

**THREE SOUTH ASIAN IMMIGRANT FATHERS' EXPERIENCES OF CHILD  
WELFARE IN THE GREATER TORONTO AREA (GTA)**

**by**

**Louis Boiragi, BSW, Ryerson University, 2013**

**A Major Research Paper  
presented to Ryerson University**

**in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Master of Social Work  
in the Program of  
Social Work**

**Toronto, Ontario, Canada 2016**

**© Louis Boiragi 2016**

## **AUTHOR'S DECLARATION FOR ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION OF A MRP**

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this MRP. This is a true copy of the MRP, including any required final revisions.

I authorize Ryerson University to lend this MRP to other institutions or individuals for the purpose of scholarly research

I further authorize Ryerson University to reproduce this MRP by photocopying or by other means, in total or in part, at the request of other institutions or individuals for the purpose of scholarly research.

I understand that my MRP may be made electronically available to the public.

## **ABSTRACT**

### **Experiences of Child Welfare of South Asian Immigrant Fathers in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA)**

Master of Social Work, 2016

Louis Boiragi  
Program of Social Work,  
Ryerson University

The research study explores the child welfare system experiences of South Asian immigrant fathers in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). The study provides an overview of the literature related to the child welfare system, its dominant cultural practices, and how interventions impact South Asian immigrant fathers. This study uses Anti-Oppressive Practice Theory (AOP) and Critical Race Theory (CRT) as its theoretical framework to understand the fathers' experiences by analyzing in-depth interviews of the South Asian immigrant fathers who shared their lived experiences with the child welfare system. This study's focus is to give voice and make visible the experiences of these fathers, who feel disappointed, misunderstood, and alienated.

***Key words:*** Child welfare, maltreatment and neglect, racialized families South Asian immigrant fathers, settlement, integration

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the three South Asian Immigrant Fathers who have contributed to the study. I appreciate the time you have taken to meet with me and sharing your unique lived experiences of the child welfare system in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA).

My Major Research could not have been completed without the dedication, wisdom, and patience of my Supervisor, Dr. Kristin Smith, Assistant Professor. I am particularly indebted to Kristin for her guidance and implausible support in enhancing my vision for this study. It was the toughest part of my learning and research, and my privilege that you always came forward to assist me whenever there is a challenge in my research to make it a success.

I would also like to thank some of the professors at Ryerson School of Social Work who taught me, inspired me and supported my work. Lisa Barnoff, Jeniffer Poole, Henry Parada, Cyndy Baskin, Akua Benjamin, Ken Moffatt, Purnima George, and June Ying Yee. You all taught me, guided and encouraged me in my learning and have also been able to facilitate avenues for my strengths.

I also would like to thank Dr. Gordon Pon, who not only taught me but also encouraged me in my research on child welfare. The time you invested to critically review my MRP as Second Reader has contributed significantly to its success.

I would like to thank the school administrative support staff who witnessed all of the stress and grumpiness through the entirety of my social work education: Jeff Edmunds, Milene Ferreira, Kristie Wright, Michelle Free, and Julie Faubert, thank you for your incredible support and assistance that I have had during my study at Ryerson University.

I would like to thank Christopher Brierley, E. Ann McRae, my colleagues and friends I have had the pleasure of meeting and with whom I shared so many memories, thank you for your support and sharing many moments of laughter and tears. I want to thank Joseph Durand, John Pandit, Christopher Cachia, Manal Srouji, and Jenell Austin for your support in editing my work.

I want to thank to my Sister Marina Augustina and Brother Pastor Rev. Victor Boiragi, PhD, who have been encouraging, guiding and inspiring me to move forward in my life since boyhood.

Lastly my special thanks to my loving children Kevin Boiragi, Austin Louis & Marilyn Louis, daughter-in-law Amelia Kusmi and sweet 'Didivai' Angelica Magnolia Sanchita Louis.

And to my most loving wife

*Mina Philomina Costa*

Without your support, great sacrifice and contribution, I could not achieve my goal.  
Thank you from my heart.

## **DEDICATION**

To my beloved parents

*Andrew Nondo Boiragi and Francisca Jamini Boiragi*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Chapter 2: Literature Review	4
2.1 History of the Children's Aid Societies	4
2.2 Critiques of the Child Welfare System, Practices and Services	6
2.3 Impact of the Absence of Fathers in Families	10
2.4 Blaming of Mothers	11
2.5 Poverty, Language and Cultural Barriers to Employment	13
2.6 Over-representation of Racialized Children in the Child Welfare System	14
2.7 Migration Experiences of Racialized Fathers	16
2.8 Traditional Ways of Child Rearing and Parenting Culture in the Canadian Context	18
2.9 Limitations of this Study	18
Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework	21
Chapter 4: Methodology	28
4.1 Research Design	28
4.2 Selection of Participants	30
4.3 Data Collection	31

4.4	Data Analysis	31
Chapter 5:	Findings	33
5.1	Child Welfare Intervention as Power Over	33
5.2	Needs Assessment to Support Families	43
5.3	South Asian Patriarchal Parenting Styles	48
5.4	The Need for Fathers' Involvement in Decision Making	50
5.5	Negative Impact of Child Welfare Intervention	54
Chapter 6:	Implications For Practice and Research	58
6.1	Child Welfare Intervention and Approaches	58
6.2	Challenges of Settlement and Integration	59
6.3	Facilitation of Access to Resources	60
6.4	Collaborative Approaches to Intervention	61
6.5	Suggestions for Staff Training and Development	63
Chapter 7:	Conclusion	67

## **LIST OF APPENDICES**

Appendix A – Recruitment Flyer	73
Appendix B – Research Interview Consent Form	74
Appendix C – Invitation to Participate	78
Appendix D – Interview Guide	80
Appendix E – Confidentiality Agreement Form	81
Appendix F – Recruitment Email	82
 LIST OF REFERENCES	 83



## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

South Asian immigrant fathers with educational and professional backgrounds migrate to Canada with a hope of a better life and future for their children and families. After arrival, fathers experience difficulties getting their credentials recognized, securing employment, and finding affordable housing. They encounter barriers to accessing healthcare, and limited resources to support childcare and family maintenance. South Asian immigrant fathers often face difficulties in securing employment because of cultural and language barriers, a lack of Canadian university education, and Canadian work experience (Ahmad, Driver, McNally, & Stewart, 2009; Chaze, 2009; George, 2007; Maiter, Stalker & Alaggia, 2009; Maiter & Stalker, 2011). These stressors increase fathers' frustrations and lead to mental and emotional stress that make life challenging for settlement and integration into Canadian society (Maiter & Stalker, 2011; Reitz, 2005; Sparks & Wolfson, 2001). Along with these settlement challenges, immigrant parents often have negative experiences if their children come into contact with the child welfare system (Maiter & George, 2003; Maiter et al., 2009; Maiter & Stalker, 2011). This research will explore how the dominant culture operates within the child welfare system and how this impacts South Asian immigrant fathers (racialized fathers) from the Anti-Oppression Practice (AOP) and Critical Race Theory (CRT) perspective.

South Asian immigrants are considered 'racialized, visible minorities', and also are included in the category of 'people of colour' or 'black' in some jurisdictions (Statistics Canada, 2006). The term South Asian refers to individuals from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, and it also refers to individuals from Africa, Mauritius, Fiji, the Caribbean, Guyana, Great Britain, and European countries whose ancestry originates from the

Indian subcontinent. Although each of these distinct communities is extremely diverse, it can be argued that members across them will experience similar forms of racialized discrimination when they come in contact with the child welfare system (Ahmad et al., 2009, George & Ramkisson, 1998; Maiter & George, 2003; Maiter & Stalker, 2011). According to the Child and Family Services Act of Ontario (2011) children's services should be provided in a manner that "(i) respects a child's need for continuity of care and for stable relationships within a family and cultural environment [and] (ii) takes into account physical, cultural, emotional, spiritual, mental, and developmental needs and differences among children. Additional services to families should whenever possible "be provided in a manner that respects cultural, religious and regional differences" (Maiter & Leslie, 2014, p. 186). This study examines the experiences of three south Asian men and how they experienced the respect or lack of respect for their culture.

The purpose of this study is to understand how South Asian immigrant fathers experience the child welfare system in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). There is a lack of research addressing these areas and this gap has inspired me to focus on South Asian immigrant fathers within the child welfare system (Maiter et al., 2009; Maiter & Stalker, 2011). In addition to examining fathers' experiences in child welfare systems, my research explores the stressors associated with poverty, loss of social supports, obtaining secure employment, and the barriers impacting cultural and traditional ways of raising children in a Canadian context (Ahmad et al., 2009; Jaycox, Bradley, Stein, Kataoka, Arlene, Pia, & Catalina, 2002; Maiter & Stalker, 2011; Maiter et al., 2009; Storhaug, 2013).

### **My Social Location and Role in Social Work**

As an anti-oppressive researcher, I must acknowledge my insider perspective. As Humphrey (2007) states, the term insider describes a particular situation where the researcher is

a part of the topic being investigated. I, as a South Asian researcher studying the above noted topic, would be considered an insider because of my personal connection to South Asian culture generally, and the subject matter being researched. I have experienced the challenges and barriers that these men have faced and bring this shared experience into the research. As a researcher, in order to facilitate a positive outcome, I must be reflective and aware of my relationships and shared experiences with my research participants. My insider and outsider status as a student/researcher would be a valuable resource, as I am able to mobilise both insider wisdom and an outsider's research tools and perspectives.

As a South Asian immigrant, I am often positioned between two different world views and cultures and, as a result, I have experienced conflict, confusion and compromise. As a Canadian citizen, I have a privileged western identity, while being a South Asian my cultural heritage and skin colour has defined and set me aside as “other” within mainstream Anglo-Saxon/Franco-phone society. The routine question of *where are you really from* has made me realize that being a Canadian is equated to whiteness, and therefore, I have been taught to see myself as the ‘other’ in my new country. I have asked myself where I fit in within the society, and often feel not Canadian or not South Asian enough to fully fit in either category. I, therefore, assume my multiple identities which often leaves me feeling like I exist somewhere in the middle. My own identity has been shaped by the cultural norms and expectations for what it means to be a South Asian immigrant man in Canada. I am a heterosexual, able-bodied, middle class, Christian individual currently studying in the Masters of Social Work program at Ryerson University, Toronto.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

#### **History of the Children's Aid Societies**

“Carbon-dated evidence suggests that Aboriginal peoples have lived on these lands now known as Canada for over 10,500 years (Muckle 1998), raising over 525 generations of children before child welfare and social work were even founded” (Blackstock & Trocme', 2005, p. 2). The child welfare system as Blackstock & Trocme' (2005) noted was “up until the mid-1950s, the only “child welfare” service provided to Aboriginal families and the only service offered their children was residential school placement” (p. 2). Any discussion of the child welfare system in Canada recalls the difficult history of Aboriginal peoples within that set of policies who are First nations (Indian), Metis, and Inuit, and who represent almost 4% of Canada's population (Gough, 2009).

The child welfare system and practice in Canada has a long history of addressing child maltreatment, neglect and “protection” which is “crisis driven” (Gough, 2009, p. 367). This literature review will provide valuable information on the origins of the child welfare system, agency mandates, and practices. The themes of child protection which are discussed in this literature review are: the history of the Children's Aid Societies; critiques of the child welfare system, practices and services; impacts of the absence of fathers in families; poverty, language and cultural barriers to employment; over-representation of racialized groups; migration experiences of racialized fathers; traditional ways of child rearing and parenting; suggestions for improvement; and limitations of this study.

Indigenous people's experience of the dominant culture was oppression during the 'Sixties Scoop', when nearly 40 percent of the 76,000 children and youths were removed from

their families and placed with non-Indigenous white families (Blackstock & Trocme', 2005; Dumbrill, 2003; Pon, Gosine, & Phillips, 2011). By establishing residential schools for Aboriginals in the beginning of the 1800s, the Canadian government, supported by Christian churches, reinforced an assimilation process targeting the elimination of Aboriginality and replacing it with the dominant culture, Euro-western knowledge, and spirituality (Blackstock & Trocme', 2005).

According to Dumbrill (2003), removing children from families was a deliberate effort to eradicate the language and culture of Aboriginal people. This attempt was supported by a Federal stipend given for every Aboriginal child apprehended. The poor treatment of Aboriginal people by the church and child welfare organizations in the name of child protection was the clearest form of oppression and was intended to protect the status-quo of white Canada. This oppression resulted not only in sustaining agency obligations for child protection, but it was intended to protect the so-called social order in the name of poverty reduction, and to socialize Aboriginal children in regards to the dominant western understandings of health, wellbeing, education and civilization (Dubmrill, 2003; Pon et al., 2011). The reasons for the disproportionate removal of Aboriginal children from their families and their adoptive placement were the myriad of traumas brought on by colonization (Blackstock & Trocme', 2005). No significant efforts were initiated by the government "to address the etiological drivers of child maltreatment such as poverty, unemployment, and substandard housing conditions, or the lack of culturally based prevention services" (Blackstock, Trocme', & Bennett, 2004, p. 3).

Social workers had very little consideration of the influence of Euro-western values and beliefs on their decision and planning for Aboriginal children and their families. From this disheartening process, generations of Aboriginal and First Nations children suffered from the

long lasting threat to their wellbeing, both psychologically and physically, and it is said that this will never be reconciled (Blackstock & Trocme', 2005). The devastating impact on Aboriginal and First Nations families language, culture, and social identity, has been immeasurable (Child Welfare Anti-oppression Roundtable, 2009).

### **Critiques of the Child Welfare System, Practices and Services**

Canada is a vast country of 35 million people, living in ten provinces and three northern territories that are large and sparsely populated (Statistics Canada, 2015; Maiter & Leslie, 2014). Each of the ten provinces and three territories has its own organization and legislation, governing individual child welfare systems. In Ontario, 47 separate Children's Aid Societies (CAS) provide child welfare services under the terms of the Child and Family Services Act (1990), the Children's Law Reform Act (2002), and the Family Law Act (2002). CAS is an institution that investigates allegations of child maltreatment and neglect, but primarily supports families to reduce risk for children, and facilitates adoption and foster care services (Maiter & Leslie, 2014). Child welfare services for Aboriginal/First Nations are provided by provincial governments on behalf of the federal government or through First Nations agencies as negotiated by the federal government. Social workers focus on the investigation of complaints, determination of child abuse and neglect, and the assessment of risks for these behaviours (Maiter & Leslie, 2014). The child welfare system has been resistant to the anti-oppression perspective. It is a system rooted "in the efforts of society's privilege to control those they perceive as a threat to their dominance" (Dumbrill, 2003, p. 101).

The child welfare system imposes dominant values on racialized children and their families, and this pattern increases their overrepresentation in the child welfare system. There is a disproportionate representation in child welfare investigations of disadvantaged and

marginalized communities who are living below the poverty line, such as immigrants, minorities and other racialized families as well as people with disabilities, single mothers, Aboriginals and those who do not identify as heterosexual (Child Welfare Anti-oppression Roundtable, 2009; Clarke, 2011; Dumbrill, 2003; Moffatt, 1999; Strega, Fleet, Brown, Dominelli, Callahan, & Walmsley, 2008). For example, South Asian immigrant children and their families are over-represented in the child welfare system compared to their proportion in the general census because of their highest substantiation rate of physical abuse and marginalization (Maiter & Stalker, 2011).

South Asian immigrant fathers experience employment barriers, settlement problems, financial problems, physical and mental health issues, which in turn affects their children's wellbeing and household (Maiter et al., 2009). These are examples of the struggles facing culturally diverse parents when they are assessed. Intervening social workers need to have an understanding of racial, cultural, and ethnic diversity integrated into their child protection practice. Child protection workers need mandatory training as they work with the many diverse South Asian family structures (Maiter & Leslie, 2014). Without the necessary training for child protection workers, these groups will continue to be over-represented within the child welfare system for many reasons such as inappropriate and inconsistent interventions and assessments by workers. This illustrates the challenge of assessing culturally diverse parents by social workers who lack the skills required to work with diverse South Asian immigrant family structures (Maiter & Leslie, 2014). Abrams and Molo (2009) advocate that workers can use Critical Race Theory to address some of these problems within the cultural competence model because it has "diverse epistemological interpretations and curricular applications" that can increase "self-awareness and skills development" (p. 247).

CAS operates using a dominant cultural framework, and therefore systematically implements a privileged agenda of “civilized” society on disadvantaged and marginalized groups and individuals (Dumbrill, 2003, p.104). This point is discussed by Wong and Yee (2010) as they explain that CAS is often criticised for “imposing dominant values on marginalized communities”, and failing to take into account the harmful impact of social and structural inequalities on families and children (p. 6). The system's dominant values institutionalize the ‘othering’ of these disadvantaged and marginalized groups (Child Welfare Anti-oppression Roundtable, 2009; Young, 2000).

Historically, the child welfare system was originally designed to serve poor and working class white families. However, black children became over-represented when they were evaluated according to the systems’ dominant values which are enforced by the prevailing institutional racism (Hill, 2004). More racialized children, including black children, are removed from their families than white children, and black children are placed in foster care for longer periods than white children (Hill, 2004). The over-representation of marginalized children is increased because all marginalized groups are defined as inferior by the dominant group within the child welfare system (Dumbrill, 2003). For example, Black children are more likely to be labeled as “mentally or educationally retarded” and they are more likely “to be suspended or expelled compared to white youth for the same infractions of school regulations” (Hill, 2004, p. 22). In such situations, parents are often blamed by school teachers for their children’s aggressive behaviour rather than be invited to help their child improve their behaviour at school.

