

HIGHLIGHTING TWO BLACK FAMILIES
EXPERIENCE WITH ONTARIO 'S CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

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ABSTRACT

Highlighting Two Black Families Experience with Ontario's Child Welfare System

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Black children are entering child welfare system at a rate five times higher than that of the average Canadian population (Polanyi et al., 2014). There are approximately 539, 205 (8% of the population) Black individuals living in Ontario, yet Black children make up 41% of the children in the care of Children's Aid Society (Polanyi et al., 2014). The disproportionate apprehension of marginalized children is not a new issue; it is only recently that child welfare organizations have acknowledged that this is an issue. This prompted some agencies to release disaggregated race-based data outlining racial disparities. This phenomenological qualitative research study intends to highlight the stories of two Black parents who have had an ongoing relationship with Ontario's child welfare system. This research hopes to outline their similarities, differences and the intricate experiences. Their experiences will be examined through a critical lens guided by anti-black racism and critical race theory.

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DEDICATION I dedicate this Major Research Paper to my family and the participants.

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Chapter I: Introduction

One of the principle issues of concern for the profession of social work is the welfare of children. In Ontario, child welfare is guided by the Child and Family Services Act, the courts, and a network of child welfare agencies. There are a total of 47 children's aid societies in Ontario. These agencies have the power to apprehend a child if they believe that their safety and wellbeing is compromised. While child welfare agencies have a list of criteria that warrant the removal of a child from their home, there are incidences when the initial decisions to apprehend are left largely to the discretion of individual child welfare workers and their supervisors. This is what is known as gray areas. In recent years, Ontario's child welfare agencies have come under fire for racial disparities within their agencies, such as the over-representation of Black and Aboriginal children in the care of the child welfare system (Ontario Association Children Aid Societies, 2015; Polanyi et al., 2014). Concerns have grown over the influx of Black children into Ontario's child welfare systems.

There are approximately 539,205 (8% of the population) Black individuals living in Ontario, yet Black children make up 41% of the children in the care of the Children's Aid Society of Toronto (Polanyi et al., 2014). While mass apprehension of marginalized children is not a new issue, it is only recently that child welfare organizations have released disaggregated race-based data outlining racial disparities. While scholars who have done research on this issue agree that there has been unnecessary removal of Black children from their families, they do not agree about the circumstances warranting these removals. They have brought forth many theories and concepts, including racial profiling, cultural misunderstandings, institutional racism, poverty, and lack of proper training, in an effort to explain this phenomenon (Bartholet, 2009; Barth, 2005; Chaze, 2009; Dettlaff & Rycraft, 2010; Dumbrill, 2003; Drake et al., 2011; Hill, 2006;

Maiter et al., 2009; Pon, Gosine, & Phillips, 2011; Polanyi et al., 2014; Roberts, 2002; Shireman, 2003; Walker, Zangrillo, & Smith, 1994;;).

The motivation behind my research stems from my personal experience in Ontario's child welfare system. I am an Afro-Caribbean heterosexual woman who grew up in Ontario's child welfare system. I have wondered for numerous years if my apprehension was appropriate. My mother is an immigrant woman from the Caribbean who is living with difficulties associated with mental illness. I often wonder if my mother was provided the proper resources and supports by the child welfare system. Furthermore, I wonder what my life would have been like had my mother received the proper supports. I recall visits from the social worker where my mother was told the numerous ways she was failing as a parent. There was never a point where she was provided resources on how she could improve. Thus, my mother began to exert her aggression and frustration through leaving the home for days on end without any idea of her whereabouts, leaving us children to fend for ourselves. We knew when the social worker was visiting based on my mother's mood. As I reflect, I believe the saddest part of my mother's interaction with the child welfare system is that her mental illness was never taken into consideration by the social worker. As a child, I was not quite sure what was wrong with my mother. It was years later that I found out she is living with schizophrenia. Therefore, she could not parent to the best of her ability, not because she did not want to, but because she could not. All she needed was support. Instead, she was demonized and surveilled and told that she was a bad parent. I cannot help but wonder if she had been provided with the proper resources, would I then have remained at home?

The involvement of Black children and families remain on a steady incline in the child welfare system, and there have been few, if any, systemic changes. While I understand that the

explanations for the overrepresentation of Black children and families in the child welfare system are multiple and complex, ranging from micro to macro level factors, my hope is to highlight the experiences of two Black families, who I interviewed about their experiences. Using a qualitative research design of phenomenology, I intend to highlight in rich, in-depth detail, the experiences, identities, thoughts and feelings of these families who experienced child welfare involvement. My findings reveal how race and racism play a role in the overrepresentation of Black children in Ontario's child welfare systems.

Chapter II: Literature Review

History of Child Welfare

To acquire an in-depth understanding of the overrepresentation of Black children in the child welfare system, many scholars believe that it is important to understand the oppressive social systems that impede and marginalize Black families (Clarke, 2010; Hill, 2004; Foster, 2012; Maiter et al., 2009; Roberts, 2002). It is vital to examine the impacts and history of social welfare systems (Foster, 2012; Roberts, 2002). In a book titled, *Shattered bonds: The color of child welfare*, Dorothy Roberts (2002) probes the history of child welfare agencies. She focuses some of her analysis on policy reforms that have taken place since the establishment of child welfare agencies. Hill (2004), Dumbrill (2007), Maiter et al. (2009), and Roberts (2002) note that early reformers intentionally excluded Black families as service users. There was a drastic shift in child welfare reforms once Black families were given access to services. For instance, at the time of its inception, policy makers probed the link between societal issues and child welfare in an effort to support poor white families, however, after Black families were included, policy makers began to pathologize families (Hill, 2004; Dumbrill, 2007; Maiter et al., 2009; Roberts, 2002). Reformers no longer considered societal factors as the cause of family difficulties, but rather saw individuals as being responsible for their own success or demise (Dumbrill, 2007; Hill, 2004; Maiter et al., 2009; Roberts, 2002). Policies quickly shifted from keeping children at home and supporting families to mass apprehensions (Dumbrill, 2007; Hill, 2004; Maiter et al., 2009; Roberts, 2002).

Racism, Anti-Black Racism, and Whiteness in Child Welfare

Pon, Gosine, and Phillips (2011) assert that the over-representation of Black children in the care of the child welfare system is due to anti-Black racism, white supremacy and

colonialism. They assert that white supremacy, which affects institutional policies, is at the core of the overrepresentation of Black children in child welfare (Drake et al., 2011; Dumbrill, 2007; Pon et al., 2011). According to Sunera Thobani (2009), white supremacy refers to the policies and practices in settler societies that exalt White people as national subjects, and the devaluation of racial “others” as threats to the security and prosperity of the nation (Thobani, 2007, cited in Pon, Gosine, & Phillips, 2011). Drake et al. (2011), Dumbrill (2003) and Pon et al. (2011) argue that race played a significant role in the investigating and reporting of families to child welfare agencies.

Dumbrill (2003) notes that the child welfare is a system of dominance. He asserts that current child welfare policies continue to perpetuate whiteness through systemic reforms that carry the edifice of the original child welfare mandate which is to exclude or oppress marginalized families (Dumbrill, 2003). For instance, Clarke (2012), Drake (2011), Font (2013), Foster (2012), and Pon et al. (2011), all argue that there are more service provisions for White families than there are for minority families, particularly Black families, when they encounter social services agencies. Furthermore, Black and Aboriginal children spend more time in foster care than any other race (Magruder & Shaw, 2008). The Ontario Association of Children’s Aid Societies (OACAS) conducted a study in 2015 in which race data were reported; the report revealed that while there were no major differences in child maltreatment rates between Black families and non-Black families, Black families are more likely to be reported and investigated by child welfare agencies (OACAS, 2015).

