on racial attitudes among Canadian children. While considerable research has focused on children and race in the American context, our discussion explores the Canadian context and discourse about multiculturalism, specifically how it relates to issues of difference and diversity.

Discourses of Diversity: Multiculturalism in Canada and Antiracist and Anticolonial Critiques

Canada prides itself on its commitment to multiculturalism, but the origins (and purposes) of Canadian multiculturalism policy tend to be overlooked. Chazan, Helps, Stanley, and Thakkar (2011) note that “the initial impetus for a multiculturalism policy did not stem from an expansive understanding of Canada’s manifold diversity. Rather it came from attempts to solve long-standing tensions between French and English Canada” (p. 1). Such dissent was a significant contributor to the development of a multicultural policy. An initial response, however, was the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, implemented in 1963 by Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson (Kymlicka, 2015; Wong & Guo, 2015). While the multiculturalism policy was established in 1971, it was not until 1988 that the federal government approved the Multiculturalism Act (Wong & Guo, 2015).

Over the years, scholars have offered various critiques of Canadian multicultural policy, and a considerable body of literature has focused on its limitations (see e.g., Fleras & Elliot, 1992; St. Denis, 2011). One significant theme in antiracist analyses of multiculturalism is that such discourse “elides both race and racism” (Srivastava, 1997, p. 117) while accenting “cultural differences,” and these differences are confined to, and imputed on, racialized bodies (James, 2001). In essence, multiculturalism relegates difference and culture to non-White bodies and in the process normalizes Whiteness. Apart from operating as a method of reinscribing White identity as “not raced” and the “norm,” multiculturalism has also been criticized for failing to acknowledge and disrupt unequal power relations that are largely demarcated along racial lines (e.g., Salojee, 2004; Simpson, James, & Mack, 2011). Overall, the deliberate omission of articulating how power and privilege function in the multicultural discourse maintains the status quo, reinforcing the state serving as a hegemonic apparatus to maintain White supremacy in the Canadian context.

For example, historical evidence reveals that the inclusion of the Multiculturalism Act in Canadian law was certainly not based on the moral intent to redress past injustices committed against Indigenous and racialized peoples or to foster an antiracist or anticolonial state. Some scholars have suggested that the multicultural policy has worked to subvert Indigenous peoples’ resistance to ongoing political and social colonization (e.g., St. Denis, 2011). For instance, based on her work with Indigenous teachers, St. Denis (2011) indicated that within the school context, multiculturalism limits the inclusion of and engagement with Indigenous worldviews and knowledges (St. Denis, 2011). From a more political perspective, Bannerji (2000) writes that multiculturalism “also sidelined the claims of Canada’s aboriginal population, which had displayed a propensity toward armed struggles for land claims” (p. 9).

A constitutive element of multiculturalism is tolerance for cultural diversity, but the articulation of culture allows the Canadian state not only to reduce Indigenous ways of being and knowing to merely another expression of difference (Thobani, 2007), but also to dismiss their distinct positioning as people who occupied the land prior to the advent of European colonization (St. Denis, 2011; Thobani, 2007). We argue that it is within such discourses that work to “other” non-White bodies that Canadian children develop particular understandings/meanings of race.

Canadian Children's Racial Attitudes: Research Overview

In contrast to American research about racial attitudes among children, which began in the late 1930s, research on racial attitudes among Canadian children began in earnest in the 1970s. Aboud (1977) used picture books containing images of fictional characters from different racial groups and found that among her sample of kindergarten and grade 1 Chinese Canadian, White, and Indigenous children, all participants preferred the White character. She also found differences by age: Indigenous first-graders had more positive attitudes about their own group and "Eskimo" characters (although problematic by today's standards, this was the word used in the 1977 study). George and Hoppe (1979) conducted a study with Indigenous and White school children from integrated and nonintegrated schools and observed similar results: When asked "Which person has the nicest colour of skin," data showed that female students in the second grade selected the White stimuli most frequently. This same pattern of White preference was also found among the grade 2 Indigenous students. Interestingly, with respect to the friendship question (i.e., "Which one of these men/women would you like to have as a friend when you grow up?"), data representing all grade levels revealed that White children in the integrated setting did not choose their own group with the same frequency as those in the nonintegrated school; they selected other racial groups as well. Crooks (1970) conducted a doll-test study with African Canadian and White children ranging in age from 4 to 5. The author found that when exposed to an interracial program, African Canadian children expressed more positive in-group attitudes. Crooks also found that, similar to the African Canadian participants, White children also responded more favourably to the Black doll after taking part in the interracial program. This interracial program included a balanced representation of White and African Canadian children, as well as African Canadian and White teachers. In describing the program, Crooks (1970) asserted that "a great deal of emphasis was placed upon the development of self-respect, especially in Negro children" (p. 143). Such approach is a particularly salient feature of antiracism education, whereby teachers, through pedagogies and other activities, affirm children's respective racial identities. It is important to note that Crooks observed a pro-White bias in the control group.