CAS risk assessments are problematic because social workers focus on parental behaviour rather than on how children are coping (Strega & Carriere, 2009). Social workers who rely upon risk assessment tools fail to consider what particular children [South Asian immigrant]



are facing in each particular situation (Strega & Carriere, 2009). Workers do not consider any structural inequalities impacting a family context, and instead, they blame mothers for ‘failure to protect’ children from child abuse and neglect, and exclude fathers from decision making (Brown, Callahan, Strega, Walmsley, & Dominelli, 2009; Strega & Carrier, 2009). Social workers use their state mandated power over parents when assessing child safety in the family home. Strega & Carriere (2009) argue that risk assessments must be done in a manner to ensure that parents are made aware of the meanings of a worker’s involvement and to ensure that they understand the mandatory nature of child protection in relation to child maltreatment and neglect. However, as Dumbrill (2006) notes, child welfare practice is a "power over" approach rather than a "power with" approach (pp. 30-31). This discussion will explore the lived experiences of CAST power that the three participants in this study underwent.

According to Dumbrill (2006) the *power over approach* describes how social workers and agencies use their power to focus upon their mandates and provincial standards. The *power with approach*, however, involves social workers and agencies focusing upon prevention of child maltreatment and child neglect through counselling and advocacy. The key difference between the two approaches is that the power over approach focuses more upon the agency and its mandate rather than the power with approach which has the strengthening of families and prevention of child maltreatment and neglect as its goal (Dumbrill, 2006a; Maiter et al., 2009; Strega & Carriere, 2009). Child welfare policies and practices rarely consider the immigrant process and the considerable stress that affects parents and their children (Clarke, 2011; Maiter & Stalker, 2011), and workers are often unaware of the racist tone to their daily child welfare practices (Clarke, 2011; Gosine & Pon, 2011). Economically, the dominant culture continues to implement a privileged agenda on disadvantaged and marginalized people who are living under

poverty (Child Welfare Anti-oppression Roundtable, 2009; Clarke, 2011; Dumbrill, 2003; Gosine & Pon, 2011; Wong & Yee, 2010).

### **Impact of the Absence of Fathers in Families**

Child welfare services have traditionally failed to engage men in childcare planning. There is a tendency of workers to ignore men's involvement in families, and to provide greater outreach to mothers than fathers and engage mothers in more case planning (Coady, Hoy, & Cameron, 2013). Child welfare disproportionately engages poor and marginalized mothers and holds them accountable for their failure to protect their children from abusive fathers. The child protection gaze remains firmly fixed on them because of their availability, and focuses on their parenting skills, while fathers are ignored (Strega et al., 2008). Men curiously remain absent from child welfare intervention, and are not held accountable for their abusive behaviour or failure to play a parental role, ignoring their responsibilities as a father, and for neglecting their part in the full care of their children along with their mothers (Strega et al., 2008).

This is illustrated when South Asian immigrant fathers are typically excluded when their families are in contact with the child welfare system (Maiter & Stalker, 2011). Fathers' voices are not heard at times of intervention or in decision making for their children, resulting in a form marginalization (Coady et al., 2013; Dominelli, Strega, Walmsley, Callahan, & Brown, 2011; Strega et al., 2008). There is a growing demand for inclusion of fathers in decision making for children and families, as well as equal and fair treatment of both parents when families are involved with the child welfare system (Strega et al., 2008). All parents, including mothers or females, identified as same sex parent lead families along with same sex fathers are considered essential for child's healthy development. Women are constructed as solely responsible for caring of children and protecting them from threats by men (Strega et al., 2008). Children need

their father's presence in their lives because children copy and learn characteristics from their parents and start developing their own identity both sexually and socially in their community and society (Maiter et al., 2009; Strega et al., 2008). When a father is present, his image is equally as important as a mother's for modelling behaviour for children. Children who come in contact with child welfare agencies experience an absence of their fathers in child welfare intervention planning (Maiter & Stalker, 2011; Strega et al., 2008). Fathers who express an interest to care for their children are often told to "hire a lawyer" (Strega, Brown, Callahan, Dominelli, & Walmsley, 2009, p. 74), which is a statement that devalues parental role.

Fathers should be included in child protection and supervision orders and, when they are perpetrators, those orders must be included in parenting assessments (Strega et al., 2008). However, when fathers are perpetrators of violence towards their partners or children, they must be treated in ways that facilitate their growth and recovery, while ensuring the safety of the children's mother and the children (Strega et al., 2008). Scourfield (2006) notes that "Most children want contact most with fathers" (p. 441) and struggle to understand and process the loss of their father, even years later. The challenge in ensuring the safety of the child and mother, while insisting that fathers maintain parental and spousal responsibilities for support is crucial, especially when dealing with fathers whose cultural identity is closely tied to their role as father (Strega et al., 2008; Strega et al., 2009).

### **Blaming of Mothers**

Closely tied to the impact of absent fathers is the risk of making mothers overly or exclusively responsible for the protection of their children. Swift (1995), in her work, "Manufacturing 'Bad Mothers' a Critical Perspective on Child Neglect" argues that, within the child welfare system "the study of child neglect is in effect the study of mothers who fail" (p.

101). Swift goes on to argue against the “individualistic philosophy that is so basic to our social and economic life” (p. 101). She further explains that, “The contextual information that might help to explain problems in child care is stripped away from the mother, and she is looked at as an ‘individual’, a process that warrants the efforts of the state to focus its change efforts on her—in fact, which makes any other effort appear off the point. Poverty, class, race, relations, gender issues, and fathers all vanish. Mothers are produced and reproduced as the ‘causal variable’” (p.125). This points to the structural sexism of the current child protection system.

The child protection gauge remains fixed upon a mother's availability and parenting skills while “fathers of the children have been virtually ignored” (Strega et al., 2008, p. 706). In some cases mothers can be accused of failure to protect their children from abuse and neglect while fathers are not subjected to accusations. Mothers are constructed as being solely responsible for not only nurturing, but for protecting children from the threat that the men in their life may pose, they are often accused of ‘failing to protect’ their children and are often blamed or perceived as being “abusive mothers” and/or “neglectful mothers” (707). Swift (1995) goes on to discuss the relationship between child neglect and the poverty marginalization and violence in which the ‘neglecting’ family live. Her contention is that, “while the children’s needs warrant our entry into the private home, it is the needs of the mother rather than the children that become the focus of the intervention” (p. 113). The state's focus upon ensuring and enforcing care for children through the family, usually means through the mother. It is the need for a change in mother that provides the justification for intervention, and it further explains the kinds of interventions that child welfare systems typically offer. Mothers are presented as having deficit needs; they have not themselves been nurtured adequately” (p. 113). Child welfare is “limited to addressing the mother’s needs in ways intended to produce better care of her children. This approach does not

necessarily de-legitimize mother as a person with needs, but interprets these needs to accord with the administrative machinery and resources of child welfare. Supervision and training of mother is logically warranted her needs are the problem but are not the ultimate purpose of intervention. She must be supervised until she is less needy; when she will be better able provide better care for her children. She will be ‘policed to care,’ to use Reitsma-Street’s phrase (1991:106)” (p. 115). This is a very brief summary of Swifts analysis of the dynamics of mother blaming in child protection and demonstrates the need for heightened awareness of workers dealing with families from different cultures with different roles and expectations.

### **Poverty, Language and Cultural Barriers to Employment**

Unemployment, poverty, and systemic barriers make racialized immigrants’ integration into Canadian society difficult (Chaze, 2009; George, 2007; Maiter et al., 2009). Without adequate employment opportunities, fathers struggle to provide for their children, which results in many mothers taking employment and becoming the primary provider for their families (Ahmad et al., 2009). This contributes to a feeling of hopelessness for the men (Maiter & Stalker, 2011). This, in addition to previously named stressors, further increases the anxiety and stress levels of families (Ahmad et al., 2009; George & Ramkission, 1998; Maiter & Stalker, 2011). When social isolation, post migration trauma and barriers to everyday supports and services are combined, many fathers lose confidence with regards to their role in the family settlement and integration process (Ahmad et al., 2009; Maiter et al., 2009). When fathers experience allegations of child abuse and neglect, and children are removed from their families, it causes a significant sense of loss (Clarke, 2011; Gosine & Pon, 2011; Maiter & Stalker, 2011). This is another experience that often places families at greater risk for greater contact with child welfare authorities. Because South Asian culture is often perceived as being significantly

patriarchal in comparison to western non-Asian cultures, western stereotypes of the oppression of South Asian women creates an increase in the involvement of child protection agencies (Ahmad et al., 2009; Jaycox et al., 2002). However, as oppressive as these stereotypes are, patriarchy is a factor in the cause of violence against women in relationships (Ono, 2013) but the western perspective on South Asian patriarchy is concerning as it fails to acknowledge its own patriarchy and forms of violence against women.

Language plays a key role for South Asian immigrants in integration, particularly for those whose first language is not English (Ahmad et al., 2009; Maiter et al., 2009). A lack of knowledge of English is one of the most significant barriers/challenges, putting people at risk of experiencing multiple acculturative stresses with negative reactions (Maiter et al., 2009). After migration, many South Asian immigrant fathers find resettlement more challenging when trying to communicate their lifelong values and beliefs in a new language (Choudhry, 2001). Language barriers experienced by newcomers can result in the use of children as family translators. Misunderstanding can occur when children do not understand the language or have an adult understanding of the content being discussed. Also, when children are placed in a position of responsibility or even power as they assume the role of acting as the voice of their family, they are placed in a situation which is highly unusual for a South Asian family.

### **Over-representation of Racialized Children in the Child Welfare System**

Although the system is legally mandated to protect all children from maltreatment and neglect, racialized families experience oppressive attention from child protection workers (Clarke, 2011; Dumbrill, 2003; Gosine & Pon, 2011; Strega & Carriere, 2009; Wong & Yee, 2010). This attention is highly complex and not a result of a single factor or explanation. Contenta, Monsebraaten and Rankin (2014) note that 41 percent of the children in the care of

CAS of Toronto are Black, while Black children and youth represent only 8 percent of the city's population. By contrast, 37 percent of kids in the care of CAST are white, when half of the city's population under the age of 18 is white. This is a significant discrepancy and illustrates clearly institutional racism as an explanation for the over-representation of children of colour in the child welfare system (Clarke, 2011; Hill, 2004). How this is manifested within the child protection system is not simply understood. To begin, it is necessary to understand that neglect and abuse are not the same within child protection law and a distinction must be made between family involvement based upon allegations of neglect and abuse, which have different implications.

Scholars such as Strega and Carriere (2015) using an anti-Oppressive lens assert that the over-representation of racialized as well as other marginalized children in the care of the child welfare system is disproportionate because "when poor families come to the attention of child welfare authorities, it is most often due to complaints or concerns of neglect" (p. 9). They point out that much of this neglect, however, is linked to issues of poverty, colonialism and racism, not deficiencies of the parents. In regards to First Nations communities, scholars such as Blackstock (2008) assert that over 60 percent of child welfare involvement for Aboriginal children is due to neglect and that is directly related to poverty (p. 9). Pon et al., (2011) assert that 35% of all the children in care in Canada are Aboriginal. While wealthy and low-income parents abuse their children at equal rates, poor people come to the attention of child welfare authorities more often than the former (Pon et al., 2011; Strega and Carriere, 2015). With an anti-oppressive lens and understanding of an intersectional analysis, the issue of over-representation of Aboriginal and Black children is inseparable from the history of White supremacy in Canada (Pon et al., 2011). According to Pon et al., (2011), white supremacy is understood here as the policies and practices

in settler societies and the exaltation of white people as national subjects, and the development of racial “others” as threats to the security and prosperity of the nation.

Clearly, over-representation of racialized groups is a multi-factored issue. When considering the experiences of South Asian immigrant families, the impact of poverty during settlement, the institutional racism of the dominant white child protection agencies, and the structural oppressions which exist within a settler society that remains white supremacist in practice, all combine to have a major impact upon the experiences of the three fathers studied in this research (Maiter & Leslie, 2014; Maiter et al., 2009). While they are not members or recipients of anti-Black racism, they are certainly a racialized group and have the same experiences of oppression as Aboriginal and Black Canadians and the expectation that they will maltreat their children.

### **Migration Experiences of Racialized Fathers**

The entire migration process begins with a transitional period upon arrival to a new country. It is during this period that people are required to learn about resources that support families; discover the social and economic challenges to newcomers, and ends with post-migration adjustment and integration. Central to this process is education about the how and where to access this information when it lacking prohibits South Asian fathers from fulfilling their sense of obligation. Individual factors, particularly familial characteristics, traditional culture, and interactions between home country values and North American culture influence their new lifestyle for a long time in Canada (Ahmad et al., 2009; Maiter et al., 2009).

Culturally and traditionally, the South Asian community is one of the most diverse communities within the Canadian multicultural context. Although the premise risks essentializing a community, some scholars insist that South Asian cultures enforce family



obligations, loyalty, self-control, and respect for elders (Maiter & George, 2003; George & Rasidi, 2014). These values can be different from the dominant Euro-centric North American culture in Canada, which is definable and normative (Maiter & Stalker, 2011; Maiter, 2009; Pon, 2009). As a South Asian father and researcher, this point carries great personal significance and how this is manifested or processed by different generations and different South Asian cultures is an area that requires awareness and sensitivity on the part of workers who are dealing with South Asian families for the first time.

The South Asian concept of obligation is not readily understood by western workers and professionals. Obligation here is linked to a sense identity and self-worth. Culture according to Abney (1996) is a “set of beliefs, attitudes, values, and standards of behavior that are passed from one generation to the next. Culture includes language worldviews, dress, food, styles of communication, notions of wellness, healing, techniques, child rearing patterns, and self-identify” (p. 409). While it is impossible to identify a unifying or universal set of South Asian cultural values workers are challenged to be aware of how each father and family experiences, values and processes their own cultural identities. Challenges may develop when parents’ desire to identify and maintain their own unique cultural heritage separate from the dominant values and beliefs, clash with children who favour integration and adoption of the new dominant cultural norms and beliefs. This difference and the resulting tension is often the initial source of contact with child protection agencies (Shariff, 2009), and requires great tact and awareness.

Fathers facing intergenerational conflict and disappointment over the influence of North American family values upon their family in Canada can experience this as a deterioration of South Asian traditional values. When families attempt to maintain traditions and practices, they are often viewed as being culturally rigid and prejudicial. Immigrant fathers however, view their

inability or failure to pass on South Asian belief, culture, values and traditions as a loss or defeat and a source of sadness (Ahmad, Riaz, Barata, & Stewart, 2004; Choudhry, 2001; Maiter et al., 2009; Maiter & Stalker, 2011). As stated above, this is closely tied to a parent's sense of self-worth and identity rather than a set of hopes and expectations which have not been met. These tensions between two different sets of family values influences all members at each stage of the immigration process and differs person to person (Ahmad et al., 2004; Maiter et al., 2009).

### **Traditional Ways of Child Rearing and Parenting Culture in the Canadian Context**

South Asian immigrant fathers face many challenges when it comes to cultural differences in child rearing in Canadian context. The speedy adaptation of what some fathers perceive as North American family values and culture by their children (Ahmad et al., 2009; Choudhry, 2001), where they are believed to be encouraged to make their own choices and question their parent's decision making authority is a major challenge. The result of this is that some South Asian immigrant parents are challenged to find new and different ways of parenting (Maiter & George, 2003) and to learn the difference between genuine cultural difference and individual behaviour. Fathers immigrate believing they have the same authority, responsibility and accurate understanding of their child to guide and educate their children as they had in their country of origin (Ahmad et al., 2009; Maiter & Stalker, 2011).

### **Limitations of this Study**

From my personal experience as a South Asian immigrant father and after a year of research, I have found a deficit in the child welfare literature as it relates to South Asian immigrant fathers. There is a striking lack of research dealing with South Asian fathers and their experiences within the child welfare system in Ontario. This deficit has inspired me to engage in this research to help create a platform for South Asian immigrant fathers to share their own lived

experiences of resilience and diversity. My goal throughout the interview process has been to create and facilitate an open, comfortable environment and communication for these fathers, enabling them to share their lived stories as truthfully as possible, while feeling safe. Finally, I chose this research on South Asian immigrant fathers to convey the messages of their lived stories and to add their ‘unspoken’, unheard,’ and ‘unstated’ voices into child welfare literature.

Although my research is small in scope, I believe this anecdotal qualitative data can form a partial framework for further study. It can also provide valuable insights for program development in the field of child protection. I also think it has importance for building bridges with fathers in the South Asian community and extending conversations around inclusion into such discussions. The findings from this study must be considered in light of some of its limitations. Because it is a snapshot of three South Asian immigrant fathers, its value is transferability rather than generalizability. The qualitative data must be viewed with caution and should not be generalized to a large population or to all topics of child maltreatment and neglect. Further research is needed on South Asian immigrant fathers to understand their struggles and strengths at different life stages in Canadian society. Future research must take the opportunity to address South Asian immigrant fathers ‘unheard voices’, which may benefit the larger South Asian immigrant community and other racialized families in the GTA.

From an AOP and CRT perspective, this study addresses how three South Asian immigrant fathers experience the child welfare system in the GTA. There is much information on racialized families in general, however, less on South Asian immigrant families and even less on South Asian immigrant fathers. I will focus on racialized fathers to understand how child welfare intervention affects fathers and their children. Because of patriarchy and the nature of male dominance, many racialized [including South Asian] immigrant husbands behave oppressively

towards their wives, often resulting in violence including physical, sexual and emotional abuse (Ono, 2013; George & Rasidi, 2014). The intersecting forces of gender, migration, a family's socio-economic status and ethnicity, make women more vulnerable to stress and violence in their intimate relationships, which increases risk within the household, endangers children's safety, and may lead to child welfare intervention (Ahmad et al., 2004; Maiter et al., 2009).