Hyper-surveillance

Another theme that surfaced throughout the scholarship on the overrepresentation of Black children in child welfare is the surveillance of Black families. Black families needlessly

undergo hyper-surveillance whenever they encounter institutions and systems such as child welfare (Browne, 2015). In her book titled “Dark Matter: On the Surveillance of Blackness,” Simone Browne (2015) highlights the history of Black bodies being surveilled since the Transatlantic Slave Trade. She pays particular attention to the ways in which policy reformers have consistently reproduced laws that perpetuate the surveillance of Black bodies (Browne, 2015). The hyper-surveillance of Black families has contributed to the overrepresentation of Black children in child welfare (Browne, 2015; Foster, 2012; Pon et al., 2011). Black families are expected to perform within the context of dominant social constructs; when they do not, they are penalized; their children are taken away until they perform as they are supposed to. Pon et al. (2011) have noted that the surveillance of racialized families has been conducted primarily by white female social workers who make up the majority of the child welfare workforce. They argue the following:

In the Canadian context, within the realm of child welfare specifically, the prevailing emphasis on the apprehension of children reflects the institutional entrenchment of the notion of the civilized and benevolent national subject as embodied largely by white female social workers tasked with policing individuals and families. (Pon et al., 2011, p. 401)

Socio-Economic and Social Factors

Barth (2005), Bartholet (2009), Chaze (2009), Dettlaff and Rycraft (2010), and Walker et al. (1994) assert that multiple risk factors predispose Black children to being overrepresented in child welfare. Low income is predictive of poverty, and Black families represent a large proportion of low-income earners (Barth, 2005; Bartholet, 2009; Dettlaff and Rycraft, 2010; Polanyi et al., 2014; Walker et al., 1994). The 2011 National Household Survey reports that

people of African and Middle Eastern backgrounds in Toronto are three times more likely to be living on low incomes than are people of European backgrounds (Statistics Canada, 2011). More specifically, 41% of people of Southern and East African backgrounds live below the Low-Income Measure (Polanyi et al., 2014). Chaze (2009) outlines the relationship between immigrant mothers and child welfare. She believes that barriers to employment, parenting skills, poverty, social isolation, and inequality are largely to blame for the phenomenon wherein immigrant mothers, who likely belong to a racialized group, are overrepresented in child welfare (Chaze, 2009). She argues that new immigrants encounter more hardships while integrating into the Canadian workforce than other groups (Chaze, 2009). Therefore, they are more prone to be investigated and cited for child maltreatment due to economic instability (Chaze, 2009). According to Chaze (2009), there is a strong empirical correlation between these social issues and child maltreatment.

Similarly, Polanyi et al. (2014) issued a report entitled *The Hidden Epidemic*, which outlines how poverty impacts children and families. Various areas of low socioeconomic status in Toronto were examined. The report states that African Canadians represent a large proportion of people experiencing child and family poverty (Polanyi et al., 2014). Low-income neighborhoods have higher proportions of peoples of colour, new immigrants, lone parents, and unemployed people (Polanyi et al., 2014). The report draws a direct correlation between poverty and a family's wellbeing (Polanyi et al., 2014). Growing up in poverty can have a devastating impact on a child's physical and psychological development, seriously challenging their ability to succeed later in life (Polanyi et al., 2014). Furthermore, parents who experience the daily stress of poverty and unemployment are more likely to abuse their children than those who are wealthy and employed (Polanyi et al., 2014). In addition, children living in families with low

socioeconomic status are more likely to experience poorer health and developmental outcomes, both in childhood and later in adulthood, compared to children from families with high socioeconomic status (Polanyi et al., 2014). In addition, they are also more likely to end up in the child welfare system (Polanyi et al., 2014).

Similarly, Bartholet (2009) argues that it is logical that Black children would be disproportionately represented in child welfare because research has shown that they are disproportionately victimized by maltreatment. Bartholet (2009) states that the main reason that children (of any race) are apprehended is maltreatment; systemic reforms are necessary to prevent such maltreatment. Bartholet (2009) asserts that the disproportionate numbers of Black children in foster care is less of a race issue and that it is dangerous for scholars to postulate it as such. Bartholet (2009) believes that if social welfare reformers organized policies to align with a focus on racism and inequality without addressing issues such as poverty, unemployment, lack of housing and so forth, then that would lead to maltreatment in Black families; as such thousands of Black children would be placed in danger.

Cultural Misunderstanding

Lastly, another theme that surfaced in the literature surrounding the issue of the overrepresentation of Black children in child welfare is cultural misunderstanding. It is a factor that is often overlooked and seldom discussed by scholars. One of the reasons is that many scholars believe that cultural misunderstanding is simply another form of racism (Chaze, 2009; Dumbrill, 2007; Hill, 2004; Maiter et al., 2009; Roberts, 2002). Or alternatively, the notion of cultural misunderstandings in child welfare has been taken up within discourses of cultural competency (see Pon, 2009). Pon, Giwa, & Razack (2016) and Pon et al. (2011) believe that cultural competency models have not, cannot and will not, rectify the overrepresentation of

Black children in child welfare (Pon et al., 2011; Sakamoto, 2007). Rather, it has become the new racism (Pon, 2009). The thing that makes it one of the most dangerous forms of racism is that it is seemingly benevolent, covert, and difficult to identify as racist (Pon, 2009). Cultural competency presents as a solution to the problem but it has no hopes of reducing racism as it does not take into consideration power and whiteness (Pon, 2009; Sakamoto, 2007). In contrast, Dettlaff and Rycraft (2010), Chaze (2009), and Shireman (2003) believe that cultural misunderstanding is at the core of the overrepresentation of Black children in Ontario's child welfare systems. Shireman (2003), Roberts (2002) and Chaze (2009) believe that while there is a fine line between discipline and abuse in Black cultures, there is also an exaggeration of child maltreatment within Black communities (Chaze, 2009; Shireman, 2003). Discipline undoubtedly appears differently from one culture to another. For instance, it may be acceptable to spank in certain cultures but not in others (Chaze, 2009; Roberts, 2002; Shireman, 2003). However, some families do not know that their discipline methods are not suitable in a country with Eurocentric norms. Similarly, many workers do not know how to educate, use their judgement and open themselves to learn, because their view of Black families are so saturated in discourses of Black inferiority. They cannot see anything other than Eurocentric norms (Chaze, 2009; Roberts, 2002).

As noted by many scholars, education and not assuming Black inferiority is central to a socially just and ethical social work practice. For instance, individuals may continue culturally appropriate disciplinary customs when they immigrate to Canada. While this is not acceptable in the Canadian context, some families do not know any different (Chaze, 2009; Roberts, 2002; Shireman, 2003). This, in turn, can create cases of child welfare intervention and apprehension when the issue could be resolved more simply through educating the parents (Chaze, 2009;

Roberts, 2002; Shireman, 2003). It is very easy to assume that the acceptable forms of child discipline are common knowledge; however, considering the overrepresentation issues presently facing child welfare agencies, no relevant factors should be taken for granted and no such common knowledge should be assumed.

As an individual of Caribbean descent who has a professional knowledge of different forms of abuse, I can use an example within my culture to illustrate the types of cultural discrepancies that may arise with respect to discipline. In my culture, parents often use language to discipline children, and the types of phrases used could be perceived as inappropriate outside of Afro-Caribbean culture. For example, my parents often told me “if you don’t stop what you are doing, you are going to see what happens.” However, in my 28 years of life, not once did I witness these ‘threats’ come to life, nor did I ever have any reason to believe that they would. While I understand that children are unique in how they relate to, perceive, and communicate, I also believe that not all such instances of alleged verbal abuse should be understood at a superficial level, devoid of cultural context. There should be deeper investigations that take into consideration non-Eurocentric understandings of cultural practices in situations such as these, prior to resorting to the extreme measure of apprehension.

Limitations and Gaps

The data and discourse within the literature raise some extremely pressing issues that should be of great concern to social workers across Canada. However, there are also significant gaps and limitations arising from the scarcity of data and the lack of action from agencies and policymakers. The literature available presently does not include comprehensive data on the number of Black children who are taken away from their families and placed in foster or group care in Ontario. While a great deal of research has been conducted with respect to the

overrepresentation of Black children in child welfare, there is not enough empirical Canadian data available to inform policy changes and calls for action. This is very problematic because policy reforms are often supported by empirical research data.