Overall, research on racial attitudes among Canadian children has established a number of central findings that are consistent with American research. First, from an early age, White and racialized children demonstrate favourable attitudes toward Whites. Bagley and Young (1988), using the Color Meanings Test (CMT) and the Preschool Racial Attitude Measure (PRAM), found that in comparison to other Caribbean children tested, Jamaican children in Toronto exhibited the most pro-Black attitudes; however, the authors further indicated that "between one-quarter and one-fifth of the black children in Toronto rejected their own ethnic identity and color in favor of whiteness" (p. 53). These results parallel Hunsberger's (1978) findings of pro-White bias among "Native" Canadian children, as evidenced by their preference for the White doll. Second, scholars have argued that age influences racial attitudes among White children: After the age of 7, they express less negative racial attitudes than their younger counterparts (Aboud, 2008).

For example, Doyle and Aboud (1995) explored how White children aged 6 to 9 evaluated Whites, Blacks, and "Native Indians." Based on the results from the PRAM II (Williams, Best, Boswell, Mattson, & Graves, 1975), they found that kindergarten children tended to be more prejudiced than third-graders. Another significant finding was that both age groups showed more prejudice toward Blacks than toward "Native Indians." Based on the Multiresponse Racial Attitude Measure, data revealed that while positive attitudes about Blacks and "Native Indians" increased with age, such changes did not alter White children's overall positive evaluation of their own group. Thus, while participants' out-group attitudes became more positive, findings showed that bias oriented toward the in-group remained relatively stable. More recently, Aboud (2003) found that among children aged 4 to 7, negative out-group attitudes were most pronounced among the younger cohort (5-year-olds). Phomphakdy (2005) also discovered that preschool-aged White Canadian children had positive attitudes about their own group and negative attitudes about African Canadians and Asians. In contrast, minority children preferred the White group more than their own, and exhibited higher levels of prejudice toward other racialized groups.

Turning the Lens: An Antiracism Analysis

This section focuses on an important issue that is sometimes neglected in scholarship about children and attitudes about race: antiracism. An antiracism framework can help broaden the scholarship about children and race and offer an alternative exegesis on how issues of race and racism play out in the lives of young Canadian children. First, it is important to critically examine the main themes in the data on Canadian children and race: the positive evaluation of White identity by White and racialized children and racialized children's in-group racial attitudes. This section will explore how antiracism theory, with its critique of Whiteness, can explain the processes (such as power and privilege) that allow White children to develop particular meanings about race in the Canadian context.

Many scholars have explored the defining features of antiracism/antiracist education in the Canadian context (e.g., Dei, 1996, Dei & Simmons, 2010; Thomas, 1984) and particularly the goal of social transformation through approaches that lay bare, interrogate,

and ultimately disrupt institutional practices that maintain and support a social order marked by racial inequities. For example, we know that environments that do not support children's racial identity lead to Black and biracial children being placed in remedial classes and teachers having lower expectations of their ability to succeed in school (Wang & Huguley, 2012). Further, antiracism employs an intersectional lens insofar as other axes of differences and oppression are considered using a race-centered analysis (Dei & McDermott, 2014). Antiracist education examines the role of social institutions in creating pathological meanings/representations of non-White groups (Rezai-Rashti, 1995). An antiracism discourse is also informed by analyses of Whiteness in relation to both privilege and power (Dei, 2000).