## **Chapter 3**

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical frameworks used in this Major Research Paper (MRP) are Anti-Oppression Practice (Gosine & Pon, 2011) and Critical Race Theory (Aylward, 1999). According to critical race theory, race is utilized as the primary lens to understand the dominant culture that often subjugates the lives of South Asian immigrant fathers in the GTA through the child welfare system. Anti-Oppression Practice (AOP) and Critical Race Theory (CRT) both have been selected as these frameworks focus on social justice and it will help determine the right directions, goals, and outcomes of this research. AOP fundamentally views individual problems as connected with larger social complex issues and encompasses broader perspectives that imagine change on both individual and structural levels. I focus my research on the experiences of three South Asian immigrant fathers when navigating the child welfare system, making AOP and CRT a good choice for this study (Maiter & Stalker, 2011; Maiter et. al., 2009; Yee et al., 2013).

According to Dominelli (2002), AOP is “a methodology focusing on both process and outcome, and a way of structuring relationships between individuals that aims to empower users by reducing the negative effects of hierarchy in their immediate interaction and the work they do together” (p. 6). The key challenges of AOP practices are the workers’ inability to support families because of shortage of resources (both social and economic) and the limitations imposed by the child welfare legislative mandate itself (Wong & Yee, 2010). From a social work perspective, “anti-oppression is concerned with the pursuit of social justice” and “embraces critical theories such as anti-racism, feminism, Marxism, structuralism, postmodernism, anti-colonialism and post-structuralism” (Gosine & Pon, 2011, p. 37).

A critical AOP approach also focuses on critique and transformation of prevailing systemic privileges that control resources, power and oppression at micro, mezzo and macro levels in relation to social differences such as race, class, gender, sexual orientation, disability, self-reflexivity, privileges and biases (Gosine & Pon, 2011; Mullaly, 2002). For example, AOP challenges CAS policies and practices that impose dominant values over racialized families rather than supporting the families, which increases risk of racialized children being over-represented in the child welfare system.

AOP discourages social workers from using power over approaches that enforce dominant values on families. Rather, AOP suggests that workers apply a “power with” approaches with parents and assess each family’s structural and contextual factors rather imposing dominant values (Dumbrill, 2006). AOP challenges CAS’ dominant practice of blaming mothers and excluding fathers from decision making, which is oppressive and a clear form of denial of a fathers’ rights. AOP opposes such oppression which generates division in family relationships, and consequently advocates for fathers inclusion in decision making because children copy and learn characteristics from father’s as they develop their own identity. AOP stresses the need to transform the unequal social and power relations between dominated racialized families [South Asian immigrants fathers] because the mainstream social values and practices prevents immigrants’ access to full participation in societal life and keeps them marginalized.

CRT provides a lens through which we can examine how race and racism impacts the lives of South Asian immigrant fathers at different levels in the society. The goals of AOP are broad and incorporate a variety of radical and social justice practice, while the main focus of CRT is on systemic change and resistance. AOP focuses simultaneously at the individual and

systemic levels to address systemic inequities that marginalize South Asian immigrant fathers and their families who experience dominance when they come into contact with CAS. For example, CAS incorporates dominant attachment models or conditions for child protection. AOP and CRT both suggest that social workers consider how dominant values impact South Asian immigrant fathers who value their South Asian culture in parenting children rather than dominant western values.

AOP in social work emerged due to the struggles of ethnic minorities challenging the power structure (Gosine & Pon, 2011), and focuses simultaneously on the individual and systemic levels to address the societal inequities experienced by [South Asian immigrant fathers] marginalized groups (Yee et al., 2013). Because AOP connects “individual problems and draws links between personal gain, political inequities, social policies, and economic forces” (Baines, 2011, p. 10). This will enable social workers to be aware of the dynamics of the client, service provider relationship, and to understand how systemic oppression may impact on the circumstances of families. This creates the opportunity for collaboration between social workers and parents to address these challenges (Yee et al., 2013).

AOP encourages practitioners to work using an integrated approach by sharing their own experiences and actions and critically examining their own power and privilege to challenge existing inequalities together where everyone shares the benefits and opportunities. AOP challenges the systemic barriers that block individual empowerment. For example, by adopting socio-political approach, social workers can better understand how the investment of human capital, such as South Asian immigrant fathers, is devalued in the labour market because of their race and systemic racism. South Asian immigrant fathers experience considerable stressors

during their integration into Canadian society, which includes language and cultural barriers, the impact of cultural diversity, and the absence of fathers in families.

AOP argues that practitioners using a ‘power with’ approach need to build relationships with parents [South Asian parents] and connect them with appropriate federally and /or local sponsored resources in the community. Practitioners can voluntarily educate both parents regarding the legislative mandate for child protection and their parental responsibilities. AOP focuses upon the critique and transformation of the prevailing systemic policies that control resources, power and oppression at micro, mezzo and macro levels in relation to social differences such as race, class, gender, sexual orientation, disability; self-reflexivity, privileges and biases (Gosine & Pon, 2011; Mullaly, 2002). These dominant policies are the causes of the over-representation of children of racialized groups who are marginalized and excluded as “others” because of racial identity.

AOP challenges the status quo in its process and outcomes which push practitioners beyond mainstream dominant practices. For example, child poverty increases risk of child maltreatment and neglect in racialized families. Social workers can promote and advocate for changes to the organization and deliver effective employment services and programs to South Asian fathers because fathers experience considerable stress due to their immigration process. The training will increase fathers’ skills and knowledge for employment and can reduce poverty in the family. AOP suggests that practitioners assess families’ structural and contextual factors collaboratively with parents and connect parents with community resources that may improve their relationships with CAS. This allows practitioners to determine child safety issues and the interventions required to reduce risks of child protection and over-representation of South Asian immigrant children.



Critical race theory (CRT) according to Aylward (1999), has a mandate to provide a medium to express divergent experiences to search for and bring out the meaning of “race” and racism in the law, and to provide a critical understanding of law. CRT is committed to exploring alternatives to discriminatory laws, offering solutions, and to improving the conditions of disadvantaged people such as racialized people or immigrants (Aylward, 1999). For example, CRT provides us a lens through which we can examine how race and racism operate at various levels in our lives as minorities in Canada, from employment to integration. I use CRT to narrate three South Asian immigrant fathers’ experiences from employment to settlement issues to understand how systemic inequalities and division shape South Asian immigrant fathers’ various identities in society.

CRT encourages social workers to provide meaningful alternatives to support marginalized groups including post-migration stressors experienced by South Asian fathers during settlement and integration. CRT attempts to eradicate the different forms of racism and to validate the lived experiences of people of color [South Asian], which are important bases for understanding the law that perpetuate their subjugation. CRT employs narrative and storytelling as methods of deconstruction to address prevailing beliefs in so-called “neutrality” and “objectivity” (Aylward, 1999, p. 82). AOP and CRT both share insights about broader social divisions and social hierarchies. CRT (Aylward, 1999) and AOP posits, “individual problems and lived experiences as being inseparable from structural societal inequalities such as poverty, sexism, racism, and colonialism” (Gosine & Pon, p. 137).

CRT and AOP understand systemic racism, dominant policies, and the impact of child welfare practices from a “location of dominance” (Gosine & Pon, 2011, p. 137). Systemic racism involves the group in power (white people) controlling all others racial groups who are more

subordinate and marginalized (Gosine & Pon, 2011). For example, systemic racism, as Henry and Tator (2010) note, “refers more broadly to the laws, rules and norms woven into the second system that results in an unequal distribution of economic, political, and social resources and rewards among various racial groups. It is the denial of access, participation, and equity to racial minorities for services such as education, employment, and housing” (p. 45).

CAS operates and practices on behalf of the dominant culture because they are protecting their “white cultural values, and white people” [...] that are situated in the society (Hill, 2004, p. 19). This privilege adversely affects disadvantaged ethnic minorities [South Asian immigrant fathers] (Hill, 2004). As Hunter (2004) notes, the notion of race is an outcome of European colonialism, a social construction, that “refers to different human bodies to create and maintain materials and ideological domination of one group to another” (p. 120). Therefore, knowledge about race constructed in the child welfare system is about racism and power of the dominant culture to control and operate policies of the child welfare system for the benefit of larger dominant groups. It is a power dynamic that racialized immigrant fathers experience once they come into contact with the child welfare system (Maiter & Stalker, 2011). The workers use a power over approach to control parents and to maintain their power dynamics because they are social workers (Dumbrill, 2003). A worker’s power over approach is not about building parents’ capacity but binding parent’s lives with fear and oppression which is about domination and oppression.

The child welfare system is largely shaped by the white dominant culture and services delivered to children and families protect the interests of the elite class who control the child welfare system (Gosine & Pon, 2011). Since CAS has a mandate to protect children, workers’ interventions impact the lives of racialized children and their parents when families come to the

attention of the child welfare authorities, and when children are removed, fathers are also excluded from the lives of their children (Coady et al., 2013; Maiter & Stalker, 2011; Strega et al., 2008). Furthermore, I will incorporate my understanding from AOP and CRT perspectives to analyse South Asian immigrant fathers' lived experience of the child welfare system and use their narratives to explore their 'unheard voices' for the benefit of larger South Asian immigrant communities in Canada. In my analysis of the fathers' narratives, AOP and CRT will be used critically as learning tools to gain insight and possibly understanding.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Methodology**

#### **Research Design**

The purpose of this study is to understand South Asian immigrant fathers' experiences with the child welfare system in the GTA. My research explores the stresses associated with poverty, which is an outcome of the failure to obtain secure employment, loss of social support, cultural barriers, and traditional ways of raising children in Canada (Ahmad et al., 2009; Maiter & Stalker, 2011; Maiter & George, 2003). This study is exploratory since there is no research on this topic that exists. In fact, there is a striking lack of research on South Asian immigrant fathers and the child welfare system in Canada. South Asian immigrant fathers have typically been excluded when their children and families are in contact with the child welfare system (Maiter & Stalker, 2011). Fathers' voices are not heard at times of child welfare intervention or in decision making, resulting in a form of marginalization (Strega et al., 2008). There is a growing demand for inclusion of fathers in decision making for children and fair treatment of the husband and wife when families are involved with CAS. Fathers can support the family and contribute as a resource person, unless their involvement poses a risk to safety of the mother and children (Strega, et al., 2008).

Given the experience of that South Asian immigrant fathers have of being excluded as they encounter the child welfare system, my research is designed to help fill the gaps in current literature on the topic by understanding three immigrant fathers' points of view. This include their experiences of child welfare policies and practices, and learning to navigate the dominant Euro-centric North American culture (Dumbrill, 2003, 2006; Gosine & Pon, 2011; Maiter & Stalker, 2011; Maiter et al., 2009; Strega et al., 2009; Strega & Carriere, 2009; Wong & Yee,

2010). This study utilizes a qualitative research methodology (Mason, 2002). This study utilizes a literature review and semi structured interviews with a qualitative narrative approach (Fraser, 2004), whereby participants were given an opportunity to share their experiences with the CAS. A narrative approach has been used to analyze in-depth the interviews of South Asian immigrant fathers and to identify their experiences of the child welfare system and the system of power, privilege and authority, which serves to marginalize South Asian immigrant fathers and their families. The narrative approach allows for a richer, more individualistic exploration of participants' lived experiences. I gathered data from the context of participants' lived experiences and interventions they received/experienced when they were in contact with the CAS. This narrative study involves hearing stories told by “ordinary people” (Fraser, 2004) to understand dominant discourses within the child welfare framework.

The study also focused on issues of power, empowerment, inequality, inequity, repression, hegemony, and victimization culture and practices of CAS to understand challenges that South Asian immigrant fathers' experience. The transcripts were subjected to comprehensive and lengthy processes of analysis to extract different stories told by these ordinary South Asian immigrant fathers (Fraser, 2004). I recognize my involvement as a researcher in the story telling process by interpreting what was said and a commitment to improving child welfare policy and practices (Fraser, 2004). The father's lived stories are ‘snapshots’. No one picture presents all their stories. The different narratives of each participant contradict, overlap and co-exist with the others. This complicates the findings, which may help practitioners in specific cases, as the story telling is partial. One practitioner might consider these stories important, while others may consider it unimportant. I argue that the stories are worth hearing to improve practice and see if they resonate with other findings. The sample is small and not representative of the larger

population. I urge caution in generalising from the findings and consider these as data identifying information which require further research.

### **Selection of Participants**

I identified three potential participants who identify as a South Asian immigrant father through a snowball process and personal network. I contacted organizations dealing with South Asian immigrants by email and followed up with telephone calls contacting individuals at different places such as churches, schools and libraries, and distributed recruitment flyers. I attended workshops, events and meetings at different places in the GTA, where I shared my research interest and posted flyers for recruitment. This helped me to identify three potential participants for this study. All three participants requested research information and consent forms by email (Appendix F). A Recruitment Flyer (Appendix A) and Research Interview Consent Form (Appendix B) and an Invitation Letter (Appendix C) along with Interview Guide (Appendix D) were sent by email and followed up with telephone calls.

Three participants were recruited who self-identified as South Asian immigrant fathers. They have been residing in the GTA for 10 years or longer, have a child under 12, and have been in contact with the CAS. The importance of 10 years of residency is deemed necessary in order to obtain participants with good insights into their experiences with settlement in Canada. Participants were given adequate time to get prepared for the interview and were offered the choice of having the interview conducted in their native language or in English. All three participants preferred their interviews in English. Also, they were given two TTC tokens for their participation. The procedures (methods) for the study received approval by the university ethics review board. These fathers voluntarily participated in this audio tape-recorded interview. Participants were highly encouraged to share their narratives because their 'unheard voices'

(speech) would be made publicly visible and their participation in the study will help me to complete this research study and obtaining my MSW degree at Ryerson University. All three immigrant fathers had cared for their children and had either encountered or been involved with CAS. Participants had different narratives and each contained contradictions, gaps and challenges, but co-existed with others. In specific cases, this might help practitioners as the telling is partial and influenced by researchers' aim and objectives. Before individual interview, each participant was given a chance to look over and sign the interview consent form.

### **Data Collection**

Participants were given detailed information about the purpose of the study and signed consents that had been approved by the University Ethics Review Board. The 1 to 1.5 hour audio tape-recorded interviews with individual participants were conducted in a private room at Ryerson University. The interview transcripts were prepared by a professional who signed a confidentiality agreement (Appendix E). All identifying information was removed from the transcripts and pseudonyms were used to ensure confidentiality. Participation in the interview was voluntary and participants could choose to end their involvement at any time during the interviews. After each interview question, data was transcribed and coded as a new concept emerged. Participants were given options to review the interview transcript by phone or by mail. Two participants asked for a copy of the transcript via email, which they have received. All three participant requested a copy of the study once the thesis is published.

### **Data Analysis**

All three interviews were audio taped, and subsequently transcribed by a professional transcriptionist approved by Ethics Review Board. Special care was taken by the principle investigator that all identifying information was removed from the transcribed data and that

numbers were assigned to each interview to ensure confidentiality. Sources of data included transcription notes from the interviews and my field notes made after each interview. A qualitative content analysis was used to analyze the data. The system of classification was obtained from the research questions and the interview schedule. Conceptual codes were developed as new data arose from close examination of transcripts. Data analysis began by reading the transcripts over and over again to allow a general understanding of the content. Data were analyzed using a coding system with new codes being added as new concepts emerged. Coded segments included phrases, exchanges, and sentences. As the transcripts were read, codes were noted in the margins. Quotations with significant codes were highlighted to provide a descriptive overview of the data. To illustrate particular themes of meaning within the transcripts, this grid provided a description to complete the data, and was helpful to write the analysis.

Since narratives are a useful tool to address social practices, this study paid key attention to the link between personal and political themes in the data collection. The narratives provided us with an understanding of the personal role within the socio-economic-political world, as narratives demonstrated that the social world is embedded in individual stories. This understanding is compatible with anti-oppressive social work principles in general and black feminist theory (Gosine & Pon, 2011) in particular. These theories have played a large role in informing researchers about issues such as race and gender (Aylward, 1999; Gosine & Pon, 2011; Mason, 2002). Given the smaller scale of this study (three participants), this research did not reach saturation.



## **Chapter 5**

### **Findings**

The findings indicated that South Asian immigrant fathers experienced various forms of oppressive behaviour from CAS intervention. Five themes emerged from these fathers' narratives that provide an insight of their lived experiences of the child welfare system. The participant's experiences have been discussed and analysed. These themes include:

- Child welfare intervention as power over
- Need assessment to support families
- South Asian patriarchal parenting styles
- The need for fathers' involvement in decision making, and
- Negative impact of child welfare intervention.

I believe that the themes identified by these three South Asian immigrant fathers resulted in their experiencing challenges to their settlement and integration and have potential linkages with other factors that have already been discussed in the study. I analyzed the findings both from an AOP and CRT perspective, emphasizing the themes highlighted above. Pseudonyms have been used, and some details of the participants' lived stories have been excluded to protect the participant's identity. I used fictitious names for the participants in this study, which are Abdul, Moqbul and Quddus to retain anonymity and to prevent readers from identifying the participants. I will quote their own words for the purpose of this research.