Similarly, most current research is heavily based upon information provided by Black community organizations and social and child welfare activists from the United States of America. The paucity of data and the lack of Canadian academic research articles on this issue would imply that it is an issue that has only recently been brought to the attention of the social work profession; however, that is not the case. Many child welfare organizations have created a ‘Band-Aid solution’ through enacting policies such as anti-oppression to demonstrate that they are tackling this issue. Anti-oppression does not address anti-Black racism, colonialism, and white supremacy in child welfare (Pon, Gosine, & Phillips, 2011). It presents as inclusive and open to change; however, it is not. Historically, anti-oppression arose as a way to silence anti-oppression proponents (Pon et al., 2016). Pon et al. (2016) further argue that anti-oppression arose because in comparison to anti-racism it was more palatable for white people who were uncomfortable with discussions about racism and whiteness. They contend that anti-oppression as applied in child welfare has not been able to address the overrepresentation of Black and Indigenous children in care (Pon et al., 2011). This is because of its inability or unwillingness to grapple explicitly with issues of racism and settle colonialism. The example provided by Pon et al. (2016) is that in the anti-oppression framework for children in Ontario (Wong and Yee 2010), which was endorsed by most child welfare agencies in Ontario, the word ‘Black’ and the word ‘racism’ only appeared once in the text of this document. This, according to Pon et al (2016), demonstrates that anti-oppression is a discourse that allows systems such as child welfare to avoid dealing with difficult issues such as racism and anti-black racism. For example, Pon et al.

(2011) argue that anti-black racism contextualizes how the very rise of the Keynesian welfare state which includes the child welfare system was rooted in white supremacy, anti-black racism, and colonialism. By centering this historical reality, child welfare practices must then begin with a concrete exercise in critical self-reflectivity about how day-to-day practices in child welfare contribute to historic and ongoing oppressions of Black families. Moreover, Pon et al. (2016) argue that anti-racism challenges historically white institutions such as Children's Aid societies to critically assess the dominance of predominantly white individuals in management. They argue that anti-black racism, unlike anti-oppression, emphasize a commitment to employment equity throughout all levels of social service agencies. Anti-oppression simply highlights differences in power, privilege and access providing few solutions or ways we can move forward. This is problematic since most child welfare agencies in Ontario have adapted an anti-oppressive framework in their policies and services (Pon, Giwa, & Razack, 2016).

As stated above, the Toronto Children's Aid Society (2015) has released data on the numbers of Black children who have been taken away from their families and placed in foster or group care. Peel CAS has recently released race-based data. Other child welfare agencies in Ontario and Canada have been reluctant to release their data or to address community concerns. There are an additional 45 Children's Aid Societies in Ontario who have not yet released any comparable data for their respective agencies. This lack of data may indicate reluctance on the part of child welfare authorities to submit their practices and procedures to public scrutiny. This is arguably a very serious issue. Child welfare agencies need to put forth more resources into this phenomenon so that the appropriate policy reforms can take place. It is evident that questions surrounding the apprehension of Black children, such as their lengthier stay in child welfare and the reasons for child welfare interventions, are all in need of further in-depth research.

Although child welfare agencies across Ontario have acknowledged that there is clearly an issue with racial disproportionality, and many scholars have researched the overrepresentation, there have been few, if any, systemic changes (Barn, 1993; Clarke, 2011; Jackson & Brissett-Chapman, 1999; OACAS, 2015). Black children and families remain on a steady incline towards overrepresentation in the child welfare system. The disproportionate rate at which Black children in Ontario are being removed from their family homes and placed in foster and group care is an alarming social justice issue that requires urgent intervention. Both social workers and community advocates have cited systemic racism, cultural misunderstandings, racial profiling, anti-Black racism, and poverty amongst the contributing factors that explain the magnitude of this phenomenon. Since most of the Canadian literature on this subject is currently available in the form of newspaper reports, there is an urgent need for greater in-depth academic research. Scholars, such as Gordon Pon, Kevin Gosine, Doret Phillips Ferzana Chaze, Jennifer Clarke, Barbara Fallon, Jennifer Ma, Tara Black and Chris Wekerle, have made positive contributions to the Canadian scholarship surrounding this issue. While I understand that the explanations for the overrepresentation of Black children and families in the child welfare system are multiple and complex, ranging from micro to macro level factors, more empirical data that is specific to the Black Canadian context is sorely needed to address this issue

Chapter III: Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that will inform this major research paper is anti-black racism and critical race theory. These two theories supported the researcher in understanding and highlighting the experiences of Black families who have had an ongoing relationship with Ontario's child welfare agencies. Kumsa et al. (2014) note that "Anti-black racism is multilayered and, configured differently, it could mean several things" (Kumsa et al., 2014, p. 21). Kumsa et al. understand anti-black racism as pertaining to three forms of expression: racism against Black people, racism Black people perpetuate (internalized racism) and both racism against and racism Black people perpetuate (Kumsa et al., 2014, p.21). At the core of anti-Black racism is the exclusionary process experienced by Black bodies in institutions and policies through dominant ideologies (Dei, 2005; Mullings, 2007). As Kumsa et al. note, "[o]ppressed people are bombarded daily with their oppressors' negative images of themselves, internalize these images and start understanding them as their own images" (Kumsa et al., 2014, p.27).

Pon et al. (2011) define anti-Black racism as emphasizing "the particular racism experienced by Black people in Canada, which is rooted in the history of slavery and the colonial period. Anti-Black racism calls attention to the specific laws and practices that led to the segregation in education, housing, and employment experienced by Black people in Canada" (James et al., 2010, as cited in Pon, Gosine, & Phillips, 2011, p. 389). What makes anti-black racism unique is not that it critiques and recognizes racism in all aspects of our lives, but that it provides a basis to eliminate it (Dei 2008; Henry, & Tator, 2010; Kumsa et al., 2014). Proponents of anti-Black racism (Dei, 2008; Henry & Tator, 2006; Kumsa et al., 2014) highlight social differences such as race as being implicated in the perpetuating and maintaining of racism and white supremacy. Unlike multi-culturalism where differences are

recognized and celebrated, anti-Black racism theorists view racialization as a process that fosters the breeding grounds for racism and, more recently, new racism (Pon, 2009). Anti-Black racism makes Blackness the focal point of its theory because different bodies have different experiences in society largely because of the color of their skin. Black bodies are criminalized, placed under hyper-surveillance, constantly encounter micro aggressions and institutional racism. Black people and communities are seen as problematic and in need of governmental control. As noted by Steven Lewis (1992):

While it is obviously true that every visible minority community experiences the indignities and wounds of systemic discrimination throughout Southern Ontario, it is the Black community which is the focus. It is Blacks who are being shot, it is Black youth that is unemployed in excessive numbers, it is Black students who are being inappropriately streamed in schools, it is Black kids who are disproportionately dropping out, it is housing communities with large concentrations of Black residents where the sense of vulnerability and disadvantage is most acute, it is Black employees, professional and non-professional, on whom the doors of upward equity slam shut. Just as the soothing balm of ‘multiculturalism’ cannot mask racism, so racism cannot mask its primary target. (Lewis, 1992, p. 2)

Whiteness is only attainable through the exclusionary process of identifying the “other”, namely Blackness, to create a social distance between groups (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Fanon, 1967). The dominant class (white) has developed racial categorization as a tool to maintain power imbalances. Blackness is a social construct that is ascribed to bodies to oppress, dominate, and subordinate certain groups of people categorized as “Black” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Fanon, 1967). Markers of difference such as gender, race, social class, age,

ability, religion, sexual orientation, motherhood and geographic location are all social constructs so deeply engrained in society that we have come to internalize them as part of our social location (Daynes, 2007). Social locations have been produced and reproduced by history and society through discourses to maintain privilege and power for those on the top of the social order (whites) (Daynes, 2007). Dominant discourses of Blackness operate to marginalize Black communities, families and individuals in society. For instance, Fanon (1967) notes that western discourses hold an untrue and falsified homogeneous ideology of black men, which are held as truth in society (Fanon, 1967). Similarly, Black women are essentialized and stereotyped as loud, inadequate, uncaring, problematic, subordinate, unattractive, other, dirty, angry, unmotherly, non-maternal and a slew of other negative and oppressive categories.