Whiteness and its defining characteristics is an important part of a comprehensive analysis of racial attitudes among White and minority Canadian children. To contextualize this discussion, it is necessary to first define Whiteness. Levine-Rasky (2013) conceptualized Whiteness as "not as a people, but as the quality of a set of social relations defined by differential access to power, resources, rewards, meaning, status, and futures" (p. 18). In other words, Whiteness as a system of racialized power (see Bonilla-Silva, 2003, p. 271) operates across various social spheres, and the outcome is referred to as White privilege (see McIntosh, 1990). Material and psychological rewards associated with White privilege (termed "wages" of Whiteness; see Du Bois, 1935) derive not only from an ideology of race, where White identity is represented as superior to other racial groups (Agnew, 2007), but also from White supremacy (Leonardo, 2009). Indeed, the belief in White superiority is a key characteristic of White supremacy (Bonds & Inwood, 2016). Yet, while such a view points to a foundational premise, White supremacy has also been defined as "a political, economic, and cultural system in which Whites overwhelmingly control power and material resources" (Ansley, 1997, p. 592). Concomitantly, White privilege as a corollary of White supremacy "allows the dominant group to define and articulate difference" (Dei, 2000, pp. 27–28). Such a process is not only characterized by the imputing of specific meanings to non-White bodies, but also involves the obscuring and normalizing of Whiteness. In effect, Whiteness becomes a social location of racialized privilege, which, along with its positive representations on both structural and cultural levels, might explain the deeper meanings behind White children's racial perceptions and attitudes.

Inherent in the construction of Whiteness, that is, as racial privilege, is its "normal" or "invisible" status. The process by which Whiteness takes on such characteristics is complex, and it involves historical, social, political, and economic factors, all of which are shaped by power relations between dominant and nondominant groups. Such privilege, working in tandem with White power, then allows White identity to function as the norm because, as part of its construction, the process of racialization has marked non-White bodies as "other." Consequently, racial meanings, further enhanced and buttressed by racial imageries, texts, and practices, position and associate White identity as a unifying symbol of power and human worth. For young White children, this discourse of Whiteness, along with the privileges it brings—an individual and institutional sense of belonging (which may be likened to psychological safety in the context of self-identification) and positive representation of one's group—may give rise to their awareness of their favourable position in the Canadian social context and, by extension, their positive in-group attitudes. However, we can extend the analysis a bit further: White children's positive evaluation of their own group is not solely related to a recognition of White positive representation: In comparison to other groups, they are not perceived as the "other"—and are not treated as such. Indeed, we argue that young White Canadian children have psychologically benefited from the wages of Whiteness, and their pro-group attitudes reflect these benefits. In short, Whiteness secures positive in-group attitudes for young White Canadian children.

Apart from all of the cultural messages and influences, White children play an active role in performing their racial understandings. Scholars have found that White Canadian children, especially those aged 4 to 6, have positive racial attitudes about their own racial group and tend to rate out-groups more negatively than their own (Doyle & Aboud, 1995; Johnson & Aboud, 2013). This enactment is a powerful display of White privilege and power. By utilizing an ideology of race that sustains the dominance of their own racial group, these children demonstrate their privilege to engage in a process of racialization that engenders psychological and symbolic benefits to themselves, as well as their privilege to "exclude" others from such advantages. Moreover, such benefits derive from the construction of Whiteness as property, that is, the institutionalized value assigned to White identity (Harris, 1993). Indeed, from an antiracism perspective, using Whiteness as an analytical tool is critical to uncovering how larger structural forces (e.g., cultural and social institutions), along with their historical antecedents, shape White and minority children's racial attitudes in the Canadian context.

Conversely, for some minority Canadian children, empirical data suggest that Whiteness influences the construction and content of their in- and out-group racial attitudes. Specifically, it is the "elevation of whiteness through the racialization of others" (Agnew, 2007, p. 18), to which minority children are exposed in the Canadian context, that impinges on their evaluation of their own and other racial groups. This process is ideological in nature. Dei (2000) writes that "it conjures images, conceptions and promises that provide the frameworks through which dominant and other groups represent, interpret, understand and make sense of social existence" (p. 28).

In essence, Whiteness as power (Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Levine-Rasky, 2013) scripts and informs a child's view of race and racialized identity, including the worth such differences signify.