#### **Child Welfare Intervention as Power Over**

All three fathers Abdul, Moqbul and Quddus raised questions about the interventions and outcomes of social workers' 'power over' approaches (Dumbrill, 2006) and the negative outcomes for their families. The first theme points to an adversarial relationship between workers

and parents characterised by, and resulting from, workers' power over approaches (Dumbrill, 2003). The narratives show that social workers used their 'power' over parents to control the power dynamics of their relationships by holding to narrow pre-conceived ideas about the parents problems with their children (Gosine & Pon, 2011). Fathers felt that they were given little opportunity to dialogue with the child protection workers regarding their interpretations of the allegations brought against them and the workers' risk assessment was seen as final, with no effort to explain the rationale or to understand the reasoning behind the fathers' behaviour. Using an AOP lens, the child welfare assessment is used to assess a parents parenting capacity to protect the safety and wellness of their children, and if they cannot, available resources and supports can and should be made available. A worker's behaviour during investigation of the household on child protection concerns can be experienced as frightening as Abdul explained,

“my son he had an argument with his mother at home....we are South Asian, we do some scolding to the kids if they don't listen. We get their ear, we catch...we do things like that [boxing of ears or pulling on ear] when he went to school he talked to his classmates... and to the teacher about this matter. Then they called a child welfare organization. They came to school, investigated my son and then they investigated with the principal...They came to my home, they took my mom and dad....my sister...and they were interviewing different people...they put us like it is a situation [Abdul was reacting to way the worker acted as if this were the day to day situation in their home rather than an isolated incident and failed to discuss the circumstances surrounding their actions]

In fact, situations and incidents are different. Situations are ongoing sets of circumstances, whereas incidents are one-time events or occurrences; reality is complicated in that sometimes isolated incidents can appear as though they are the daily situation. Situations in child protection are defined as all of the facts, conditions and events that affect a child or youth's safety and wellbeing at a particular time in a family, whereas an incident is an unexpected and usually unpleasant thing that happens or takes place (Fallon et al., 2013).

For example, child welfare workers are mandated to see the children, and assess their safety in order to protect children from situations of abuse and neglect as defined by relevant legislation. Workers often intervene with families on child protection measures, which are imposed by legislative mandates. An interview may be needed with the parents, and if the parents cannot be located, or it is believed that contacting parents may endanger the child, among other reasons, social workers can remove a child from their family to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the child. The fathers interviewed looked upon the intervention as being based upon an incident and not an ongoing situation which contradicted and conflicted with the social workers' assessment. Workers do not share information about their intervention approaches with parents, and thus, intervention is frightening to parents and they find it to be a violation and denial of their parental rights.

Abdul stated that he experienced the workers' behaviour as judgmental and the CAS intervention was frightening as the parents lost their voices to address their kids' future. The father's experience of how secrecy was used by the workers to maintain power and control over their families was frightful. The father subsequently became sceptical about the child protection system because the social workers assumed an expert role and failed to provide reasons for their investigations of the family as Abdul explained,

“... they wanted to find the evidence that we torture the kids, if we do torture they are going to take our kids away from us... we are fighting husband and wife or what we do involve the kids if they don't listen.”

When workers do not share power with parents, it creates a gap between the workers' interventions and parental roles and responsibilities. The workers' power over approaches ignores these roles and responsibilities and acts as a barrier that prevents their collaborative engagement with the parents. AOP supports parents' capacity building, recognizing families as a

source of both pain and strength, which could strengthen families' parenting capacity. AOP and CRT both suggest social workers should not use their power over approaches, unless the child is at imminent risk, this can bring about the positive outcome of building effective relationships between children and fathers.

Moqbul experienced a negative intervention based on allegations that had been investigated without adequate input or communication with him. Moqbul and his family were afraid when allegations were identified by the investigating child protection worker. They raised questions about the integrity and confidentiality of hospital doctors who disclosed his daughter's medical information to social workers. Moqbul thought it was a violation of confidentiality and the rights and freedoms of his daughter, as well as of his family, and believed that it increased the risks of safety for their two minor daughters. To appropriate Dumbrill (2006), the father presented a "tough macho image throughout his interview" (p. 30) as evidenced by his indignation about the way the workers investigated and asked questions. As Moqbul explained,

"My younger girl is very active and always runs here and there...once she fell down from couch, she got a bump (bruise) on her head. We took her to hospital and the doctor wanted her undergo for CT scan and the doctor found nothing in the report.... Two or three days later one day one lady knocked at the door...I just opened it and the lady told me... I am from Children's Aid Society Toronto. You admitted your kids in the hospital and she had an accident on her head. "...where is your kids...what happened...what happened to your little one? She checked everything in washroom, bedroom, living room and she said 'where is your wife?'"

Moqbul continued, saying that the workers' power over approach was tyrannical and his family was frightened because of the manner in which the investigation was conducted. The parents wanted to know the reasons for the investigation and wanted to cooperate with the workers, but they felt disrespected. Instead, the workers used their power to remove him from the home when his wife was being interviewed, which led him to feel disrespected and discriminated against. The social workers wanted to talk to his wife in private without any influence from him

to get factual information about the incident as part of their usual intervention in assessing the child's safety and to screen for risks. In a private discussion, the wife could be helped to feel comfortable in discussing the safety and wellbeing of her children and family. While in his presence, Moqbul's wife cannot share any information 'whatever it could be' about his possible violence and abusive behaviour or child maltreatment because these facts when disclosed could severely affect the husband-wife relationship and endanger his wife's safety and the safety of her children. For example, any husband could commit violence against both his wife and children or try to manipulate them to avoid responsibility for his behaviour because of his power and dominant male privilege. He may blame his wife or report her as abusive or negligent of the children or simply hide the actual facts to avoid criminal charges. In this instance, it seems that Moqbul was unable to appreciate these concerns.

In cases where fathers are involved in domestic violence or child maltreatment, mothers may face allegations of failure to protect their children. It is at this point that the thesis of Swift (1995) is most helpful. Swift (1995) helps to understand how this places an exorbitant amount of pressure on mothers while failing to address the problems faced by the family, and holding the father accountable for his abusive behaviour. Violence against women often escalates during intervention, separation, and or court proceedings and places the family at heightened risk for violence. Fathers, even those without criminal history, tend to be viewed as a threat and heavily scrutinized. Moqbul explained,

"And she said ok ... can I talk, how can I talk to your wife?" Tomorrow, I'll come and I'll talk to your wife but you should not be at home when we are going to talk to her. I said its ok but why? What's the problem? She said ok we are going to talk to her you know keeping you apart from her so you cannot influence her".

Quddus felt intimidated and had a negative perception of the child welfare intervention when workers withheld information about their intervention. He felt that as a parent of the

children, he has the right to know about their children ‘good and bad’ and as a citizen, he should not be disrespected. It is difficult to know whether Quddus felt intimidated and was threatened due to racism or because his control over children was being challenged by the workers. Since safety of, and risk to, children are both concerns for the worker, they often use power over approaches with parents when investigating child maltreatment in the family. The parents might be unaware about CAS investigation processes, and therefore they felt discriminated, as Quddus exclaimed,

“I got a phone call from the welfare. I don’t know ... as I told you I got a daughter and she’s almost 8 years old regarding this...and we are Asian. I try to look after my daughter there is some issue she didn’t like...probably she complained to the school or ... I don’t know who called me. My wife got a phone call from the welfare office and they said they want to get the interview. I don’t know what the reason is”.

Quddus expressed his frustration with the CAS intervention, which he experienced as undermining his South Asian culture. By not treating him and his wife respectfully, and relying upon the usual CAS style of intervention, Quddus and his wife felt their parental authority was challenged and unvalued. Like so many cultures, many South Asian families are very traditional and patriarchal in structure, and promote the primary importance of the welfare of the whole family. The family unit commonly extends beyond the western concept of a nuclear family to include grandparents, siblings and their families holding these relationships in exceedingly high esteem.

The needs of these extended families will often factor into an individual’s decision-making process. Moreover, the South Asian community has been recognized by some as a collectivist society; therefore acquiescence to parental standards, appreciation of, and acknowledgment of the choices of senior citizens are a few values that have been credited to parents (Maiter and George, 2003). Often, mothers are traditionally responsible for nurturing and

child rearing and will have different parenting goals and roles. These are often influenced by their individual internalized cultural values, beliefs, norms and external factors related to their social context (Maiter & George, 2003). So too fathers are often responsible for behavior regulation and discipline of their children and raise them based on their experiences of internalized South Asian cultural values. Based on this, the mothers' key goal is to teach children certain personal norms to develop their character, identify formation, personal qualities and value system, which include respect to elders, modesty, hard work, humility, persistence, and having a disciplined life that is most likely to be attained through adherence to religion (Maiter & George, 2003).

Some South Asian parents are concerned about sex education in the Grade 5 school curriculum (Maiter & George, 2003). Some believe that it promotes a level of freedom that leads their daughters to experience premarital sex at an early age, negatively influencing her character formation and future, in a manner that is not consistent with their cultural expectations (Maiter & George, 2003). For example, one parent shared "we don't like to teach small kids about sex in the school. Every Asian parent doesn't like it" (Maiter & George, 2003, p. 421). Parents believe, because of the influence of western culture's individual rights and freedom, their daughter will engage in an early sex life, which is beyond their control as a parent. They think their daughter is going to be damaged or harmed and believe that as a parent, they are unable to protect her because they are handcuffed by the culture. They believe that they have lost their authority with their children after coming to Canada for a better life for their children. On the other hand, some parents also mediate their values in response to their new experiences in North American society and believe that sex education will develop the knowledge of their children about sexuality, which is not inappropriate but is a part of life.

The task of parenting becomes challenging for some parents in Canada because of different social contexts that parents encounter, which are different from their preferred parenting values (Maiter & George, 2003). Within these two different cultural views there seems to be double standards at play because parents are concerned about their daughter's life and future but do not express concerns for their sons based on patriarchal notions about female and male sexuality. This points to a difficult concern and challenge for social workers.

The concept of patriarchal culture is not a fixed entity. Depending upon a number of different variables every South Asian family will differ, including the fact that they might not embrace a patriarchal family structure and embrace a unique family structure and set of values. Depending upon things like religion, education, class and caste, every family will differ. When CAS workers make assumptions about South Asian fathers based upon their participation in a patriarchal culture, they are making racist assumptions. In South Asia, family life is embedded in the extended family and each member of the family has a specific set of roles and duties. Power is organized hierarchically, where elders hold more powers than youth and men more powers than women do. Within this patrilineal kinship system, there is the flexibility of what one might expect that elders can be appealed to act as intermediaries and intervene in an instance of abuse or misuse of power (Deepak, 2005). When workers make assumptions about South Asian fathers without engaging them and understanding their full set of preferred values and goals, they are disregarding their full humanity.

Patriarchy is a complex and confusing belief system that is uniquely manifested in many cultures. As bell hooks says "Patriarchal thinking shapes the values of our culture [North American]... we cannot dismantle a system as long as we engage in collective denial about its impact on our lives" (hooks, p. 3). If North American workers approach South Asian fathers



with projected assumptions about patriarchy without acknowledging their own, they engaging in a racist discourse about these fathers and asserting another form of “power over”. South Asian families come from a collectivist culture where responsibilities for childcare and parenting are shared with the extended family members (Mitchell, 2005). In such cultures, mothers have a limited role to play in parenting and extended family members such as fathers, grandfathers, aunts and uncles, are customarily entitled to share the rights and responsibilities that accompany the parenting of children in the family (Chase, 2009).

Quddus considered CAS intervention as a challenge to his family values and its impact as a “punishment”. South Asian tradition, cultural values, and norms are viewed by Quddus as resulting in good behaviour and success for a child’s future life. As a parent, he sees a cultural difference in the expectations of parental responsibility and accountability between South Asian and European / North American parents (Deepak, 2005). He is part of a process whereby some South Asian parents are challenged to find new ways of parenting in a nuclear family structure rather than an extended kinship system in Canada. Children are expected to listen to elders and parental advice when making decisions in regards to education, careers, and marriage (Maiter & George, 2003). There are also contradictory expectations between South Asian and North American culture regarding dating, sexuality and marriage (Deepak, 2005). Quddus worried about his daughter’s future as he exclaimed,

“I always have concern about her education. Like my dream, my wife is a doctor yeah I want to make my daughter as a doctor....I want to see my daughter or my kids nice future, good future and bright future. I do not want to see she stays at night club and spoil her life”.

The difficulty here is that parents and workers may essentialize their understanding of what North American or South Asian culture is. By doing so workers fail to understand the unique nature of each family and their cultural histories and parents may assume that any challenges or

differences are simply a matter of the influence of North American culture. In either case, the individuality of each party is not recognized and ethical service is much more difficult.

Just like for many parents, for some Asian parents, children are their parents' life and parents take more responsibility for their children's future. Even after marriage, parents continue to support children and if children suffer, it hurts their parents and parents then suffer. It is relevant to AOP because the social workers did not identify, understand, value or respect what may be an aspect of a families perceived South Asian tradition, whereas AOP promotes mutual respect, equity, and encourages workers to consider a family's contextual factors when intervening and supporting parents in meeting the needs of their children. Otherwise, cultural assumptions and attitudes concerning South Asian maltreatment and neglect of children will continue to remain unaddressed, as there are significant differences in defining child maltreatment across cultures (Maiter, Alaggia & Trocme', 2004) as Quddus explained,

"Definitely they ruin our culture because I think after certain age they can do sex ...that once they got the freedom but initially, my daughter she's 8 years old. She's still my baby.... [She does not know about sexual life]... for this culture I do not know they are respecting our culture. They can give us the freedom to put our kids in the right track. We can tell them we are not their enemy and they are our kids. We came in this fast world country for a better life not for premarital sex. I mean not for...I don't want to spoil my kids... not for the spoiled life."

In summary, social workers should not use a "power over" approach unless they find a situation where a child is at imminent risk of harm. Social workers' power over approach is dominant and secrecy is deployed as a tool to maintain and control parents (Dumbrill, 2003). A worker's power over approach is inappropriate, challenges the families' rights, and acts as a barrier that prevents their effective engagement with parents. AOP & CRT challenges this power structure both at institutional and societal level, and suggests social workers use a "power with" approach for building relationships with parents through advocacy in assessing a family's needs

and to provide adequate support for child protection (Dumbrill, 2006; Gosine & Pon, 2011).

Workers must understand how South Asian immigrant fathers and their families experience and negotiate during child welfare intervention because AOP and CRT both recognize systemic racism, individual problems and lived experiences of individuals and families.

AOP is a critique and it seeks the eradication of systemic forms of privilege, power and oppression as generated by social differences such as class, race, gender, sexual orientations, and disability (Gosine & Pon, 2011). Parents should not be frightened and workers should be working in collaboration with the parents because parents are responsible for the safety and wellbeing of their children. Both parents and caregivers such as stepfathers, stepmothers, mothers, brothers and mothers, sisters, who are providing care need to be equally involved in child protection and case planning because it is an important and valued process based on South Asian family values and culture. During interventions, parents were reminded about their parental roles and responsibilities, but it is found that they had little input into the interventions, which they experienced as intrusive (Dumbrill, 2003). South Asian parents' parental responsibilities and feelings are captured in the following quotes:

“Our children are everything; they are our life. We do not like to go away on our own vacations or leave the children with a babysitter. We do not have personal life. Our life is our children” (Maiter & George, 2003, p. 323).

Ignoring these facts results in parents feeling unacknowledged and their needs going unaddressed, leading to their continued experience of marginalization.

### **Needs Assessment to Support Families**

Child welfare assessments in Ontario are framed by legislation and government policies. The current risk assessment model focuses narrowly on individuals or families, ignoring structural and contextual factors and identifying personal problems and deficits. Risk

assessments focus primarily on parents rather than children (Clarke, 2012; Strega & Carriere, 2009). AOP suggests practitioners assess structural and contextual factors in collaboration with families to determine interventions, which can reduce the risk of child protection intervention and minimize over-representation of racialized children in the child welfare system (Strega & Carriere, 2009). These three South Asian immigrant fathers raised questions about workers' knowledge of risk assessment and skills since contextual factors were ignored. Fathers thought that workers might work with them to help them but they felt that the workers' attitude was oppressive and felt that the social workers misused their power and privileges. Social workers ignored the families' contextual factors and made their assessments based upon allegations brought against parents. AOP and CRT can both be used to address societal inequalities experienced by fathers and other caregivers to support their children.

AOP emphasizes that social workers should develop partnerships through power sharing, which entails creating egalitarian relationship with parents and treating them as experts (Gosine & Pon, 2011) to assess the family's needs focusing on the best interests of the children and their families. This will enable workers then to reduce parental concern that their South Asian cultural norms and family values are being overlooked and unrecognized during subsequent interventions. This is necessary because parents often feel coerced into compliance with intervention plans through fear of their children being removed by workers (Dumbrill, 2010) as Abdul explained,

“...so the better would be, so you know taking action to those parents then be friendly and find out what is the truth, like don't just attack them....don't just talk with the kids. Don't just call the police.....don't just take the, you know, like don't jump into them you know just find out what is going on”.

Abdul continued, saying that his family needs strong social supports because they had extended family support in their country of origin, which is no longer available since they moved

to Canada. He and his wife frequently have feelings of guilt for failing to meet the expectations they have for themselves as parents. As a father, he cannot spend more time with his children due to economic hardships and lack of social and extended family support as Abdul said,

“I think they could have done a lot of things....you know when things happened to me after that I realized that you know ( ) maybe I should have spent more time with my kids, give some more love with my kids. I know we need money here we don’t have family friends like back home we used to have my uncle, my ( ), my dad, my nephew, my grand-uncle, my maternal uncle...it’s a big plus point for us but they are not in Canada and they are there”.

Abdul continued emphasizing the parent-child relationship and the responsibilities for which he is accountable as a father. He continued saying that his family needs support as he needs to work long hours outside the home to meet his family’s needs, and cannot spend more time with his children. Many racialized parents experience marginalization, exclusion and high levels of poverty as they work for survival (George & Ramkissoon, 1998). Their struggles continue unless their family’s income level changes to a minimum standard of living, if not, their children experience a heightened risk of maltreatment and neglect. AOP and CRT suggest social workers assess a family’s structural and contextual factors when intervening and provide adequate support to the parents by connecting them with resources within the community to meet the family’s needs, as Abdul said,

“I realized that kids, my kids...they need more time from me especially a dad, especially a lot of laugh for them, a lot more like intimate with them you know. I realized because I was busy at work I couldn’t have time you know mentoring their life, what they need but beside these thing some more potential thing which is you cannot buy with money or anything like that”.