Critical race theory (CRT) was developed from the legal discipline by scholars and activists who wanted to change the relationship between racism, power, and race (Alyward, 1999; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Rocco et al., 2014). This theory was developed from critical legal studies and later advanced by Black feminist scholars such as Kimberlé Crenshaw and Patricia Williams (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Some scholars of critical race theory are Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, and Richard Delgado (Rocco et al., 2014). Black women scholars who brought forth intersectional analyses to CRT are Kimberlé Crenshaw and Patricia Williams. Critical race theory is helpful for explaining certain social phenomena that result from the hidden assumption that whiteness and its associated cultural attributes constitute a norm against which not only persons from all cultural backgrounds, but also human behavior, patterns, can be measured for adequacy (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Critical race theory has similarities to anti-Black racism because it places race at the forefront of all interactions between Black individuals and the masses (Alyward, 1999; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Rocco et al., 2014). While

proponents of the theory understand that race is a social construct, they believe that race is at the core of maintaining and perpetuating racism and power. Critical race theory places race, power, and racism in a broader perspective that includes “economics, history, context, group and self-interest, and even feelings and the unconscious” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 3). Critical race theory questions the very foundation of liberalism (Delgado and Stefancic 2001). Like anti-Black racism, critical race theory not only sets out to highlight how society is structured along racial lines but also how to transform it (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

Presently anti-oppression is the framework utilized by many child welfare agencies and workplaces (Wong & Yee, 2010). Anti-oppression social work theory and practice contends that “the contemporary social order is characterized by a range of social divisions (class, race, gender, age, disability and so on) that both embody and engender inequality, discrimination, and oppression” (Thompson, 1998, p. 3). However, the theory provides few practicable suggestions for approaching these issues. It has become the shield for inequality, the very thing it is trying to prevent, by being so vague, and by leaving decisions to apprehend at the discretion of workers who are ill prepared to make them. Thus, while most child welfare organizations in Ontario purport to practice from, or is moving towards, an anti-oppressive framework, Black and Aboriginal children are still flooding the child welfare system. Anti-oppression theory has no doubt created an edifice or framework within which other theories can be examined, and it should not be removed from practice, but it should be used in conjunction with other theories that are more explicit about anti-racism in their recommendations. Anti-Black racism can and will provide a better focus on the ways in which racism, discrimination, and inequality continue to shape the experiences that Black families are facing when they encounter child welfare agencies in actual practice. Put together, critical race theory and anti-Black racism constitutes a

theoretical framework that can provide social workers with the guidance and support that they need when working with marginalized populations. This is not to say that anti-racist theory is without faults, or that it has all the ultimate answers; it simply has more achievable and feasible goals than anti-oppression alone, and that is what I believe is needed.

Both anti-black racism and critical race theory place an emphasis on the intersectionality and interlocking nature of oppressions such as racism, sexism, classism, heterosexism, ableism, and so forth (Crenshaw, 1995; Dei 2008; Henry and Tater 2010; Hooks 2014; Pon et al., 2011). Crenshaw's (1995) focus on intersectionality of oppressions advances the understanding of oppressions faced by racialized women, which was not well addressed by the white feminist writings at the time.

I believe that critical race theory and anti-Black racism as a theoretical framework best highlights Black parents' experience with child welfare agencies in Ontario. This is because it is important to know who is implicated in situations where there is a vast overrepresentation in child welfare. It is hard for Black families to succeed in a child welfare system that is structured to ensure that they fail. It is important for research to examine the historical context of the situation and how it continuously maintains and perpetuates racism and imbalance in power. It would be impossible and problematic to highlight the overrepresentation of Black children in child welfare without looking at the systemic structures of the organizations in charge of these services. Individuals of the dominant culture have utilized their social location and privilege to impose Western/Eurocentric knowledge in child protection practice. Theory informs child welfare policy and practices. It is often Eurocentric norms and values that inform knowledge. Therefore, child welfare policies are developed utilizing the same dominant ideologies. This is

problematic because Eurocentric ideologies are based on the notion that whiteness is exalted and superior.

Proponents of anti-Black racism and critical race theory highlight that Black communities need to mobilize through activism such as poetry, storytelling, counter narratives, dance, music, art, film, research, community building and any form of counter knowledge to challenge dominant ideologies that influence policies and our daily lives (Dei, 2008; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Fanon, 1967; Henry & Tator, 2010; Kumsa et al., 2014). They believe that this is the only route to change within systems that have been built on oppression and dominance (Dei, 2008; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Fanon, 1967; Henry & Tator, 2006; Kumsa et al., 2014). Both anti-Black racism and critical race theory highlight the importance of collaboration in Black communities. As noted by Leseho and Black (2005) and Rosenthal (2003), Black communities need to come together and resist against the dominant class. Some of the core values of anti-Black racism and Critical Race theory are equality, equity, self-reflexivity, transparency and social justice. Therefore, I believe it was only appropriate that these theories be used as my framework since I provided an avenue for two Black families to share their experiences with Ontario's child welfare system. The hope is that this literature will contribute to consciousness-raising within the Black community and the greater society about the overrepresentation of Black children in child welfare. As well, it is my hope that this research will contribute to the policy reforms that so desperately need to be enacted within child welfare agencies.

Chapter IV: METHODOLOGY

The design that informed the research of highlighting the experience of two Black families' experience with Ontario's child welfare system is phenomenology. Phenomenology is "a design of inquiry coming from philosophy and psychology in which the research describes the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon as described by participants" (Creswell, 2007, p. 42). Therefore, since the goal of this research is to gather rich and in-depth data on Black parents' personal experiences with child welfare, I believe that this design is most suitable. Phenomenology allows the researcher to delve into the participant's experience providing them the room to share their experiences. Furthermore, phenomenology focuses on the individual experience which is important in this research. It allows findings to emerge, rather than presenting a situation to the participants (Creswell, 2013). It allows the participants to freely share their stories, omitting whatever they feel uncomfortable sharing. Lastly, as noted by Creswell (2013), the phenomenological approach is appropriate to examine a shared lived experience for individuals (Creswell, 2013). Therefore, while my research participants differ in a variety of factors such as age, religion, culture, language and so forth, they share the common experience of having had a relationship with Ontario's child welfare system.

Design

Using a qualitative design this research will highlight two Black Families' experiences with Ontario's child welfare agencies. I interviewed two families who have or have had an ongoing relationship with any child welfare agency in Ontario. The selection criteria were not limited to families who have had their children apprehended. This allowed me to collect rich, detailed and in-depth data. This research is focused on researching the experiences of these families and is not interested in collecting data surrounding apprehension. Furthermore, the research is not focused

specifically on apprehension but the experience of Black families with Ontario's child welfare agencies. The rationale for utilizing a qualitative method is to capture a personal and in-depth perspective of how Black families are treated when they encounter child welfare agencies. Furthermore, the MRP aims to contribute to the sorely needed Canadian empirical data surrounding the overrepresentation of Black children in child welfare and to facilitate policy reforms.

Selection Criteria

Inclusion Criteria

The participants that were eligible to participate in this research have Black parents (mother, father, guardian who has custody), who identify as Black (African, Caribbean, Afro-Latina and African American) with a child(ren), and who has an ongoing or previous relationship with any child welfare agency in Ontario.

Exclusion Criteria

The individuals who were not suitable to support this research were persons who did not identify as Black (African, Caribbean, Afro-Latina and African American or African Canadian) and did not have an ongoing relationship with any child welfare agency in Ontario. For instance, if a participant received a one-time visit or call for any child welfare agency, they were not able to support this research. While I understand, and know that every experience is unique and important, I believe that this research should focus on ongoing relationships with child welfare agencies to gather rich, comprehensive, and detailed data.

Recruitment

In the past, I worked and volunteered at an agency that supported Black families. I sought permission from the supervisor to recruit through the organization. Permission was granted, and I provided the workers with an email (see appendix A). I asked workers to circulate the email to their contacts so that eligible participants could review and contact me should they wish to take part. Workers did not refer clients to me directly. Referral was done on a confidential and voluntary basis. In addition, flyers were posted across Ryerson campus and other community agencies. I understood biases and as such I was mindful that I may know some of the participants. To ensure confidentiality and unbiased data, I terminated any contact with participants who were interested in supporting this research that I have had any prior contact or relationships with.

Furthermore, this research utilized a snowball method of recruitment. My peer group of Master of Social Work students contains several members who previously supported or who are currently supporting Black families in their work capacities. I provided them with the recruiting flyer to pass along where appropriate. As mentioned above, classmates did not refer clients to me. This was on a confidential voluntary basis. Interested participants were able to contact me through email.