Another important part of an antiracism analysis of racial attitudes among Canadian children is the recognition that race produces "real effects" for racialized persons. While race carries no biological validity, considerable evidence supports the argument that racialized persons experience White-dominated societies quite differently from their White counterparts (Dei & Simmons, 2010). For young Canadian non-White children, lived realities sometimes take the form of exclusion by White peers (e.g., MacNevin & Berman, 2016), as well as the internalization of a racial hierarchy that purports the superiority of the dominant White group. MacNevin and Berman (2016) used participant observations of children's play as one method of data collection about children and race in the Canadian context and reported the following:

Sarah (age 4, Egyptian) and Ruby (age 3.5, half European and half Afro-Trinidadian) were playing in the dramatic play centre. Ruby was holding a White baby doll while Sarah was holding a Black baby and rummaging through a basket of clothes. She uncovered a White baby in the clothes basket, picked it up and dropped the Black doll on the floor. Sarah told Ruby the babies were hungry and needed to be fed. The two girls laid their babies on the table and pretended to feed them carrots; they did not pretend to feed another Black baby that was also lying on the table. Ruby and Sarah then brought all three dolls from the table to an empty bookshelf adjacent to the dramatic play centre, and said they were putting the babies to bed because they were sick. They placed the two White dolls together on one shelf and the Black doll on another shelf. I pointed to the Black doll and asked why that baby was sleeping by herself; Ruby responded, "She didn't fit." Sarah soon announced that the babies were awake. Both children picked up a White doll and left the Black doll on the shelf. While the children selected some new clothes and began dressing their dolls, I pointed to the Black doll that was still lying on the floor, where Sarah had dropped it earlier. I asked, "Whose baby is this?" Sarah replied, "I dunno. I'm not having that one." (p. 831)

This scenario illustrates the children's preference for the White doll. Such preference is clearly linked to their recognition of power differentials and how these accord with race and privilege in Canadian society. MacNevin and Berman (2016) built on Foucault's concept of discourse and offered a similar interpretation of the play episode, writing that "children are active agents who draw on the discourses available to them in the historical, social and political context in which they live. The discourses they draw upon may be observed in their play" (p. 829).

Aboud and Doyle (1995) assessed racial attitudes among kindergarten and third-grade Black Canadian children using the PRAM II and the MRA (Multiresponse Racial Attitude Measure). While their data revealed pro-Black attitudes, these findings were most pronounced among third-grade students; kindergarten-aged children's evaluations indicated lower levels of in-group bias (Aboud & Doyle, 1995). These results are consistent with earlier (see Bagley & Young, 1988; Corenblum & Annis, 1987) and more recent (see Phomphakdy, 2005) investigations that revealed racialized children's positive perceptions of the majority White racial group. It is important to note, however, that a comprehensive analysis of such racial evaluations cannot be divorced from a critical understanding of both ideological (e.g., dominant constructions of racialized difference) and institutional forces (e.g., school settings, the media)—and how these converge to secure White racial domination—that allow children to simultaneously value one identity while denigrating the other.

Indeed, these results suggest that children can also partake in the unequal power relations that characterize the shaping of racial identities, including the meanings superimposed on racialized bodies. Simply stated, an internalization of Whiteness suggests that the power differential between minority and majority group members constrains the individual agency of some children, in the sense that it distorts how they come to see, appreciate, or value their own racial identity. Based on this premise, it can be argued that the "effect" of race, particularly in the lives of some minority children, manifests in the racial perceptions they use to evaluate White identity, such as desirability or superiority, and the ways in which such beliefs guide their understandings or judgments of non-White groups.

Although research has demonstrated a pro-White bias among minority children, it is important to note that parents and teachers can play integral roles in promoting a positive racial identity in children. Some American research has explored parental practices that center on building racial pride and teaching children about the meaning of their racial identity, referred to as "racial socialization" (Hughes et al., 2006). While data regarding racial socialization practices among Canadian parents are somewhat sparse (for notable exceptions, see Calliste, 2003; Hall, 2016; Lalonde, Jones, & Stroink, 2008), overall, the antiracism literature supports educational

efforts aimed at cultivating a positive racial identity by acknowledging students' lived experiences and valuing their cultural and Indigenous knowledges (Dei, 1996).