Moqbul expressed his frustration about the nature of the workers’ risk assessments using their dominant power to compel parents to acknowledge that they abuse their children. He thinks that workers might have experienced working with other families who might have abused their children and now the worker is aggressively applying the same thoughts to them. Moqbul

suggests that workers should consider the stressful experiences of newcomers in regards to settlement, employment and integration, and should not contact police or agencies before assessing a family's contextual factors. They need to take as much time as needed to understand these factors. He emphasized that stressors and factors such as family isolation, culture shock and insufficient income, when coupled with the demands of children in a western cultural environment, are completely different from their South Asian society. As Moqbul explained,

“when something happens regarding the child abuse or come to contact the police...they should take the time to understand why this is happening. New immigrant experience a lot of stress in regard to employment, integration and they have to finance and ( ) the information. As a newcomer, we are financially stressed out always and we feel down. The definition of abusing child might be different from culture to culture because the way I was born and grew up is different than the person who was born in North America or western culture. So the perspective and the definition of child abuse from culture to culture should be of course different”.

Moqbul's lack of knowledge and awareness about CAS and the child welfare system could inform his belief that CAS is only for Christians, and there is no CAS for South Asian, Spanish or Chinese communities, which he thinks is a form of discrimination. In reality, it is not the case because CAS is mandated to ensure child protection for each child in Canada, regardless of race, colour and origin. Yet, as Moqbul explained,

“One Children's Aid Society for Christian community...another for the other community, for the Aboriginal people but I don't see any child welfare system or Children's Aid Society for the South Asian or Chinese or for the Spanish people. I think this is one kind of discrimination. If child welfare system try to provide services in a culturally prepared way then the South Asian fathers might be benefited because they can better understand the culture and expectation of the South Asian fathers, South Asian culture for South Asian family”.

Quddus expressed his frustration with the workers' assessment because the outcome did not help them; rather, it created a situation where they felt that their children would be removed if they were reported for child abuse and neglect. Quddus felt that the workers' intervention was “tyrannical” or “frightening” (Dumbrill, 2006, p. 30) and that it did not support parents by

resolving problems with their children. Rather, Quddus felt that the workers' assessment only increased his mental anxieties about his children's safety and wellbeing. When a worker's assessment and decision-making process 'revolve around immediate safety of the children if they are to remain in the home' (Parada, Barnoff, & Coleman, 2007, p. 42) and because workers have legal authority to apprehend.

AOP suggests workers should build meaningful and collaborate partnerships with parents to resolve issues with their children (Gosine & Pon, 2011). CRT encourages workers to challenge the 'neutrality' and 'objectivity' (Aylward, 1999, p. 34) of existing policies and practices that oppress minority people [South Asian immigrant fathers], regardless of the structure imposed upon them and to assess problems from multiple and various ways within the lives of individuals. Parents should not feel oppressed by the workers' decision otherwise his experience will lead him to say that, as parents, they are perceived as "enemies" to their children by social workers, although it is not the fact. As Quddus explained, "They are thinking we are enemy of our kids".

In summary, according to my findings, CAS assessment tools are problematic because they ignore families' structural and contextual factors. Without addressing these major issues, the challenges of parents are likely to continue increasing the risk of ongoing child protection intervention. Social workers need to consider systemic inequities and contextual factors before any decision is made within AOP and CRT perspectives. The workers should build a cohesive relationship aligned with "power with" approach with parents from different cultural backgrounds in order to assess and support families by connecting them and educating them in regards to how community resources function so that they can care for and protect their children as informed parents.

### **South Asian Patriarchal Parenting Styles**

South Asian immigrant fathers experience critical challenges in raising their children in the Canadian Euro-centric North American cultural context. All three fathers find that integrating their children into Canadian culture is a complex and costly endeavour, which only increases parents' mental, physical and emotional stress. South Asian fathers value their own culture and tend to guide and deal with their children accordingly, rather than incorporate western culture. These fathers are describing the North American parenting culture as challenging for their settlement and integration in Canadian society. AOP and CRT suggest practitioners consider the South Asian culture and remain open to diversity when assessing relationships of parents with their children along with other factors in relation to their South Asian parenting styles. Because these particular South Asian immigrant fathers come from the same cultural background and traditions, values and shared worldviews, which are influenced by internal and external factors, their parenting style appears different in a North American context. Social workers should consider South Asian culture a major challenge for immigrant fathers in regards to parenting in Canada. Social workers should remain open to a variety of family structures and types of households of South Asian families residing in Canada.

Abdul blamed the educational system and culture that challenges his family's South Asian values. He believes that children in Canada learn about sex too early, and are encouraged by the school curriculum. For this, children behave inappropriately with parents when dealing with family values and cultural issues and this often creates conflict with them. Abdul thinks that social perceptions about sex at an early age is acceptable to the western society and culture. It must also be noted that his concerns are more focused upon female children identifying a double standard based on gender, which is also concerning and problematic. As a parent, he has no right



to prevent his child in regards to sexual behaviour and cohabitation when they are over 16 years of age. This type of dilemma or cultural dissonance makes him feel “worthless as a parent”, and shows how he believes he does not fit into western culture and society. Therefore, he concludes that he is just a victim and oppressed by this undesirable situation. The main reason for Abdul to think this way is that the underlying social and family values and traditions of South Asian parents are that their children must not engage in any type of sexual activity before marriage. These values and norms create social stigma and conflict with children that go beyond or challenge parental rights and values. As Abdul explained,

“And then difficulties are like certain ways that respectful. Like my neighbours, they are like Canadian born and my kids they are friend and what happen is ...certain things they wanted to have that ...I cannot let them allow and let them to have premarital sex. In the school ... the things they do sometimes I am not agree with the education, the system but I do not have any choice...This is not our culture. This is not our homeland so I talk to them. We are citizen here but still we do not sometimes feeling 100%. But we survive because Canada is a better country that’s why sometime we sacrifice a lot of thing”.

Abdul continued defending his parental rights and emphasising the importance of parenting and childcare for the development of character and social identity formation of his children. Abdul added that his children learn English, ignore their mother tongue, and gradually move away from his own values and culture. This struggle surges with additional stress. He is concerned about his language and Bengali culture, therefore, often conflict arises with children on tensions around cultural issues, which increases the risk of CAS intervention. Abdul explained,

“But for him it was hard because he is already two years there. He has language problem and I really wanted him to learn our home language first because that for me is more important than Canadian or English language. Bengali is my mother tongue...I want my son learn Bengali language first that is why I wanted him to born in Bangladesh not in Canada cause my first child. That’s my concern that I want to be first stage in Bangladesh and Bengali language is my first concern”.

The men I interviewed value South Asian culture rather than North American culture to guide their children. For example, conflicts with children on language and cultural issues upset Quddus. His worries and concerns make him feel that he is not able to pass his religion, culture and tradition to generations within the family once in Canada. As Quddus explained,

“In our culture and everything is totally different. Ok we are immigrant. We have to consider lots of things. Ok I push her to use ...and everything, she need to consider how to study. I do not mind to spend the money Ok I do not mind for anything but I know they try to...and she try to follow the Canadian culture. We try to follow our culture there is a big ( ) between two culture. She is not following my culture she is not following that culture...she is in the middle of something. There’s a big ( ) thing”.

In conclusion, social workers should consider South Asian culture, family values, traditions and the nature of the interactions between their home culture and the host culture when assessing parent-child interactions and relationships. This must be done to assist parents in resolving problems and providing support to the family, thereby strengthening their parenting capacity in collaboration with parents (Maiter & George, 2003). South Asian immigrant fathers will be able to share their opinions openly with their workers when they feel that their unique sense of responsibility and obligation as fathers are acknowledged. This can lead to finding a common ground when dealing with children regarding cultural issues and support their children within legislative rules, policies and standards. Fathers need support from the CAS, and social workers can encourage fathers to participate in workshops and seminars to broaden their understanding of cultural issues and western individualism.

### **The Need for Fathers Involvement in Decision Making**

Men are involved as fathers, step fathers, mothers’ partner, mothers’ brothers, grandfathers and family friends in the lives of children. Problematically, often CAS will not value these extended kin-care relationships. Failure to provide fathers with their legal rights in decision-making may have negative consequences for everyone involved in the lives of children.

Fathers provide emotional support, financial and company resources for their children's social, emotional, and financial needs. Their presence gives children a sense of belonging in a family, which impacts future generations. AOP and CRT suggests that workers should also consider the participation of other caregivers that will promote respect, values and a sense of belonging, which allows children to feel secure within the family.

All three fathers in their own way agreed that a father's involvement as a partner in the decision making process with CAS is important in their children's lives. Abdul emphasized the adaptation of his own culture as a built-in or default value system inside of him. Any deviations disturb and make him annoyed, with a feeling that he is losing something extremely valuable for his children. As Abdul explained,

"Fathers I think, I think every father makes the right decision but every people have different view of their point. ....But I think forever I was, as a father I was, ...I wanted to say that ... I wanted to say that every father they think they're best for the kids and I did the same".

Abdul continued his arguments to support how important his own culture is and how he treasures it for his children as a source for better education and good manners. Abdul said,

"My most important to my kids is my culture,.. how we grew up, how we respect elder, how to maintain a better perspective to the real life and ... be respected, be ... like educated way to be maintained. Like whatever I am like as a father I want my kids to be better than me and also I want to have my kids better education, better learning and ... good manner, be nice. That's all".

Abdul understood that whenever problems arise, it would be wise to discuss them with teachers and seek suggestions, which will help fathers to make meaningful and effective decisions for their children. Because of his own concept of double standards when it comes to the gender of his children, maladjustment in his present situation, where he faces enormous barriers and perhaps a sense of false pride that he is not doing any good for his children while

they are trying to integrate in the North American society, all leave. Abdul with a strong sense that he must work hard at solving the problem facing his family. As Abdul explained,

“I think ... I think best thing to having problem with their children goes to the school the teacher, parents should sit down and talk together what’s going on, what we should do. I think that’s the best way to solve this problem”.

Moqbul agreed that decision-making should not be exclusive to fathers; both parents should be involved to maintain a balance. As Moqbul explained,

“And when you are talking about you are the whole decision maker, so you should not act like this so what’s the point you know it’s a double standard, it’s a double standard. But in our culture yeah we do both. Sometimes we make some decision for kids but sometimes we let them decide what do you want to do? So it’s both. But it depends person to person. For me I do like this because they are not mature and they are not fully capable to take their own decision so we make a balance I make balance within that.”

Moqbul suggested that parents consult with seniors or school teachers as a part of decision making when they are facing difficulties as Moqbul explained,

“Well ... in our culture usually, if we have parent if we had any problem. We usually talk to our seniors or the person with resources, with wisdom but here, I think we should talk to you know teachers, the school teachers, maybe counsellor who is very specialist in child ... I don’t know”.

As a South Asian father, Quddus’ opinion is that mothers are traditionally concerned for nurturing and caring for the children. What seems to inform his beliefs is the idea of tradition. In a South Asian, patriarchal family, values, tradition, and gender roles tend to be clearly defined, with mothers being traditionally responsible for nurturing and child rearing, while fathers are responsible for discipline, manners and behaviour of children. Patriarchal traditional values made Quddus think that, as a father, he plays the decision-making role for his children, which is different when he is in Canada with his family. Here, both parents share in the decision-making role equally when parenting children. Fathers have been found to experience increased parenting stress compared to mothers because they never want to see any negative impact on their

children's life. Quddus thought that whatever decision fathers make for their children can only be the right one. As Quddus expressed,

“Tell me one thing, are there any father in the whole world ever think about their kids anything wrong? I don't think so.” “OK she's from me how could I think something wrong for my daughter? Definitely, I'll think better for my daughter. I'll find one of the best thing for her.” “How could I think, I'm not a wrong decision maker. OK I think every single dad always-think positive not negative. They should give us a chance. They are not giving us a chance to do anything”.

Quddus faced a big challenge when he made a decision for his daughter to leave the school party at 10:00 P.M. at night. The teacher told his daughter that she can stay if she wants, making Quddus think that the teacher is telling his daughter do overlook her father's decision. Quddus found this a wrong direction for his daughter and contradictory to his decision. He was worried about his daughter's safety thinking something unsafe may happen to his daughter at night. As Quddus explained,

“Now if she goes to the school teacher, my daughter says that I cannot stay at a school party after 10:00 pm. We are not doing anything wrong, so why you should stay here? That's the solution that means teacher are pushing her, telling her she's right her dad is wrong. Okay who is supposed to know everything is right or wrong? It's between our system and their system”.

In conclusion, the South Asian patriarchal tradition places fathers as a key player with authority to make decisions for their children as a prominent figure in the family. Family background, values and customs make these three fathers think and act in a single direction. This type of role model may work well in some South Asian countries, but not in Canadian society. Often, fathers are worried and concerned that their children are embracing new traditions and culture, while ignoring their own which threatens South Asian family values and identity. Conflicts with children surrounding these issues may result in violent and aggressive behaviour on the party that leads to CAS involvement. Social workers who ignore fathers' opinions and exclude them from the decision making process and planning completely denies and deprives

fathers of their sense of obligation and parental responsibility as a father. This also ignores the fact that the father's goals are focused upon the needs of his children and their opportunity in a new country. This type of treatment towards fathers does not bring any benefits or positive changes to the family.

### **Negative Impact of Child Welfare Intervention**

South Asian families are often influenced by collectivist values, respect for authority, lifelong parent-child interconnectedness, larger family network and religion (Choudhry, 2001; Maiter & George, 2003). South Asian immigrant fathers frequently experience new challenges with their children because of dual cultural differences and parenting stress could be broadly experienced particularly in parent-child interactions. In this situation, fathers should focus their parenting vision in collaboration with mutual respect and social dignity. In many cases, fathers may believe that they are losing control over children and, as a result, they are over-represented within child welfare system as perpetrators of child maltreatment, particularly in the most severe forms. Before making any such decision, fathers ought to discuss these issues with children in a friendly manner and with flexibility, give good examples, and make children understand the impacts of such issues on their lives. AOP suggest that social workers should support South Asian fathers and their families to increase their parenting capacity and knowledge on child protection and parents' responsibility in a Canadian context. CRT can ensure legal obligations while AOP can guide workers to build an operational plan that would hold everyone accountable for producing different outcomes in order to help South Asian immigrant fathers and their families in the child welfare system. Fathers need to supervise, monitor and guide their children's activities. Fathers also need to consult with school teachers as well as social workers for solutions to their problems, otherwise, situations may deteriorate creating a situation that

needs immediate attention or parents might be criminally charged for child neglect and maltreatment. As Abdul explained,

“Best solution for the immigrant father as I think should capture... They have to see over and over... don’t just overlook the situation, don’t just overlook like the system you have to see what’s going on in the school, what is the situation here and what is the best for you to do. I think as an immigrant father they should check the reality and then they should proceed that way. Fathers express the need to talk about whatever issues they might face, and see the other side of the view and be more “flexible”.

Moqbul stressed the need for dialogue when fathers face challenges with their children on any issue in which they may feel uncomfortable and which may threaten their children’s character, education or knowledge building. Children may not understand the consequences of their behaviour but it is a father’s role to understand and guide their children. As Moqbul described,

“OK so far immigrant fathers have challenged their children... it should be a dialogue between fathers and the children. Both of them should be flexible because we have to understand a great extent that we are in a new country. A new society, culture so if we want to make them to practice our own culture where they are in already”.

Moqbul continued, saying how much he appreciated family life and that taking children out of their family home can break that bond as Moqbul explained,

“If you hear that a child is being abused by a South Asian immigrant father and don’t take a decision ok so go there and take their child away and if it happens then you’re going to make a mess. You are going to kill the children in a way and you are going to kill the family because we strongly believe in family bond. So the family is very important but if you try to rip the family by taking the children, so you are going to make a big mistake”.

The child welfare system is mandated to implement government legislation and standards. The relevant laws have been formulated and developed based on western family values. However, there are invisible differences between westernized nuclear family values and culture and South Asian family values and culture. South Asian immigrant fathers face dual challenges in maintaining understanding and identifying their South Asian values, particularly in

child rearing. Fathers may experience conflicts with children based upon what they interpret as cultural issues and, when extreme conflicts arise, CAS may become involved. CAS intervenes with families and assesses risk using the same criteria expectations and laws being applied for white non-immigrant communities in Canada. Often, it seems that South Asian values have not been considered, which has a negative impact on South Asian family relationships. Since the South Asian community is a fast growing population in Canadian society, a similar child welfare system should be established where South Asian parents can be directly involved in enacting policies so that the children are protected according to South Asian values. As Moqbul explained,

“But you are judging this abuse in the same laws or same act so South Asian parents of course are discriminated in the eyes of the law. That’s why I would like to recommend that as the South Asian are growing in Canadian society, another child welfare system or child welfare law should be enacted in the Parliament or in the city or in the province in making this kind of law the South Asian parents should be involved directly and they should be consulted. So everything should be in consideration to make any law to deal with the child abuse situation by the South Asian parents”.

Social workers are guided by policies and guidelines set for child protection. Social workers have the decision-making authority to protect children from caregivers’ abusive behaviours, or for neglecting children. Once children come into contact with CAS, parents may be put under surveillance and strictly monitored by social workers. If further allegations are made, children may be removed from their family. As Quddus explained,

“The best solution only one they let us the permission to guide our kids. They let us the power. We got the power; we got a right to make the decision.. We are not their enemy, we are for our daughter... and they are our kids, they are from my blood. Okay if they think, if they let us control them ....one day we will do the best thing. ....I am not telling I am going against the law... I want to, I respect the law, and I respect the Canadian law.”