Consent/Confidentiality

Using the snowball method, initial consent to share contact information took place by the potential future participant contacting me first. In the snowball method, the participant received information describing their expected participation requirements in the research; this was voluntary and therefore, they were able to quit at any time. I ensured that they understood confidentiality within this project. I also ensured that I made it accessible for participants to contact me by email at any time throughout the research if they had any concerns. Once I was

contacted by the potential participant, I provided them with a written, detailed consent form (in person or by email) (please see appendix B), which they signed and provided to me prior to our interview. I ensured that I collected two hard copies of the consent form before moving forward.

The written consent form was accompanied with the consent agreement form which outlined in greater detail the research study and its requirements of the participant. These forms were provided to the potential participant once they contacted me with an initial interest for more information. They had ample time to review the information and ask questions before agreeing to participate.

I collected the name, phone number, and/or email address of my research participants during the recruitment process so that I could facilitate arranging interviews and correspondence with the participants during the research process. The information was kept confidential and securely stored electronically with password protection – it will all be destroyed prior to publication. None of this information will ever be used in the research publication; instead pseudonyms replaced the names. Furthermore, each participant was given a code, for example “Participant A”, that ensured that they are not identifiable.

There were not any major potential benefits for participants during this study. They may however benefit from having the opportunity to share their experiences and contribute to knowledge production in the area of child welfare experiences of Black families. This information will be utilized to contribute to existing scholarship surrounding the phenomenon. There is minimal psychological risk (e.g. feeling anxious, upset or uncomfortable). Questions and topics that arose throughout this research pertaining to the participant’s experiences may be triggering to individuals, making them feel anxious, upset or uncomfortable as sensitive topics are discussed. Some risk management strategies which I used included consulting with

community organizations and having readily available a list of resources (please see Appendix B)

The psychological risks raised in the consent form were revisited with the participant before and after their interview. Before the interview they were reminded that they can skip questions, take a break, or discontinue the interview permanently, as well as withdraw from the study at any time. They were also be made aware of resources which they could access to receive psychological supports (please see appendix C). I also ensured that I collected a list of community resources that provide counselling and support for families, in the event that participants were interested. After the interview, I checked-in with the participant and restated the information about how to access support services provided at the beginning.

Interview

Each participant participated in one semi-structured interview which lasted between 1 to 2 hours. I utilized an interview guide consisting of a list of questions (please see appendix D). These interviews were audio-recorded so that I could transcribe the interviews for critical examination and in-depth analysis of the text. I also provided the participants with a copy of the transcript to review and provide further contributions. The completed research paper is a descriptive analysis and reflection upon the interview answers provided by the participants and how these answers fit with, contrast, or provide new perspectives upon this emerging area of study.

Data Analysis

A phenomenological approach seeks to understand the essence of the experience of participants (Cresswell, 2007). Therefore, since this research utilized a phenomenological approach to highlight the experiences of two Black parents' experience with Ontario's child welfare system, I transcribed the data using line by line coding. The data was transcribed

verbatim. I read over the data line by line several times, and then placed data into themes. This allowed me to highlight common themes between participants. I then used selective parts of the themes, removing repetitive statements, to highlight common experiences of the participants. The essences of the phenomenon of the overrepresentation of Black children in child welfare were derived from this analysis.

Chapter V: FINDINGS/ ANALYSIS

This chapter highlights the experience of two Black families' encounter with Ontario's child welfare system. Names have been removed for confidentiality purposes. In addition, identifying details of the participants' stories have been excluded to protect their identity. The participants in this study are two women who identify as Black mothers. They have had an ongoing relationship with Ontario's child welfare system. Through data collection and analysis, the four themes that emerged were: Hyper-surveillance, Socio-Economic Status/ Social Factors, Whiteness, and Lack of Support/Systemic Flaws. These are further supported by the research conducted by the scholars that I highlighted in my literature review. I anticipated that hyper-surveillance, whiteness, and socio-economic/social factors would arise during data collection, but, I did not think about systemic flaws. The participants' experiences are consistent with some of the experiences I recall my mother having when she encountered Catholic Children's Aid Society of Toronto, which were among the factors that motivated me to research this phenomenon. In contrast, I was shocked that cultural misunderstanding was not a prominent theme in the participant's experiences. However, as I reflect on my scholarly research completed for my literature review, scholars such as Pon (2009) highlighted ways cultural competency have become a new form of racism. Therefore, while it was shocking, it made me reflect on the ways that systems of oppression can mask their blatant disregard for certain bodies through pretentious practices such as cultural competency.

Theme #1: Hyper-surveillance

One theme that emerged from the data was the surveillance of Black bodies. Black bodies go through hyper-surveillance. For instance, one participant stated:

I am working my ass off and a lot of those parents at my daughter's school don't work. They stay at home. They have two parent families where one stays at home and one works and they walk around with their tea and jog around the racetrack and am busting my ass and my kid is polite, yet you are going to lay all that stuff on me that I am not a good parent when your kid locked my daughter in a stall.

Another participant highlighted similar experiences of being pushed through extra hoops in the system to prove they are an adequate parent:

They had us do two supervised visits at CAS for what reason? I don't know. I found out afterwards that is actually not common for kinship cases; especially since neither of us have any kind of record or anything like that. Like, there was, there was no reason for that. I don't know if it is CAS doing or the fact, by the way, mom decided that I guess out of spite because she feels it is my mom's doing why the kids got taken out of her care. She did not allow my mom to see them while they were in foster care. So, my mom would have no access. So, when they came back, I mean there [were] quite a few issues. They were taken out of a home and did not get to see, you know, their maternal grandmother with whom they have a very good attachment for quite some time.

Another participant noted:

You know, it's always a little bit unsettling when you have white women show up. I have had all white women show up not understanding my background, what's your schedule like? I mean I am by myself. It is just me and my kid. I just don't feel they understand. So, having someone come into my home and who is basically looking for flaws is not going to see the strengths in our routine or what I am doing.

The participant continues:

I feel, as if I am supposed to live in this.... [pause].... I live in Toronto. I was born in Toronto. This is my city. I have my home and I have my kid. I don't feel like my life is my own. I don't feel like what I do is the freedom of the, I don't have the access and the freedom to just live my life because I have people watching and looking for mistakes that other people can probably, [or] are doing worst and getting away with.

Another participant noted:

I am a teacher; I have seen children where I had red flags and nobody said anything. My daughter goes to school looking immaculate and have excellent manners and she volunteers with the special needs children when nobody else wants to because I am an educator and I know about inclusion and diversity and you call on me, when the other kids locked my child in a stall and make fun of her skin and nothing was wrong. My daughter was locked in a washroom stall and the school did nothing about it. A girl tried to force her to lift her skirt to show her private parts and nothing was done about it. My daughter had songs sing.... cry.... about her skin tone and nothing was done.

Another participant stated:

I just don't understand how the world can be like that. It is that stigma? She, she's a single parent, so there must be trouble at home. Oh, she is a Black parent, so there must be trouble at the home.

Another noted:

Took her out in the hallways and ask her, what are your consequences and my daughter said well I will just get in trouble. She goes well if you tell me what your consequences are, [then] I won't tell your mom that you took the toy. So, my daughter is nine and she sees this as a way out to not, for me not to know that she took the toy.

The participant further stated:

I am sorry, I feel this might be off topic, but, I feel like those factors, those outside factors are what influences CAS workers to do what they do. I am doing everything I am supposed to but if I am strong and I advocate [then] I am seen as aggressive. People, people are ill minded, wicked people are using CAS against Black people too, you know, to get what they want. I am upset at this person, so I'm going to call CAS and that's what it seems like happened in those three instances with me. You are going to be upset, so call Children's Aid.

Another participant highlighted the constant surveillance that Black parents go through in comparison to parents from another race. She asserted:

You know, let's go back to cultural differences, it is not homogeneous. Let's not throw a blanket over everybody. I know that in the Italian community, my friends, even educators, joke about getting the shoe. Oh, my mom hit me with the shoe, shoe, shoe, shoe. Black women, we will say I will beat you. I will say, 'do you want to get licks?' You don't want them and if my kid is going [to] smarten up because that idea is in her head. It is not the actual act. It is the, I better smarten up or start behaving or else I will get a consequence. It is the same thing at school. What's the consequence? Well, you are going to lose a privilege, so you better smarten up. It's not, I understand there are cultural things, every culture has something different. It is when it becomes an act I understand that is when you need to intervene but if your child is behaving and knows to behave and is....do you know what I mean? If they are okay and they are not being hurt and it's our culture to just say that, then why are you coming into my home?