Teaching Implications: Using Antiracism Practice in the Early Years Classroom

One of the most common approaches to addressing difference and inclusion in the early years is the application of an antibias curriculum (see Derman-Sparks, 1989; Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2010). An antibias approach encompasses all the necessary components of an effective early childhood program that shares a vision of inclusion and equity (Derman-Sparks, LeeKeenan, & Nimmo, 2015). This approach is rooted in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), which encompasses the right to freedom from discrimination of all children. Such an approach “includes addressing issues of personal and social identity, social-emotional relationships with people different from oneself, prejudice, discrimination, critical thinking, and taking action for fairness with children” (Derman-Sparks et al., 2015, p. 3). Derman-Sparks developed this approach in 1989 and has written extensively on the antibias curriculum, but she is also an advocate for antiracist practices, which she links to a developmental perspective (see e.g., Derman Sparks & Ramsey, 2006).

Antibias curricula, though widely supported for providing resources that can encourage and assist children in accepting and valuing all types of differences, have received some criticism over the years. Vandebroek (2007) notes that antibias education builds on the work of developmentalists, and that using this approach may contribute to the avoidance of political discussions about racism. Despite this kind of limitation (which may not be widely discussed), antibias education is used in ECE circles and is taught in a number of preservice ECE courses and programs across Canada (Janmohamed, 2005).

In contrast, an antiracism approach builds on the idea that addressing issues of race and racism is central to any educational practice aimed at transforming the social order (see Husband, 2012, for a discussion of using such an approach in an early years setting in an American context). In the context of early childhood education, it calls for learning activities that encourage children to reflect on the processes inherent in the construction of racial difference: how power differentials structure relationships between White and non-White groups; the racialized nature of institutional power; racial imageries attached to racialized persons and how these signify power imbalances; and the material effects such symbolism creates for racialized persons in the Canadian context.

Within the play-based approach to the early years, teaching from an antiracism perspective requires educators to critically reflect on how they construct their play-based environment, the activities they allow (and how they interpret these), and the types of play materials present in their classroom. As MacNevin and Berman (2016) point out, it is critical that educators do not rely primarily on so-called diverse materials as a means of addressing racial identities/difference in the classroom. In other words, a more effective strategy—and one that is consistent with an antiracism pedagogy—entails including play materials that are representative of different racial backgrounds (e.g., a Black doll or drawing materials such as markers or crayons in different skin tones) *and* critical discussions concerning race and racism. Additionally, antiracism pedagogy calls for educators to interrogate the conceptual underpinnings of play-based learning. In other words, teachers should critically assess play-based learning, particularly in relation to how such an approach may not only reinforce monolithic understandings of children but also marginalize non-Eurocentric forms of play. More pointedly, antiracism critiques Whiteness and knowledge production; therefore, deconstructing and reconceptualizing the knowledge base of early childhood education (as others scholars have shown) can serve as a significant starting point for developing a decolonized and critical antiracism praxis in the early years.

Conversely, because research has demonstrated that children also express their racial preferences and attitudes in peer contexts, teachers must also pay careful attention to how children form their play groups (especially in the dramatic play areas), the interactions between peers, and the language children use to describe not only racial criteria but also non-White groups. A play-based curriculum grounded in the tenets of antiracism, while attributing saliency to race, recognizes the intersections of other markers of difference, such as class and gender, and creates a learning environment in which stereotypical constructions are challenged through not only providing alternate images, but also thoughtfully discussing with children the origins of these symbols and the reasons for their creation (which can be linked to power differentials). It is also vital that teachers supply a range of evidence that counters racist representations of non-White groups.

To conclude, the process by which children come to understand the meaning and social significance of race and the values associated with persons belonging to the dominant group and non-White bodies has been attributed to developmental cognitions and, to a lesser extent, parental influence. From a social-political perspective, scholars have argued that children's racial attitudes are mediated by

discourse, namely race discourse, to which they are exposed in their respective social contexts. This paper has extended their findings by using antiracism theory as an analytical tool to explain the consistent finding of pro-White bias and preference among minority and White Canadian children.

To demonstrate the pedagogical significance of the empirical data, this paper has also provided a brief overview of an antiracism approach specific to the early learning context. Such suggestions, while not exhaustive, build on the idea that it is essential to equip all young children, regardless of social positioning, with the moral imperative to reveal, disrupt, and actively challenge racism. Negating the place of race and racism, or denying the lived realities for some children and their families that derive from structural oppression, only limits the educational experience for all children and supports the many and varied racial injustices prevalent in contemporary Canadian society.

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