In summary, South Asian immigrant fathers find child rearing in a Canadian context the most challenging aspect of their family life. Since fathers migrated to Canada to enhance the



future of their children, they must be willing to adjust to a new set of family values and should not maintain the same unquestioned or unexamined norms they had maintained before in their home country. The fathers may feel guilty that they are unable to maintain their parental responsibility because of western influences. Like many parents, leaving children with daycare strangers can be a source of guilt for South Asian immigrant parents, but they must have willingness to support their children and accept the cultural difficulties. Social workers still tend to use a cultural literacy approach when dealing with South Asian immigrant families on child protection issues (Maiter & George, 2003; Maiter, 2009; Maiter & Stalker, 2011). Social workers must consider the diversity of language, race, ethnicity, religion, family values and other social norms using AOP and provide effective input using a CRT lens while supporting families. Otherwise, the child welfare system will fail to continue to address social injustice and inequities. South Asian immigrant fathers must not be excluded from their children's lives; they should be given the opportunity to help their children, and in creating the best for their future in Canada, otherwise fathers' voices will remain 'unheard' in the child welfare system.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Implications for Practice and Research**

#### **Child Welfare Interventions and Approaches**

Child welfare workers should lessen their emphasis on the need to start interventions, and increase their understanding of the situations South Asian immigrant fathers face when attempting to address and resolve familial issues. Child protection interventions must begin by addressing the power imbalance that exists between workers and parents, and by acknowledging the fear parents may be feeling during intervention. Workers may gauge, through parental reactions, the perceptions they generate about their power. Parental resistance or overt compliance should make workers question parents' perception of the power they have over them. Social workers often use their power based on parents' reactions to protect children from maltreatment and neglect.

These research findings can be useful for policy makers or practitioners when working with racialized families, particularly with South Asian immigrant fathers and their families. The implication of this research is that all efforts must be made to limit the loss of resources that South Asian immigrant fathers experience in the GTA. After arrival to Canada, South Asian immigrant fathers and their families should be linked to people who share the same type of cultural practices in the community. Such linkages will help newcomers to build their knowledge of diverse issues on child maltreatment and neglect. This will strengthen the parents' capacities to deal with the loneliness, hopelessness, desperation, depression, isolation, and family conflict, which increase the risk of child welfare intervention.

## **Challenges of Settlement and Integration**

The next step, and often key to all immigrant fathers' settlement and integration is finding good quality affordable housing, which is also a primary element necessary to protecting children from child maltreatment and neglect. For example, child poverty is a major problem for child neglect (Duncan, 2004) and that increases the risk of neglect for the most disadvantaged and marginalized families. CAS should continue to recognize the socio-economic problems of these families, including South Asian immigrant fathers in the GTA. South Asian immigrant fathers should be provided job training and government subsidised employment programs, information about Canadian culture and its norms, and with access to culturally appropriate resources. Workers must be involved in both supporting a family's integration, while assessing child maltreatment and child neglect.

Since poverty affects the self-esteem and overall wellbeing of children and their families, acquiring professional work and a better income can bring meaningful changes. Primary interventions will cover advocacy, parent education, public school, and service networking. This information will facilitate the development of a sense of mastery and a sense of belonging on the part of South Asian immigrant fathers. Migration inevitably involves the loss of important resources: one's home, job, social support, and other resources (Ahmad et al., 2009; Maiter et al., 2009). South Asian immigrant fathers who have a strong educational background and considerable work experience lose their sense of efficacy, sense of competence and self-esteem when they are not able to mingle and fit within the North American cultural environment. This overall spiral of unrecoverable loss in their lifetime can have an impact on their family life and lead to conflict in family (Maiter et al., 2009).

By focusing upon how to identify, access and navigate the system of health and social services including language training, appropriate employment resources including upgrading, credential recognition and networking, as well as an understanding of the affordable housing market, is crucial and will enable these fathers to act upon their sense of obligation and responsibilities. Providing accessible ESL services to all immigrants will enable South Asian immigrant fathers and their families to improve their language skills and have greater access to employment. By providing this education during the integration, process fathers will be able to participate more actively in society and the labour market and to contribute to the Canadian economy. Focusing on how to obtain key resources such as language, appropriate employment and affordable housing is crucial. This way, not only will they regain their lost social support and sense of self-esteem, but will also be able to assist other immigrant fathers. This will inevitably lead to a significant decrease in the risk factors that contribute to child protection involvement.

### **Facilitation of Access to Resources**

Practitioners need to find resources and provide adequate support for families, and help South Asian immigrant fathers find ways to better address the needs of their family's new life in Canada. Practitioners also need to keep in mind the contextual factors of South Asian immigrant fathers' lives, and to identify the most stressful aspects of that process for each family at a particular point in time in order to reduce the stressors and fathers' concerns of raising children in a new environment. It would be helpful for parents to have a support system of other individuals who have experienced similar situations. It can also be very helpful to normalize the experience when mental health issues become a concern by providing information about the stressors involved in migration. In many cases, assistance to obtain needed financial support may

reduce concerns about neglect because CAS and practitioners need to know how the process of migration and being a minority impacts on families and children in a new society in Canada.

### **Collaborative Approaches to Intervention**

If all efforts were made to increase opportunities for accessing resources, then this would be a better way to utilize available resources, and be more helpful in reducing child maltreatment and neglect in racialized families. On their end, social workers need to build and develop a collaborative network of organizations, community resources and stakeholders. Also, social workers would be well served to build a support network for South Asian Immigrant fathers with a goal of ending child poverty, maltreatment and neglect. CAS is needed to create and develop a child poverty report card by building non-partisan public education and advocate coalitions between racialized families and resources. As they support parents, practitioners need to assist both parents to increase their knowledge about child maltreatment and abuse by organizing policy workshops, special events and individual family consultations involving researchers, advocates, policy makers, teachers, physicians and church groups in the community. Parents could receive an informative, contextual presentation about the Canadian perspective on parenting skills and cultural competence based on child rearing approaches, safety and wellbeing. This holistic approach would support South Asian immigrant fathers and their families in child rearing within the North American cultural context. Social workers may facilitate employment training and elimination of poverty to promote family wellbeing by encouraging organizational policy reform, and effective service delivery to meet a family's needs.

In doing so immigrant, fathers would be provided job training under subsidised employment programs to increase chances of employment and to reduce child poverty. Workers

should be encouraged to listen to the South Asian immigrant fathers in non-judgemental ways and to work collaboratively with fathers to increase their parenting skills in the Canadian context as well as to normalize parent-child struggles while addressing the family's structural issues that pose barriers to best practices. Considering the potential of positive consequences, social workers have a moral responsibility to go the extra mile to support families that are struggling with child-parent conflict and to support a parents' capacity, to resolve issues themselves. CAS must take into consideration that South Asian immigrant fathers migrate to Canada to create better futures for their children and that they need support to resolve the differences between themselves and their children when dealing with cultural issues, rather than giving them a prescribed or pre-packaged solution which is completely unknown and unfamiliar to them.

In order for them to maintain kinship and family values, South Asian parents need to be heard and to be given the opportunity to share their issues and problems. In order for that to happen, CAS and other agencies must provide additional supports to enable the frontline social workers to provide the required support to families. South Asian immigrant fathers often believe their knowledge based on their own values and cultural beliefs is more appropriate than the methods used in the Canadian context (Ahmad et al., 2009; Maiter & George, 2003). Their South Asian family values and culture will help them "to prevent the spiral of resource loss, and to increase opportunities for resource gain" (Maiter et al., 2009, p. 37).

South Asian immigrant fathers feel a parental obligation to make maximum sacrifices to make the lives of their children happier and more successful within their South Asian family values and traditions. In cases of parent-child conflict, father and mothers both need to be included in childcare planning (Strega et al., 2008). Child protection workers must understand how fathers [South Asian] experience and negotiate child welfare intervention, if fathers are to

help them engage with service plans. Policy makers and CAS need these understandings ‘if they design services’ with meaningful outcomes that these three South Asian immigrant fathers experience as valuable (Dumbrill, 2006). When intervening and providing services to families, workers need to consider the diversity of language, race, religion, ethnicity, values and norms as encouraged by CRT and AOP, which embrace social justice and challenges inequities (Gosine & Pon, 2011).

### **Suggestions for Staff Training and Development**

South Asian immigrant fathers and their families experience systemic barriers and racism during their settlement in Canada. When coming into contact with CAS, families experience multiple challenges that include “different ideas of child rearing practices, the different definition of child maltreatment, the possibility of racial biases and service provision that does not address their particular needs” (Maiter & Stalker, 2011, p.138). Bonnie and Pon (cited at Strega & Carriere, 2015) assert that “institutional, systemic racism is perpetuated through neutral “common sense” discourses circulated in the child welfare system” and “this discourse is embedded in Eurocentric ideology of individualism that fail to acknowledge key social determinants of health such as racism and poverty” (pp. 105-106). The child welfare systems are shaped by active colonial policies and structure that operate at multiple levels in Canada and result in the persistent race, class and gender stratifications (Strega & Carriere, 2015).

Therefore, it is vital for CAS workers and managers to understand and contextualize the history of racism and colonialism, and their impact on the attitudes and micro-level practices of staff and management. CAS workers and managers need to undergo anti-racism, anti-Black racism, and anti-colonialism training. This training will raise their critical consciousness, disrupt, challenge and transform social relationships that are oppressive and exclusionary, and would

hold them more accountable in their relations with South Asian immigrant fathers and their families (Pon et al., 2011; Yee et al., 2013).

### **Anti-Racism**

Anti-racism refers to engaging in work that challenges social structures and social institutions with the goal of bringing about systemic change with respect to racism and racial oppression. This work is intended to empower racialized and marginalized individuals while encouraging white people to become aware of, and begin challenging the power and privileges afforded to them so that they may develop into allies. Scholars such as Pon et al., (2011) assert that “anti-racism education is a political practice and a theoretical framework that informs critical scholarly work, pedagogical, curricular, and organizational change measures, as well as social work practice. Anti-racism is concerned with celebrating differences and addressing racial intolerance and inequality with vital attitudinal changes, cultural awareness approaches, and song-and-dance-oriented initiatives. Anti-racism uses race as the main prism through which to understand and respond to interlocking systems of oppression and maintains that, while it is important to grapple with intersectionality, race must service as the “lens” through which one acquires insight into inequalities of class, gender, ability, and sexuality and how these sources of oppression interact with race” (p. 395-396).

### **Anti-colonialism**

Anti-colonialism recognizes the ongoing and insidious nature of neo-colonialism. Processes of neo-colonialism privilege Eurocentric knowledge over Indigenous, Aboriginal, racialized and Black ways of knowing. In such a process, Indigenous and Aboriginal peoples [all racialized groups] are pushed to the edges of the society where they are expelled from “useful participation in social life and potentially subjected to severe material deprivation” (Dumbrill,



2003, p. 57). Pon et al., (2011) assert that “anti-colonialism is the political struggle and active resistance of colonized people against the ideology and practice of colonialism. Anti-colonialism is a social, cultural, and political stance against colonialism. Anti-colonialism emphasizes decolonization and affirming Indigenous knowledge and culture, while establishing Indigenous control over Indigenous national territories. Anti-colonialism, like critical race feminism and anti-oppression, emphasizes critical self-reflexivity and power sharing. Anti-colonialism and critical race feminism are the most effective approaches for understanding the contemporary racial disproportionality in child welfare” (p. 400-401). Social workers maximize their contributions to decolonization and minimize their role in reproducing colonialism through their practices. These both approaches represent alternatives to anti-oppression discourses in that anti-colonialism and critical race feminism promise a more effective and critical response to racism and colonialism (Pon et al., 2011).

### **Anti-Black Racism**

Anti-Black racism refers to historical and contemporary forms of racism specifically targeting Black people and Black communities (Clarke, 2011, Pon et al., 2011). Bonnie & Pon cited at Strega & Carriere (2015) assert, “anti-Black racism includes individual, systematic and structural forms, as well as specific laws and practices that lead to segregation in education, housing and employment. Anti-Black racism includes historical and contemporary forms of Black people’s resistance to racial discrimination. Anti-Black racism as a dialectic because it refers to both the racial oppression directed at Black people on one hand and the resistance to this discrimination on the other hand (Akua Benjamin, 2003). This dialectic captures the tremendous resistance and resilience of Black people in the face of brutal racism” (as cited at Strega & Carriere, 2015, p. 108). It also points to the need for child protection agencies to look

inward to the experience and expertise of their black workers for input, guidance and leadership in changing how practice occurs on a day-to-day basis.

The object of this study is to learn from the experiences of three South Asian immigrant fathers involved in the child welfare system, and to understand how their “unspoken”, “unheard”, and “unstated” voices can be made more noticeable for the empowerment of the larger community. I believe that my little efforts in making South Asian immigrant fathers concerns and voices publicly visible may contribute to CAS and practitioners when working with the South Asian immigrant communities in Canada for child protection.

## **Chapter 7**

### **Conclusion**

This MRP has explored the experiences of South Asian immigrant fathers involved with the child welfare system in the GTA. The three South Asian immigrant fathers I interviewed experience difficulties in raising children in a Euro-centric western culture in which they are not familiar or experienced. These parents came into contact with CAS because of conflict between parents and children related to cultural issues. The fathers interviewed raised concerns about the interactions they had with CAS such as their experience of surveillance and control. They expressed their fear of the new challenges they faced once they came into contact with CAS. Sharing their lived stories, the fathers provided insight into CAS' culturally dominant child welfare practices and their children's relations with school teachers, doctors and social workers. The differential treatment, surveillance and discriminatory assessment of workers lead the parents into uncertainty with a fear of removal of their children from their homes.

CAS' risk assessment and interventions increase tension in households because social workers do not listen to fathers, nor consider structural inequalities and the families' contextual factors. When workers rely upon a risk assessment tool, they focus upon parenting deficits and not on the needs of individual children. They often blame mothers for their failure to protect children and exclude fathers during interventions and decision-making. AOP encourages social workers to enumerate child safety and risk factors from multiple sources during assessment and look for a family's strength, protective factors, contextual factors and the family's desired outcome. Family and worker both should have a clear understanding of the family's point of view, including differences in the perception of all family members regardless of their race and ethnicity, on what is going on, its outcome and further initiatives if needed for change. Social

workers should clarify and share information with the families to enhance safety, protective factors and reduce risk, assistance should include direct observation of parent-children interactions (Strega & Carriere, 2009). Social workers should build and maintain a collaborative and respectful relationship with South Asian immigrant fathers and their families in the best interest of children using “power with” approaches, where both workers and parents mutually agree on the objectives and strategies required, rather than “power over” approaches to support parents (Dumbrill, 2006). When social workers engage in a “power with” approach, it will strengthen a collaborative effort with families in assessing precisely a family’s needs and observe ongoing situations that might need to be changed to make decisions whether children are removed from or remain in their home (Strega & Carrier, 2009). Poverty and affordable housing should be validated in the child welfare policies and implemented in the regular culture and practices of workers. The workers should observe parent-child interactions, relationships, and different parenting styles while negotiating with parents’ child protection obligations and provincial standards rather condemning and excluding fathers at the time of conflict and duress in the families.

CAS’ practice of blaming mothers and ignoring fathers does not address structural issues, which are totally beyond the control of parents. These issues are poverty, affordable housing, safe environment and domestic violence against women (Gosine & Pon, 2011). If fathers are intimidating or intoxicated in the presence of workers, they may feel overwhelmed by these men. This can lead workers to avoid men for fear of their aggressive reaction and exclude them when intervening and planning. Consequently, when children are in contact with CAS, mothers are included and fathers are excluded, and they focus upon the mother who is seen as the principle caregiver and make them exclusively accountable for their children. When this happens the

children may be perceived as no longer at risk of harm, but no one is seeking input from the mothers regarding their needs, knowledge and understanding about how to navigate the service system that can support them in this new role. When mothers are compelled to assume roles previously held by fathers, they do not necessarily have the knowledge or understanding of the community that the husband would have in his capacity as the public face of the family.

Although children who come into contact with CAS often have fathers, men often curiously remain absent from child welfare intervention and are excluded from the childcare decision making process. As a result, when children and family come in contact with CAS, mothers are over-represented and fathers are under-represented in the child welfare system (Strega et al., 2008). The child protection 'gaze' remains firmly upon the mother's permanent availability and skills as a parent. Mothers are responsible for child safety as the primary caregiver and are held accountable. The failure to engage men or record them as fathers can lead to 'mother blaming' in terms of 'failure to protect' children from maltreatment. The current legislation recognizes the family unit for children's care and safety, and the principle is considered secondary to the safety and protection of the child (Swift & Parada, 2004). The legislation (CFSA, 2000), Section 37 (2) (b) (i) (ii) has made mothers more accountable for harm including emotional harm experienced by a child in their care. This may be done considering that a father or father figure can leave his children 'leaving them on the street; even though they are sources of economic support for the family. However, a mother cannot leave her children on the street whatever the circumstances may be, unless her life is endangered or there is no alternative. When problems arises and allegations are made, workers focus on mothers, blaming them for their inability to protect their children from the abusive men in their family rather than holding the men to account for their behaviour.

CAS services have failed to engage fathers who are in the child welfare system. Strega et al., (2008) notes, “ignoring fathers in the child welfare discourse is to be more routine” (p. 712). While intervening, child welfare workers focus on mothers failing to protect children and ignore fathers’ involvement in the family (Coady et al., 2013; Strega et al., 2008). The dominant culture makes fathers feel unsupported and sidelined by social workers when they wanted to be part of their children's lives (Walmsley, 2009).

The findings presented from this small sample of South Asian immigrant fathers may help researchers, practitioners, and policy makers to understand the effect of CAS’ dominant cultural policies, standardised processes and routinized practices. Since South Asian immigrant parents are sometimes coping with severe mental, physical and other contextual struggles, a narrow focus on specific abuse incidents only results in an increased experience of oppression shared by racialized families. Factors beyond societal discrimination and the discriminatory practices of CAS, including Ontario’s risk assessment policies, need to balance child welfare obligations to protect children from abuse and neglect with a view of the family including their strengths and not just their limitations in an effort to reduce the over-representation of racialized children (Yee et al., 2013).