This surveillance of Black bodies dates back to the transatlantic slave trade and continues

to this day through various institutional structures and social constructs such as the police, welfare, child protection agencies, the health care system, and many more institutional structures. Furthermore, policy reformers have consistently reproduced laws that perpetuate the surveillance of Black bodies (Browne, 2015). Thus, Black bodies are consistently being scrutinized, judged and othered, ostensibly in hopes of fixing them to align with the status quo. Some scholars have theorized that the hyper-surveillance of Black families contribute to the overrepresentation of Black Children in Ontario's Child welfare (Browne 2015). Black families needlessly undergo hyper-surveillance for purported inadequacies (Browne, 2015).

Theme #2: Socio-Economic Status

The second theme that emerged from the data was socio-economic factors. Socio-economic factors play a crucial role in the service provided and accessed by families. The participants highlighted how their socio-economic status was brought into play when they encountered Ontario's child welfare system. One participant stated: "I really feel it for the people that are going through this and like have you know less time, less patience, less education, less". She went on to say:

I flew back from studying abroad and I immediately started the process of job hunting, then I called CAS; my mom called CAS and said, 'my daughter is in the house now.' She was literally immobile for a while and they felt they wouldn't do well without someone to go after them. A lot of interviews with the kinship worker; she was very kind and I am being told they usually are because they are not the ones having to deal with the child going into foster care.

Another participant noted:

So, it is already set up for us to fail. Because even if we are working to advocate or be an

ally to say look, I might understand what is going on in this case, they will discredit your opinion and see that as favoring. So, we can't win, it is already set up for us to fail.

Another participant highlighted her experience of being spoken to like she was beneath the workers and she lacked the knowledge base to understand, and be spoken to intellectually. She stated:

Again, I always feel like we are being talked down to and just so I can give you a background, I mean no family should ever be talked down to but I mean, both my mother and I are university educated, so, we are not two people coming off the street corner and playing a role. My mother was also a social worker for many many years in both England and within the child and family services here in Toronto. So, she has a background in that, so, again you get where we are coming from when I say, really angry to be talked down to? Oh, we have to remember that this is about the boys. Yeah, this is about the boys. Where is our funding for, counselling and any of that stuff?" I feel like even when they respond the tone of that was very condescending. It is well, we have to remember that this is about the boys. I said you guys need to remember that.

The participant further stated:

I don't have anything to compare it to in terms of whether it is fair, but I do feel like we are being treated like the idiot sister, I don't know a better comparison. We are being treated like we just quietly sat there and take whatever it is they dish out. This is why I am kind of at a loss for what are my rights. I don't know what those are because whatever they call us up and say this will be, you know, that is what it is; what it is we don't get a second; we don't get a say in it. We don't get push. If we do, it is no, that is it. Even in terms of the hospital incident, they did not email us and call us on our own turf to say, we

said yes the mom could stay overnight. So, the time that my mom found this out is when she is in the room with my drugged nephew and his mom and the doctor and there wasn't really a time to push back at that time. That is how I feel how everything has gone with them.

Another participant shared a similar experience of feeling belittled. She shared:

I am a registered ECE; I graduated with honors from George Brown. I have been a preschool teacher for the last nine years. I recently resigned to go back to school. I am working towards my PhD. I always found it difficult to pat myself on the back because praise was quite minimal. You know when you are doing something that. It takes so much courage, so much strength, it is not only mentally exhausting and physically exhaustion, but, it shows a lot of resilience. I was, I found, recognition limited, but, I knew what I was doing was stellar. Going to school and graduation with honors, [and] with an infant. Then working as an educator to educate other people's children plus having my own. So, instead of feeling triumphant about my accomplishments, I had the unfortunate experiences of living in a society that stigmatized me.

Theme #3: Whiteness

According to Cornel West (2000) in the book titled, "The Cornel West Reader", "The Afro-American encounter with the modern world has been shaped first and foremost by the doctrine of whiteness, which is embodied in institutional practices and enacted in everyday folkway under varying circumstances and evolving conditions" (West, 2000, p. 70). Resonating with West's view on whiteness, one participant stated:

So yeah, and even for a while mom was not showing up for her visits. There is another aspect of this that I wanted to bring up and I am not sure if you are going

to bring up in your research, but, mom is white.

Another participant shared a similar experience; she noted:

So, my first experience with CAS was when I separated and I tried going to do the egalitarian thing of going to court to get a custody arrangement, access arrangements and him being unfamiliar with that was, tried to villainize me and contacted CAS to say I was abusing our child. So, back story, he's Caucasian; so here I am as a student. I'm raising our daughter and I'm looking to you to participate in access and because you're upset with me you call CAS to say I am hurting our kid. She was maybe a little over a year.

She continued:

He wanted to villainize me because he was upset, so that was my first experience with CAS. Fortunately it did not get any further than an intake. But to have that as a single Black parent, as a single Black woman, it really dampens how you feel. It was not like I had anybody saying yeah, you are doing a great job – this is bullshit and we are sorry we shouldn't even come. Oh, well, the white guy called and said this and this and this, so we are going to come and check-up. I mean, it just diminishes everything that I, that I, it felt like everything that I do.

Another participant described an incident where they felt race affected their encounter with child welfare. She stated:

For instance, little requests like hey, could you move the visits to the evening or weekends so the kids don't miss as much school? Especially when you have a kid that is developmentally delayed, then you take him out of school several hours a week for visits. I am not saying he should not see his mom. I am simply saying could you slide the visit? And you know, sorry to pull the race card, but sure it is great that he can't speak

so well, at 16 when he is ditching class because he cannot understand what is going on in them. The sympathy just, uh, is all gone by then.

Another participant explained a story about a friend of hers and how it led to an encounter with child welfare. She noted:

A Caucasian girlfriend of mine who fortunately, at school, I had a group of girls I studied with and, you know, I would bring my daughter to study group. I would bring her to class with me and she got lots of hands, my daughter got lots of hands, everybody adored her. One particular woman really took to my daughter and I.... [pause].... as a parent, I felt like I had a right to say, you know, who I believe my daughter should have time with, who my daughter should be around.

She went on to say:

I felt like she was encroaching a little bit; she felt a little entitled to my daughter because we were friends. That is fine, but the relationship started to get a little bit weird. A little bit iffy for me. If I made a decision for my kid, she would belittle my choices. She felt like she could trump every decision that I made.... and I was not really sure where that was coming from. She does come from an affluent family, so you know the group of us. If I said something, she would say something and I felt like I had to do [what she said] because maybe she had a better opinion than I did. So I don't know, it just got really weird and I said I don't really want you being around my kid and me anymore. Let us just take a break.

She continued:

So, she called CAS on me and not only did she call CAS on me, she actually tried to say that she was my daughter's second mom and wanted to go to court for custody of my kid.

When I talk about, when we talk about, white privilege -- that's white privilege. This young girl I went to school with actually thought she could be a better mom to my kid. A girl I went to school with tried to go to court and tell police that she would be a better mom to my daughter. Well, I have known her for years and I have more financial stability and we would take better care of her. Yep, and tried to say that you know, because she's been around me so long that legally she was like a second parent. I am not even joking. This actually happened to me and I had to have people prove this woman is just a friend. She wasn't sexual. She even tries to say we were sexual partners, so that way, she would be a co-parent. She called CAS saying, I will be a better mom.

Another participant described an experience where she felt race played a role. She stated:

I don't have anyone to compare the situation with, but, I feel like she has gotten so many chances and I have asked how long does it take when kids are in kinship care to come up with a permanency plan because I don't understand how it is acceptable to have two boys, I even appealed to the CAS workers and said you know only recently we started telling them to call our place home because it occurred to me that they are three and four and they do not have a place to call home. Because we don't know from one day to the next where they will be next year? Should we make plans for them for school next year? Should we make family vacation plans? We don't know.

She continues,

I will give an example of times that I felt like...again I don't want to accuse her workers and any accusations out there. Times when I felt like mom's wants, needs was prioritized over ours and not in the way of her being mom. This past February my older nephew was scheduled to go into surgery to have his tonsils removed, okay. Again, this is not elective

surgery, this is something his doctors saw and said he literally stops breathing and his nose is blocked which is a worry and we should probably get this fixed sooner than later. This past February my older nephew was scheduled to go into surgery to have his tonsils removed ok. So, it was arranged that mom was allowed to be in the hospital. Also, that mom would come to our home for the next two weeks since he will be on bed rest. So, mom calls our one-for-all worker and arrange between her and the that she will be staying overnight at the hospital to be by her son.

A participant described an example where she believed race, otherness and whiteness played a role with her interaction with Ontario's child welfare agencies. She noted:

My daughter took somebody's toy. The kids were playing and she found that a toy was on my child and she said, you know, I am going to tell your mom that you took the toy. My daughter is like 'please don't tell my mom I am going to get in trouble. If you tell my mom I am going to get in trouble,' and the teacher said what does that look like at home?

She continued,

The woman proceeded to go down a list of ways to punish children. Does your mom beat you? Does your mom use a belt? Does she lock you, put you in the room? Does she yell at you? My daughter says yes to all... [laughing]...nods her head and every single one...[laugh]...I mean now I am laughing about it, but I was like are you serious? I go why did you do that? She goes, 'I did not want you to know I took the toy'...[laugh]. She didn't ask her did your mom take your toys away? She didn't ask her, you know, does your mom, you know, so you can't get a treat after school. She said does your mom beat you with a belt? She didn't ask her no time-out? You know what I mean? Are you kidding me? She gave her a list of culturally stereotyped punishments."

She went on to say:

So, the teacher told CAS that I do ABCD; the intake worker came. My daughter cleared it up, but now that's another thing. She took my, took my Black child out in the hallway to ask her questions; leading questions that are specific to the types of punishment reserved and stigmatized within our community. She didn't ask her: did your mom take your toys away? She didn't ask her, you know, does your mom you know so you can't get a treat after school? She said does your mom beat you with a belt?

Another participant stated:

I have had all white female workers come and it seems that even within our community the numbers are small. Our representation is small. When I talk to this woman about this, last week about the situation, she said she was one Black professor out of 150. How many Black workers are there, case workers in CAS, I mean how many? I mean if you have so many Black children in care, how many of the workers are Black there?

When locating the role of Black bodies within any system, it is important to highlight and understand the history of colonialism. The dominant culture sets the standards according to which everything in society should function - language, religion, behavior, values, rituals, and social customs that become the “norm” for the society (Johnson & Yanca et al., 2010).

Moreover, dominant ideology has become so powerful that it is hard sometimes to recognize and it has become normalized part of “every day” language and experiences. Participants discussed experiences where it was evident whiteness played a role in their encounter with Ontario’s child welfare agencies.

Theme #4: Lack of Support/Systemic Flaws

Lack of support and systemic flaws was another prominent theme which emerged from the data. Participants discussed the lack of supports provided to them by child welfare agencies in Ontario. Furthermore, the participants highlighted the inconsistencies in information given to them. One participant noted:

So again, our overall experience with CAS has been very amateur on their part. It seems like they expect a lot more professionalism from us than we should expect from them.”

Another participant highlighted similar experiences:

Omigosh no, we were never offered legal representation. Sorry, when we were at the courts we were allowed to meet with the lawyer and explain the paper work to us. No one has sat with us to let us know our legal rights. My mom has a better idea obviously of how that works, me, not so much.

Another participant highlighted her encounter and the lack of support she received. She noted:

So, from December 2015 to December 2016 our experience with CAS has been trying. We have asked for, you know funding to get the boys into different things right, several times. That’s like pulling teeth; it’s like we are beggars and then, and then, keep in mind these boys have been exposed to drug usage on several different occasions and they are still not in counseling. We are not rich people, so you, I have to tell you, counseling. I can barely afford [counseling] for myself if I wanted to go do that let alone, art of play therapy.

The participant went on to say:

Their language skills are not, the older one is developmentally delayed, so his language

skills are not where they should be. So, like you know, putting him in a room where someone is also just talking at him is not going to help him, right. So, it is not things that I make up in my head, right. So, and again and we would bring these things up, like hey, can we get some funding for this thing? And they would be like 'oh yeah, yeah, we will get on it.' Their idea of supporting us with resources is every now and then they will get tickets to some kid's thing like Toronto FC games. They would email us, oh we got tickets. That is wonderful, don't get me wrong, that is not what I mean of course, of course.

She continues,

We have never seen a lick of funding for any of the activities that we put them in, right. I mean they been in, thank goodness we don't sit around waiting for them, I mean they have been in soccer, swimming, taekwondo, most recently for this one. We are trying to find something physically that he likes...laugh. It is not working yet, basketball, what not. In terms of help and funding from them, it has been horrible. We send an email to one person and the email trail goes cold whenever they quit or leave the job, or one went on maternity leave I think or sick leave or sabbatical or whatever. They have been absolutely shorthanded with us. I will give you an example of that. We brought up that recently, the older nephew has started hitting people at school and we feel that with some counseling that, you know, that might not continue. That is our hope. I mean as someone who was been removed from their home and seen their parents fighting, they should get some counseling anyways. We believe that he would really do well in play or art therapy. Could you, could they put forward a place for art therapy and they referred a place that does not do play art therapy...pause...that's the laugh...my mom was like that

place specifically does not do that. Ummm...so that has literally been the help...so, again from their point of view they referred a place.

She further stated:

For instance, little requests like hey, could you move the visits to the evening or weekends so the kids don't miss as much school? Especially when you have a kid that is developmentally delayed, then you take him out of school several hours a week for visits. I am not saying he should not see his mom. I am simply saying could you slide the visit?

Participants highlighted similar experiences with inconsistencies with workers and services. One participant noted:

We have been through several workers. The thing with CAS is that they are short staffed or they are under staffed or they [are] over worked or whatever the excuse is at the time; and I get that, but not my concern, right? Even recently we kind of had a blow out with them because, umm ummm, they had one worker being worker for mom, being the kinship worker, being everything. She was not working at all in our best interest or the kid's best interest, so we felt [that] like from the beginning of this process, you guys have been bending over backwards for accommodate.

She also stated:

Umm, so I mean I understand they have to investigate. I feel like there should be a little bit, I wish it was not that simple. I guess, I guess what I want to say is, I wish it wasn't that simple.

Chapter VI: Implications

The four themes that arose during data collections and coding were hyper-surveillance, socio-economic/social factors, whiteness, and lack of support/systemic flaws. These themes were prominent in all participant interviews and resonate with anti-Black racism and critical race theory.

Participants spoke about the hyper-surveillance they experienced not only from child welfare agencies but also every system of power they encountered, such as schools. They felt like they were constantly trying to prove that they are good mothers to some system of power. One mother highlighted that she felt like she was fighting a losing fight. Lawson (2013) highlights the experience of Black mothers who immigrated to Canada through the West Indian Domestic Scheme (Lawson, 2013). She outlines the history of Black women mothering white children and the benefits it has had on the Canadian economy and the lack of acknowledgement they receive through historical discourse (Lawson, 2013). She stated that Black women were great mothers for white children (Lawson, 2013). They practically raised the current generation of white children who are now in power. However, when it comes to mothering their own children, they are seen as inadequate and incapable (Lawson, 2013). She notes “the specificity of the requirements, and in particular, the erasure of children and intimate partners, produced black domestic workers as women not expected to have children or to deny them emotional involvement and physical presence in the lives of their children” (Lawson, 2013, p. 143). Similarly, Roberts (2002) highlights the relationship between whiteness and black reproductive autonomy. Hyper-surveillance thus is nothing new to Black mothers and the Black community. This hyper-surveillance is linked to Canada’s history of hiding their contribution to slavery and oppression and their covert racism.