In concluding, I must reflect upon my experiences as a South Asian immigrant father and AOP researcher engaging in this study. I have struggled with all of the challenges faced by these three fathers and I am struck by one important observation. Like the participants of this study, I came to Canada out of a sense of obligation to create a better life for my children. Unlike the participants, I came with a wealth of experience working with English speaking Eurocentric people in my prior work with various United Nations agencies. I understood how political and social systems operate. I understood how to network and communicate with bureaucrats and

professionals and still I faced the same experiences as these fathers. If, I with all of my unique experiences, privilege and knowledge, have also struggled to access the networks of support and services that are available in Canada, what is it like for those without these advantages? When CAS workers encounter South Asian fathers, they must try to understand how motivated they are by their sense of obligation and use this strength. Workers must also understand that when these fathers are denied the knowledge of how to function within a Canadian context, they are unable to fulfill their obligations as fathers, which creates significant problems on many levels, personal, marital and familial. It is during these moments that CAS becomes involved and the failure to respectfully recognize each father's unique experience in this regard perpetuates a sense of oppression and hopelessness.

Further research is needed to explore the relationships between bias and discriminatory reporting, discriminatory assessment and controversial decision making by mandated professionals involved with CAS. Research is also needed to investigate the issues raised by the fathers including differential treatment, power-over approaches, surveillance and criminalization that pushes families into mental anxiety, stress and uncertainty. Within AOP and CRT perspectives, an accountability mechanism should be put into action to determine such discriminatory practices. Social workers should develop collaborative partnerships using 'power with' approaches with parents for effective case planning (Dumbrill, 2006), and to build full and concrete understandable changes for reducing risk and enhancing protective factors with the families, organizations and community resources towards ending child poverty, maltreatment and neglect with AOP perspective (Strega & Carriere, 2009; Yee et al., 2013).

Bonnie and Pon as cited in in Strega and Carrier (2015), have called for a new Social Contract, "a critical discourse that reflects power imbalances and the impact of social inequities

needs to be included within Ministry documents that guide child welfare” (p. 117). This study and the experience of these three South Asian immigrant fathers have demonstrated the importance of, and the impact of, race and racism on their experiences with CAST. Their experience also illustrates how race is a social determinant of health, as described by Bonnie and Pon, in Strega and Carrier (2015). Race as a social determinant of health has impacted these families and their lived experiences within the child welfare system. The findings of this study demonstrate the need for individual practitioners, managers and policy writers to “understand what processes or supports are required to facilitate the child, family and community’s well-being, while at the same time ensuring that everyone has the necessary level of understanding and self-reflexivity to end the practices of dominance and marginalization.

Social workers and racialized parents must be involved within agencies to develop safe and positive relationships. Such exploration has potential to transform both organizational structure and culture, and these practices would prevent or reduce the risk of child maltreatment and the over-representation of racialized children in the child welfare system (Gosine & Pon, 2011; Maiter et al., 2009; Yee et al., 2013). Otherwise, the ‘unheard voices’ of these South Asian immigrant fathers that have provided significant insight into their anxieties and tensions and the highly complex experiences of migration will remain unacknowledged in the child welfare system. Racialized immigrant families [fathers] will continue to experience barriers as they access provisions of the welfare state (Gosine & Pon, 2011) and continue to encounter the negative experiences of Aboriginal communities during the “Sixties Scoop”.



## APPENDIX A: Recruitment Flyer



SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK  
FACULTY OF COMMUNITY SERVICES  
*Accredited by The Canadian Association for Social Work Education*

### RECRUITMENT FLYER

**Experiences of Child Welfare of South Asian Immigrant Fathers in the GTA**  
**Research Conducted by Louis Boiragi, MSW Candidate, Ryerson University**  
*(Research is to fulfill requirement of my graduate degree)*

#### Purpose:

To study how South Asian immigrant fathers experience the child welfare system in the GTA. This research is being done to fulfill requirements for my graduate degree.

#### Benefit:

Opportunity to share experiences which may not be heard Increase fathers knowledge of child welfare intervention in the Canadian context

#### Participants:

- South Asian immigrant fathers from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka
- Reside in the GTA 10 years or longer
- Be a father
- Have a child under 12 years
- Have been in contact with the child welfare system

#### Interview:

Audio recorded, 1-1.5 hour in person interview

**For more information please contact Louis Boiragi at [louis.boiragi@ryerson.ca](mailto:louis.boiragi@ryerson.ca).**

Thank you  
Louis Boiragi  
MSW Candidate, 2015  
School of Social Work  
Ryerson University, Toronto.  
[louis.boiragi@ryerson.ca](mailto:louis.boiragi@ryerson.ca)

**Leave a message at**  
Phone: (416) 979-5000 ext. 4789 (Press 2)

**Supervisor**  
Kristin Smith, PhD  
Assistant Professor  
School of Social Work  
Ryerson University, Toronto  
[kristin.smith@ryerson.ca](mailto:kristin.smith@ryerson.ca)  
Phone: 416-979-5000 ext. 6272

## **APPENDIX B: Research Interview Consent Form**



SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK  
FACULTY OF COMMUNITY SERVICES  
*Accredited by The Canadian Association for Social Work Education*

### ***Research Interview Consent Form***

### **Child Welfare: Experiences of South Asian Immigrant Fathers in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA)**

#### **Research Conducted by Louis Boiragi**

You are being asked to participate in a research study on child welfare. Before you give your consent to participate, it is important that you read the following information and ask as many questions as necessary to be sure you understand what you will be asked to do.

#### **INVESTIGATOR:**

This study is being conducted by Louis Boiragi, a graduate student in the Master of Social Work Program at Ryerson University under the direct supervision of Dr. Kristin Smith, Assistant Professor, School of Social Work at Ryerson University, Toronto.

#### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:**

The goal of this study is to understand how South Asian immigrant fathers experience the child welfare when their children and families come in contact with the child welfare system. The paper will be submitted to Ryerson University in partial completion of a Master of Social Work degree. The second purpose will be a subsequent unsupervised manuscript intended for publication in a peer-reviewed journal.

#### **PROCEDURES**

This study will consist of 3 one-on-one interviews with individual immigrant fathers who have a child under 12 years old. The participants will be recruited among immigrant fathers who have been living in the GTA for 10 years or longer.

You will be asked to sign the consent form in presence of the researcher before beginning of individual interview. By volunteering to participate in this study, you will take part in one individual interview lasting between 1 and 1.5 hours at an arranged time during the period of April to July, 2015. Your interview will be conducted at either at a private room at Ryerson University or a different location of your choice that is both comfortable and private. The interview will be audio recorded and later transcribed by a professional transcriptionist, who has signed a confidentiality agreement. The interview questions you will be asked are:

1. How did you come to be involved with the child welfare system? What was your experience with child welfare?
2. How can child welfare services better listen to South Asian immigrant fathers' voices?
3. How do you think child welfare could intervene in South Asian families' lives while respecting their culture? What do you think they could have done?
4. Do you experience difficulties in raising children in Canadian culture? What have some of these difficulties been? How do you manage these difficulties?
5. Are different parenting cultures a challenge for you while undergoing settlement in Canada?
6. Do you think fathers have the right in decision making for children? Why do you think this?
7. Who do you think is the best person to help parents if they are having problems with their children?
8. What do you think the best solution for immigrant fathers when they face challenges with their children? What are they?
9. When you think about your child's future, what is most important to you?
10. Is there anything else you would like to share? Is there anything I did not ask about that you think is important? Do you have any questions for me?

You may choose to decline answering any questions.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Your name and identity will remain confidential. Only the investigator and his supervisor will have the access to the data collected. A transcriptionist will be used and has signed a confidentiality agreement. All identifying information will be removed from transcripts and pseudonyms will be used to ensure confidentiality. Transcripts and audio recordings will be password protected, stored in USB in locked cabinet at the Principal Investigators place of residence for the study and deleted after five years. We will ensure full and secure deletion of data once the study is complete.

## **VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you volunteer to be part of this study, you may withdraw at any time during the research process, and that can be done by simply notifying the researcher by email or phone. In the event of your withdrawal, none of the information generated by you will be used in the results. You may also choose to decline to answer any question you do not wish to answer and still remain in the study. Your decision to participate or withdraw will not affect your relationship with researcher or with Ryerson University.

## **RISKS / BENEFITS TO PARTICIPATION**

Possible risks related to participation in this study are minimal. However, it is possible that you might experience feeling uncomfortable for a number of reasons, including the fact that the topic has deep personal and professional meaning. In order to minimize these risks, you will be encouraged to share only information that is comfortable for you. You may benefit from the opportunity to reflect on your experience in the context of the child welfare system in Canada.

Your participation in the study has the potential to shed light and contribute to the racialized immigrant fathers of child welfare intervention and its practices. You will be provided a copy of the research findings once the study is complete.

### **COSTS TO PARTICIPATION**

There are no financial costs to participating in this research study. You will receive 2 TTC tokens at the beginning of the research study to reimburse for travel costs.

### **FUTURE CONTACT**

If you consent to be contacted for the purpose of sharing the study findings, you will be contacted when the study is complete via email or phone, as you prefer.

### **QUESTION ABOUT THE STUDY**

If you have any questions please, call me or my supervisor:

#### **INVESTIGATOR**

Louis Boiragi  
MSW candidate  
School of Social Work  
Ryerson University  
[louis.boiragi@ryerson.ca](mailto:louis.boiragi@ryerson.ca),

#### **Leave a message at**

Phone: (416) 979-5000 ext. 4789 (Press 2)

#### **SUPERVISOR:**

Dr. Kristin Smith, Assistant Professor  
School of Social Work  
Ryerson University  
[kristin.smith@ryerson.ca](mailto:kristin.smith@ryerson.ca)  
Phone: 416-979-5000 Ext. 6272.  
Phone: 416-979-5000 ext. 6272

### **COMMITMENT TO ETHICAL RESEARCH PRACTICES**

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Ryerson Research Ethics Board. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact the Ethics Review Office at:

Research Ethics  
C/O Office of the Vice President  
Research and Innovation

#### **Research Ethics Board**

[rebchair@ryerson.ca](mailto:rebchair@ryerson.ca)  
416-979-5042  
Ryerson University  
350 Victoria Street  
Suite YDI 1100  
Toronto, Ontario  
M5B 2K3

## **SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT AND RESEARCH INTERVIEWERS**

I understand the information provided to me about the study, Experience of Child Welfare of South Asian Immigrant Fathers in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). My questions have been answered to my satisfaction and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this agreement and have had a chance to ask any questions you have about the study. Your signature also indicates that you agree to be in the study and have been told that you can change your mind and withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You have been given a copy of this agreement. You have been told that by signing this consent agreement you are not giving up any of your legal rights.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Principal Investigator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Principal Investigator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

---

## **CONSENT TO BE AUDIO-RECORDED**

I agree to allow my research interview to be audio-recorded and later transcribed for the purpose of data analysis.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## APPENDIX C: Invitation to Participate



SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK  
FACULTY OF COMMUNITY SERVICES  
*Accredited by The Canadian Association for Social Work Education*

### ***Invitation to Participate in a Research Interview***

#### **Child Welfare: Experiences of South Asian Immigrant Fathers in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA)**

##### **Research Conducted by Louis Boiragi**

My name is Louis Boiragi and I am a Graduate Student – Social Work at Ryerson School of Social Work. My Supervisor is Dr. Kristin Smith, Assistant Professor, School of Social Work at Ryerson University, Toronto. I would like to invite you to participate in my research by participating in an individual interview conducted by myself at an arranged time during the period April to July, 2015. The purpose of the interview is to understand how South Asian immigrant fathers experience the child welfare system. The following will provide you with additional information about my study and my contact information should you have any questions.

My research examines the relationship between South Asian immigrant fathers, and the child welfare services in Canada. The study will contribute to create a better understanding of child welfare and services in the Canadian context. As part of my research, I would like to complete individual interviews with 3 South Asian immigrant fathers at each of our selected sites in order to explore your first-hand experience of child welfare intervention.

##### **What Would Participation Involve?**

You will be asked to take part voluntarily in one face-to-face, confidential, individual interview to be conducted by me during April to July 2015. The interview will be audio recorded and later be transcribed. The interview will last between 1 and 1.5 hours. Your interview will be conducted at either at a private room at Ryerson University or a different location of your choice that is both comfortable and private. During interviews, research participants will be asked to reflect on the following questions:

1. How did you come to be involved with the child welfare system? What was your experience with child welfare?
2. How can child welfare services better listen to South Asian immigrant fathers' voices?
3. How do you think child welfare could intervene in South Asian families' lives while respecting their culture? What do you think they could have done?
4. Do you experience difficulties in raising children in Canadian culture? What have some of these difficulties been? How do you manage these difficulties?

5. Are different parenting cultures a challenge for you while undergoing settlement in Canada?
6. Do you think fathers have the right in decision making for children? Why do you think?
7. Who do you think is the best person to help parents if they are having problems with their children?
8. What do you think the best solution for immigrant fathers when they face challenges with their children? What are they?
9. When you think about your child's future, what is most important to you?
10. Is there anything else you would like to share? Is there anything I did not ask about that you think is important? Do you have any questions for me?

You may choose to decline answering any questions.

If you decide to take part in the interview, your name and identity will remain confidential. In addition to members of the research team, a professional transcription service provider who has signed a Confidentiality Agreement will have temporary access to your information for the purpose of transcribing our audio tape recordings. You may decline to respond to questions you do not want to answer. You may withdraw at any time during the research process, and that can be done by simply notifying the researcher by email or phone. In the event of your withdrawal, none of the information generated by you will be used in the results. This study has been reviewed and received ethics approval through the Ryerson Research Ethics Board. If you have any questions regarding our research or about participating in an interview, please contact:

Louis Boiragi  
 Graduate Student, Expected 2015  
 School of Social Work  
 Ryerson University  
 louis.boiragi@ryerson.ca

Kristin Smith, PhD  
 Assistant Professor  
 School of Social Work at Ryerson University  
 kristin.smith@ryerson.ca  
 Phone: 416-979-5000 ext. 6272

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact the Ethics Review Office at:

**Research Ethics**  
 C/O Office of the Vice President  
 Research and Innovation  
 rebchair@ryerson.ca  
 416-979-5042  
 Ryerson University  
 350 Victoria Street, Suite YDI 1100  
 Toronto, Ontario, M5B 2K3

## APPENDIX D: Interview Guide



SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK  
FACULTY OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

*Accredited by The Canadian Association for Social Work Education*

### **Child Welfare: Experiences of South Asian Immigrant Fathers in the GTA** **Research Conducted by Louis Boiragi**

#### **Interview Guide**

**Preamble:** Thank you for agreeing to be part of this research process. My name is Louis Boiragi and I am a Graduate Student – Social Work at Ryerson School of Social Work. My Supervisor is Dr. Kristin Smith, Assistant Professor, School of Social Work at Ryerson University, Toronto. Before we start, I would like you to know that this interview will take approximately between 1 and 1.5 hours. I also want to assure you that everything you say here is confidential and that only I will have access to the information you provide, with the exception of my research supervisor. All identifying information will be removed from your transcript and a pseudonym will be used if you are quoted. The data later will be transcribed by a professional transcriptionist, who has signed a confidentiality agreement for professional transcription service. At any point during the interview, you may ask to stop the recording or take a break. You can also terminate the interview at any point if you feel any discomfort or you decide to change your mind about being part of this research study. Do you have any questions before we begin?

1. How did you come to be involved with the child welfare system? What was your experience with child welfare?
2. How can child welfare services better listen to South Asian immigrant fathers' voices?
3. How do you think child welfare could intervene in South Asian families' lives while respecting their culture? What do you think they could have done?
4. Do you experience difficulties in raising children in Canadian culture? What have some of these difficulties been? How do you manage these difficulties?
5. Are different parenting cultures a challenge for you while undergoing settlement in Canada?
6. Do you think fathers have the right in decision making for children? Why do you think this?
7. Who do you think is the best person to help parents if they are having problems with their children?
8. What do you think the best solution for immigrant fathers when they face challenges with their children? What are they?
9. When you think about your child's future, what is most important to you?
10. Is there anything else you would like to share? Is there anything I did not ask about that you think is important? Do you have any questions for me?

You may choose to decline answering any questions.



## APPENDIX E: Confidentially Agreement Form



SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK  
FACULTY OF COMMUNITY SERVICES  
*Accredited by The Canadian Association for Social Work Education*

### ***Transcription Service Confidentiality Form***

**Experiences of Child Welfare of South Asian Immigrant Fathers in the Greater Toronto Area**  
**Research Conducted by Louis Boiragi, MSW Candidate, Ryerson University**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, transcriptionist, agree to maintain full confidentiality in regards to any and all audiotapes and documentation received from Louis Boiragi, Master of Social Work Candidate (2015) at Ryerson University related to his research study called, Experiences of Child Welfare of South Asian Immigrant Fathers in the Greater Toronto Area. His supervisor is Dr. Kristin Smith, Assistant Professor, School of Social Work, Ryerson University, Toronto.  
kristin.smith@ryerson.ca, Phone: 416-979-5000 extn. 6272

Furthermore, I agree:

1. To hold in strictest confidence the identification of any individual that may be inadvertently revealed during the transcription of audio-taped interviews, or in any associated documents;
2. To not make copies of any audiotapes or computerized files of the transcribed interview texts, unless specifically requested to do so by Louis Boiragi and/or Dr. Kristin Smith;
3. To store all study-related audiotapes and materials in a safe, secure location as long as they are in my possession;
4. To return all audiotapes and study-related documents to Louis Boiragi and/or Dr. Kristin Smith in a complete and timely manner.
5. To delete all electronic files containing study-related documents from my computer hard drive and any backup devices.

I am aware that I can be held legally liable for any breach of this confidentiality agreement, and for any harm incurred by individuals if I disclose identifiable information contained in the audiotapes and/or files to which I will have access.

Transcriber's name (printed) \_\_\_\_\_

Transcriber's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Louis Boiragi

Signature

Date

## **APPENDIX F: Recruitment email**

### **Re: Recruitment of potential participants for a qualitative research**

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am currently completing a Master of Social Work degree at Ryerson University. I am in the process of recruiting potential participants from South Asian immigrant fathers for a small study on child welfare. My Supervisor is Dr. Kristin Smith, Assistant Professor, School of Social Work at Ryerson University, Toronto, kristin.smith@ryerson.ca, Phone: 416-979-5000 ext. 6272

I request permission to recruit potential participants from your agency list serve for South Asian immigrant fathers who have been in contact with the child welfare system. The study is to fulfill requirements of my graduate degree in 2015. The study provides immigrant fathers the opportunity to share their experiences on child welfare which may not have been heard. Please advise me about the agency protocol and how to be contacted in order to finalize my recruitment process. The criteria for recruitment participants include following information along with a recruitment flyer attached (Appendix B - Recruitment Flyer):

#### **Purpose:**

To purpose of this study is to understand how South Asian immigrant fathers experience the child welfare system in the GTA.

#### **Benefit to immigrant fathers:**

- Opportunity to share experiences which may not be heard
- Increase fathers knowledge of child welfare intervention in the Canadian context

#### **Participants:**

- South Asian immigrant fathers from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka
- Reside in the GTA 10 years or longer
- Be a father
- Have a child under 12 years
- Have been in contact with the child welfare system

#### **Interview process:** Audio tape recorded.

This interview process will include individual father only for a 1 to 1.5 hour face to face audio tape-recorded interview which can be done at a location of participants' choice or your organization or at Ryerson University. For more information please contact me at louis.boiragi@ryerson.ca or my supervisor Dr. Kristin Smith.

Thank you for assisting me in recruitment process.  
Sincerely,

Louis Boiragi  
MSW Candidate, 2015  
School of Social Work  
[louis.boiragi@ryerson.ca](mailto:louis.boiragi@ryerson.ca)

**Leave a message at**

Phone: (416) 979-5000 ext. 4789 (Press 2)

## REFERENCE LIST

- Abney, V. D. (1996). Cultural competency in the field of child maltreatment. In J. Brier, L. Berliner, J.A. Bulkley, C. Jenny, & T. Reid (Eds.), *The APSAC handbook on child maltreatment*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Abrams, L.S., & Molo, J.A. (2009). Critical Race Theory and the Cultural Competence Dilemma in Social Work Education. *Journal of Social work Education*. Spring, ProQuest, Vol. 45, No.2, 245.
- Ahmad, F., Driver, N., McNally, M.J., & Stewart D. E. (2009). "Why doesn't she seek help for partner abuse?" An exploratory study with South Asian immigrant women. *Journal of Social Science and Medicine*. ELSEVIER Ltd. 69,613-622.  
doi:10.1016/j.socscimed.2009.06.011
- Ahmad, F., Riaz, S., Barata, P., & Stewart D. (2004). Patriarchal Beliefs & Perceptions of Abuse Among South Asian Immigrant Women. *VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN*, Sage Publications. Vol 10.No. 3, 262-282. doi:10.1177/1077801203256000
- Aylward, C. A. (1999). *Canadian Critical Race Theory: Racism and the Law*. Fernwood Publishing, Halifax, Canada.
- Blackstock, C., Trocme, N., & Bennett, M. (2004). "Child welfare response to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children in Canada: A comparative analysis" *Violence Against Women*, SAGE Publications, 10(8),901-916. doi:10.1177/1077801204266312
- Blackstock, C. (2008). *The Breath of Life: When Everything Matters in Child Welfare*. Paper presented to University of Victoria Aboriginal Child Welfare Research Symposium, Victoria, February 15.

- Blackstock, C., & Trocme', N. (2005). Community-based child welfare for aboriginal children: Supporting resilience through structural changes. *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand*, Ministry of Social Development. 24(1-17). <http://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/journals-and-magazines/social-policy-journal/index.html>
- Brown, L., Callahan, M., Strega, S., Walmsley, C., & Dominelli, L. (2009). Manufacturing ghost fathers: the paradox of father presence and absence in child welfare. *Child and Family Social Work, Journal Compilation*. Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 14, 25-34.  
doi:10.1111/j.1365-2206.2008.00578.x
- Child Welfare Anti-Oppression Roundtable (2009). Anti-oppression in Child Welfare: Laying the Foundation for Change. A Discussion Paper. Toronto: The Child Welfare Anti-Oppression. Roundtable, 1-68.
- Choudhry, U.K. (2001). Uprooting and Resettlement Experiences of South Asian Immigrant Women. *Western Journal of Nursing Research*. SAGE Publications Inc., 23(4), 376-393
- Contenta, S., Monsebraaten. L., & Rankin, J. (2014). "Just 8% of Toronto Kids Are Black, But 41% of Kids in Care are Black". *Toronto Star*, Dec, 11: A1, A33.
- Coady, N., Hoy, S.L., & Cameron G. (2013). Fathers' experiences with child welfare services. *Child and Family Social Work*. John Wiley & Sons Ltd., 18, 275-284.  
doi:10.1111/j.1365-2206.2012.00842.x
- Chaze, F. (2009). Child Welfare Intervention in Visible Minority Immigrant Families. The Role of Poverty and the Mothering Discourse. *Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering*. Volume 11, Number 2, 56-65.

- Clarke, J. (2012). Beyond Child Protection: Afro-Caribbean Service Users of Child Welfare. *Journal of Progressive Human Services*, Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, LLC, 23,223-257. doi:10.1080/10428232.2012.719119
- Clarke, J. (2011). The challenges of child welfare involvement for Afro-Caribbean families in Toronto. *Children and Youth Services Review*, ELSEVIEWR. 33, 274-283. doi:10.1016/j.chilyouth.2010.09.010
- Deepak, A. C. (2005). Parenting and the Process of Migration: Possibilities Within South Asian Families. *Child Welfare*; Child Welfare League of America, NY, ProQuest, Sept/Oct 84, 5; 585-606. 009-4021/2005/050585-22
- Dominelli, L., Strega, S., Walmsley, C., Callahan, M., & Brown L. (2011). 'Here's my Story': Fathers of 'Looked After' Children Recount their Experiences in the Canadian Child Welfare System. *British Journal of Social Work*. Oxford University Press. 41, 351-367. doi:10.1093/bjsw/bcq099
- Dominelli, L. (2002). Anti-oppressive practice in context, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. In social work: themes, issues and critical debates. New York, NY: Palgrave, 1-19.
- Dumbrill, G.C. (2010). Power and Child Protection: The Need for a Child Welfare Service users' Union or Association. *Australian Social Work*. Routledge, , Volume 63, No. 2, 194-206. doi: 10.1080/03124071003717655
- Dumbrill, G.C. (2006a). Ontario's Child Welfare Transformation. Another Swing of Pendulum? *Canadian Social Work Review*. Volume 23 (1-2), 5-19.
- Dumbrill, G.C. (2006). Parental experience of child protection intervention: A qualitative study. *Child Abuse & Neglect*. Pergamon ELSEVIER Ltd..30, 27-37. doi:10.1016/j.chiabu.2005.08.012

- Dumbrill, G. C. (2003). Child Welfare: AOPs nemesis? In W. Shera (Ed.), *Emerging perspectives on anti-oppressive practice*, 101-119, Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press.
- Duncan, L. (2004). *The Welfare of Children*, 2nd edn, New York, NY, Oxford University Press
- Fallon, B., Wert, M. V., Trocme, N., MacLaurin, B., Sinha, V., Lefebvre, R., Allan, T., Lee, B., Rha, W., Smith, C., & Goel, S. (2013) Ontario Incidence Study Of Reported Child Abuse And Neglect. Major Findings. Child Welfare Research Portal, 2015
- Fraser, H. (2004). Doing Narrative Research: Analysis Personal Stories Line by Line. *Qualitative Social Work*. SAGE Publications Ltd. 3(2), 179-201. doi:10.1177/1473325004.043383
- Gosine, K., & Pon, G. (2011). On the Front Lines: The Voices and Experiences of Racialized Child Welfare Workers in Toronto, Canada. *Journal of Progressive Human Services*, Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group. LLC. 22,135-159.  
doi:10.1080/10428232.2011.599280
- George, P., & Rasidi M. (2014). Domestic Violence in South Asian Communities in the GTA. Critical Perspectives of Community Activists and Service Providers. CAOS: *The Journal of Critical Anti-oppressive Social Inquiry*. Volume 1, 67-81.
- George, U. (2007). *Immigration and Settlement in Canada*. Book Surge Publishers.
- George, U., & Ramkissoon, S. (1998). Race, gender, and class: Interlocking Oppressions in the Lives of South Asian Women in Canada. *Journal of Women and Social Work*. Sage Publications, Inc. Vol 13 No.1,102-119. doi:10.1177/088610999801300106
- Gough, P. (2009). An Overview of the child welfare systems in Canada. *International Journal of Child health and Human Development*. Nova Science Publishers, Inc. Vol 2, Issue 3-Special Issue, 357-372.

- Henry, F., & Tator, C. (2010). *"The Colour of Democracy: Racism in Canadian Society"*. Fourth Edition. Nelson Education Ltd., USA.
- Hill, R.B. (2004). Institutional racism in child welfare. *Race and Society*, ELSEVIER, 7,17-33.  
doi:10.1016/j.racsoc.2004.11.004
- hooks, B. F]Understanding Patriarchy - NO BORDERS  
*imagineborders.org/pdf/zines/UnderstandingPatriarchy.pdf* he word,  
because *patriarchal* gender roles are assigned to ... We played together with them, often  
with me aggressively. Understanding. *Patriarchy bell hooks...*
- Hunter, M. (2004). Rethinking epistemology, methodology, and racism: or, is White sociology  
really dead? *Race and Society*, ELSEVIER Inc.,119-137.  
doi:10.1016/j.racsoc.2004.01.002
- Humphrey, C. (2007). Insider-outsider. *Action Research*. SAGE Publications, Volume 5(1), 11-  
26. doi: 10.1177/1476750307072873
- Jaycox, L. H., Bradley, D., Stein, S.H., Kataoka, M.W., Arlene, F., Pia, E., & Catalina, Z.  
(2002). "Violence Exposure, Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, and Depressive Symptoms  
among Recent Immigrant School Children." *Journal of the American Academy of Child  
and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 41 (9), 1104-1110.
- Maiter, S., & Leslie, B. (2014). *Child Welfare Systems and Migrant Children. A Cross Country  
Study of Policies and Practice*. Cary, NC, USA, Oxford University Press, ProQuest  
ebruary. 179-194.
- Maiter, S., & Stalker C. (2011). South Asian Immigrants' experience of child protection services:  
are we recognizing strengths and resilience? *Child & Family Social Work*. Blackwell  
Publishing Ltd.16 (2), 138-148. doi:10.1111/j.1365-2206.2010.00721.x

- Maiter, S., Stalker, C., & Alaggia R. (2009). The Experiences of Minority Immigrant Families Receiving Child Welfare Services: Seeking to Understand How to Reduce Risk and Increase Protective Factors. *The Journal of Contemporary Social Services*. Alliances for children and families. Vol. 90 (1), 27-36. doi:10.1606/1044-3894.3842
- Maiter, S. (2009). Using an Anti-racist Framework for Assessment and Intervention in Clinical Practice with Families from Diverse Ethno-racial. *Clinical Social Work Journal*. ORIGINAL PAPER. 37, 267-276. doi:10.1007/s10615.009.0198.0
- Maiter, S., Alaggia, R., & Troceno N. (2004). Perceptions of Child Maltreatment by Parents from the Indian Subcontinent: Challenging Myths About Culturally Based Abusive Parenting Practices. *Child Maltreatment*. SAGE Publications. Vol. 9, No. 3, 309-324. doi:10.1177/1077559504.266800
- Maiter, S., & George U. (2003). Understanding Context and Culture in the Parenting Approaches of Immigrant South Asian Canadian Mothers. *Journal of Women and Social Work*, Sage Publications. Vol 18, No. 4, 411-428. doi:10.1177/0886109903257589
- Mason, J. (2002). *Qualitative Researching*, SAGE Publications. Second Edition, 1-218.
- Mitchell, B. (2005). Canada's Growing Visible Minority Population: generational Challenges, Opportunities and Federal Policy Considerations. Canada Heritage. Online: <[http: www. Pch.Gc.Ca/Progs/Multi/Canada 2017/7\\_E.Cfm#2](http://www.Pch.Gc.Ca/Progs/Multi/Canada%2017/7_E.Cfm#2)>. Accessed: 18 Nov. 2008
- Moffatt, K. (1999). Surveillance and government of the welfare recipient. In A. Chambon, A. Irving, & L Epstein, *Reading Foucault for Social Work*. 219-242. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Moffatt, K. (2012). *Troubled Masculinities. Reimagining Urban Men*. University of Toronto Press. Toronto, Canada.



- Mullaly, B. (2002). *Challenging Oppression. A critical social work approach*. Toronto: Oxford University Press.
- Ono, E. (2013). Violence Against Racially Minoritized Women: Implications for Social Work, *Journal of Women and Social Work*, Affilia, SAGE 28 (4), 458-467.  
doi:10.1177/0886109913505044
- Parada, H., Barnoff, L., & Coleman, B. (2007) Negotiating “Professional Agency”: Social Work and Decision-making within the Ontario Child Welfare System. *Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*, Volume XXXIV, Western Michigan University, Number 4, 35-56.
- Pon, G., Gosine, K., & Phillips, D. (2011). Immediate Response: Addressing Anti-Native And Anti-Black Racism in Child Welfare. *International Journal of Child, Youth and Family Studies*, 3 & 4, 385-409.
- Pon, G. (2009). Cultural Competency as New Racism: An Ontology for Forgetting. *Journal of Progressive Human Service*. Routledge, Tailor & Francis Group, LLC. 20, 59-71.  
doi:10.1080/104282.30902871173
- Reitz, J. G. (2005). “Why We Need Mentors to Tap Immigrant Skills.” The Globe and Mail Update, Feb. 9 [www.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/story/RTGAM.20050209](http://www.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/story/RTGAM.20050209).
- Scourfield, J. (2006). The challenge of engaging fathers in the child protection process. *Critical Social Policy Ltd.*, SAGE Publications, Vol. 26(2),440-449; 062594.  
doi.10.1177/0261018306062594
- Sparks, R.J. & Wolfson W.G. (2001). *Settlement in the Workplace. The Settlement Needs of Employed Newcomers*, Toronto. COSTI Immigrant Services.

- Storhaug, A. S., (2013). Fathers involvement with the Child Welfare Service. *Journal of Child and Youth Services Review*. ELSEVIER Ltd., 35, 1751-1759.  
doi:10.1016/j.chilyouth.2013.08.006
- Statistics Canada. (2006). Census dictionary. Available at: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/concepts/definitions/minority-minorite1-eng.htm> (accessed 4 April 2010).
- Statistics Canada. (2015). Census dictionary. Available at: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/start-debut-eng.html> (accessed 11 April 2016).
- Sariff, A. (2009). Ethnic Identity and Parenting Stress in South Asian Families: Implications for Culturally Sensitive Counselling. *Canadian Journal of Counselling*, Vol. 43:1, 35-46.
- Strega, S., & Carriere, J., (2015). Walking This Path Together. Anti-Racist and Anti-Oppressive Child Welfare Practice. Second Edition. Fernwood Publishing, Halifax & Winnipeg
- Strega, S., Brown, L., Callahan, M., Dominelli, L., & Walmsley C. (2009). Working with Me, Working at Me: Fathers' Narratives of Child Welfare. *Journal of Progressive Human Services*, Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, LLC, 20,72-91.  
doi:10.1080/10428230902871207
- Strega, S., & Carriere J. (2009). Walking This Path Together. Anti-Oppressive Approaches to Assessment, Risk Assessment and File Recording, Fernwood Publishing Ltd., 8, 142-157.
- Strega, S., Fleet, C., Brown, L., Dominelli, L., Callahan, M., & Walmsley C. (2008). Connecting Father Absence and Mother Blame in Child Welfare Policies and Practice. *Children and Youth Services Review*. ELSEVIER Ltd., 30,705-716.  
doi:10.1016/j.chilyouth.2007.11.012

- Swift, K. J. and Parada, H. (2004). "Child Welfare Reform: Protecting Children or Policing the Poor." *Journal of Law and Social Policy*. OSGOODE, York University, Ontario 19.1-17.  
doi:10.1016/j.chilyouth.2013.08.006
- Swift, K. J., (1995). Manufacturing 'Bad Mothers'. A Critical Perspective on Child Neglect. University of Toronto Press, Toronto
- Walmsley, C. (2009). Fathers and the Child Welfare System. Research to Practice Network, Federation of Child and Family Services of BC. 1-19 .
- Wong, H., & Yee J.Y. (2010). An Anti-Oppression Framework for Child Welfare in Ontario, Ontario Child Welfare Anti-Oppression. Roundtable, OCAS, 1-52.
- Yee, J. Y., Hackbusch, C., & Wong H. (2013). An Anti-Oppression (AO) Framework for Child Welfare in Ontario, Canada: Possibilities for Systemic Change. *British Journal of Social Work*. Advance Access Publishing, Oxford University Press. 1-19.  
doi:10.1093/bjsw/bct141
- Young I. M. (2000). Five faces of oppression. In *Reading or Diversity and Social Justice*. New York: Routledge. 35-49.