Participants highlighted the lack of resources that were available when they encountered child welfare agencies. They highlighted that they felt like beggars. Furthermore, many of the services requested were never provided and the workers never recommended anything. This is troubling considering that these services were for their children and not the parents. Therefore, if child welfare's main mandate is to protect children, why are resources inaccessible? In addition to financial and community resources, participants noted that they felt like there is no one there to let them know if they are doing a good job. They highlighted that this made it feel even more strenuous going through this process. It is not that they needed to hear that they were doing a good job, however, whenever you are under a microscope and must constantly perform, isn't it only fitting that you expect some form of gratification for the surveillance? As I reflect on the literature discussed earlier, it is evident that the data I collected is congruent with the findings of scholars who have done research on this phenomenon. For instance, many scholars highlight that more service provisions are available for white families compared to Black families when they encounter child welfare.

I initially expected to hear about the lack of resources for families to keep children at home. I neglected to consider resources once families were already involved with child welfare systems. I mainly thought about resources to help keep Black children out of the child welfare system. For instance, both participants spoke about the lack of resources provided to them once their children were already involved with child welfare. Thus, my participants highlighted two levels with respect to services provided to them through their experience: the lack of support to keep Black families out of child welfare system and lack of supports while the families are involved with this system.

Similarly, participants felt that whiteness played a role in the services that were provided to them by child welfare workers. The individuals who participated in this research were in interracial relationships (white and Black). They highlighted that they felt more accommodations were made for their white partners in comparison to themselves. In addition, they at times felt like their white partners used child welfare agencies as a crutch to be malicious by making false reports when the relationship deteriorated. The participants explained this as a frustrating experience because they had to explain to a stranger (CAS worker) that they were good enough to parent their child. They also felt like they were being measured through the lenses of whiteness. They highlighted that front-line CAS workers tended to raise "red flags" when they encounter situations that do not conform to their own white middle-class expectations. This type of attitude is consistent with critical race theory and anti-Black racism, which highlights systems of oppressions and the way certain bodies encounter them.

As noted earlier, cultural misunderstanding did not surface as a theme in the data. This is because cultural misunderstanding can be seen a crutch to maintain whiteness. For instance, as a person who identifies as Black, I seldom misunderstood or treated someone different because of their culture. There is a human component in interacting with individuals that have nothing to do with culture, religion or socio-economic status. Therefore, it is problematic considering that most child welfare agencies across Ontario have adopted a cultural competency model. A cultural competency model is where social workers learn other cultures and as Baskin (2016) notes, you cannot be competent in someone else's culture because cultures are so complex (Baskin, 2016). Furthermore, the cultural competency model creates an otherness of everyone who is not white (Baskin, 2016). In this way, it reinforces whiteness.

The findings suggest that socioeconomic status influences the interaction between Black parents and child welfare agencies. Due to perpetual anti-Black discrimination, high unemployment rates, lower wages and labor force discrimination, poverty is significantly pronounced in the Black community (Kunz, 2000). One participant stated, “I really feel it for the people that are going through this and like have you know less time, less patience, less education, less.” Black families who belonged to middle to low socioeconomic status are less likely to know their rights, have access to resources, supports, or have the capacity to afford legal counsel. Therefore, children from low/middle-income families may siphon into the child welfare systems at an alarming rate. As noted by Barth (2005), Bartholet (2009), Dettlaff and Rycraft (2010), Polanyi et al., (2014), and Walker et al., (1994), low income is predictive of poverty, and Black families represent a large proportion of low-income earners. This is not to say that every low/middle-income individual does not know their rights or have access to legal counsel, nor does it mean that anyone who is considered upper class knows their rights. It is simply access to resources, money and time. An individual who is low/middle income is likely to have less time and access to resources to defend themselves. For instance, while legal aid is free, you must financially qualify. This leaves many families in the “in-between loophole” where they do not have money to afford legal counsel but they make just enough to not qualify for legal aid. This is an unfair position for Black families because child welfare agencies are guided by legal counsel from the moment they encounter families. It makes no sense that they should have legal counsel and families should not throughout the entirety of the process.

Lack of support/systemic flaws is another issue highlighted by participants when they encounter child welfare agencies. As noted by Roberts (2002), the child welfare system is completely flawed with oppressive and white supremacist policies and laws (Roberts, 2002).

Child welfare systems and policies were never put in place to support Black families (Roberts 2002). Therefore, how can a system that was not designed or amended for Black families enrich them? The system itself needs a complete revamp before major changes and progress can be seen in Black communities and the rate that Black children are entering child welfare will be lowered. It is not enough for child welfare workers to be culturally competent; it is not enough for child welfare agencies to say that they practice from an anti-oppressive framework. These theories and models do not account for whiteness, racism, oppression, and inequality. Lack of support/systemic flaw is a form of anti-Black racism. It can easily be portrayed as experiences every family has when they encounter child welfare agencies. However, we cannot ignore the mass apprehension of Black children. Furthermore, if the issue was simply lack of support/systemic flaws, why is it that only Black and Indigenous children are overrepresented in child welfare? We must be careful to not mask anti-Black racism as everyday societal inadequacies.

Chapter VII: CONCLUSION

It is evident that questions surrounding the apprehension of Black children, such as their lengthier stay in child welfare and the reasons for child welfare interventions are all in need of further in-depth research. Although child welfare agencies across Ontario have acknowledged that there is clearly an issue around racial disproportionality, and many scholars have researched the overrepresentation, there have been few, if any, systemic changes (Barn, 1993; Clarke, 2011; Jackson & Brissett-Chapman, 1999; OACAS, 2015). Black children and families remain on a steady incline towards overrepresentation in the child welfare system.

The disproportionate rate at which Black children in Ontario are being removed from their family homes and placed in foster or group care is an alarming social justice issue that requires urgent intervention. Both social workers and community advocates have cited systemic racism, cultural misunderstandings, racial profiling, and poverty amongst the contributing factors that may explain the magnitude of this phenomenon. While I understand that the explanations for the overrepresentation of Black children and families in the child welfare system are multiple and complex, ranging from micro to macro level factors, more empirical data that is specific to the Black Canadian context is sorely needed to address this issue. There is an urgent need for greater in-depth academic research that can support policy reforms. Scholars, such as Gordon Pon, Kevin Gosine, Doret Phillips, Ferzana Chaze, Jennifer Clarke, Barbara Fallon, Jennifer Ma, Tara Black and Chris Wekerle, have made positive contributions to the Canadian scholarship surrounding this issue.

Anti-oppression social work theory and practice contend that “the contemporary social order is characterized by a range of social divisions (class, race, gender, age, disability and so on) that both embody and engender inequality, discrimination, and oppression” (Thompson, 1998, p.

3). However, the theory provides few practical suggestions in addressing the overrepresentation of Black children in child welfare. It can instead be deemed a shield for inequality. For instance, most child welfare organizations in Ontario practice from, or are moving towards, an anti-oppressive framework, yet, Black and Aboriginal children are still flooding into the child welfare system. If cultural misunderstanding and accepting differences were the issue for the overrepresentation of Black children in child welfare, then anti-oppression practices should lower the number of Black children entering child welfare. However, it is clearly not, based on the data collected for this research and the data collected from previous scholars. Anti-oppression theory has no doubt created an edifice within which other theories can be examined, and it should not be removed from practice, but it should be used in conjunction with other theories that are more explicit in addressing important issues such as white supremacy, anti-Black racism, and colonialism. In comparison to anti-oppression, anti-Black racism can and will provide a better focus on the ways in which racism, discrimination, and inequality continue to shape the experiences that Black families are facing when they encounter child welfare agencies in actual practice (Pon et al., 2011). Put together, critical race theory and anti-Black racism constitute a theoretical framework that can provide social workers with the guidance and support that they need when working with marginalized populations. This is not to say that anti-racist theory is without faults, or that it has all the ultimate answers; it simply has more achievable and feasible goals than anti-oppression alone, and that is what is needed now.

Lastly, Black communities need to mobilize through activism such as poetry, storytelling, counter narrative, dance, music, art, film, research, community building and any form of counter knowledge to challenge dominant ideologies that influence policies and our daily lives.



Appendix A

PARTICIPANTS NEEDED FOR RESEARCH TO HIGHLIGHT THEIR STORIES AND THEIR EXPERIENCES AS BLACK PARENTS WITH CHILD WELFARE AGENCIES.

Are You:

- An Afro-Canadian parent of any age (mother, father, couples, legal guardian) who have had an on-going experience with any child welfare agency in Ontario?
- A service users?

If you answered yes to the above noted questions, you are invited to volunteer for a study that highlights the stories of Black parents and their experiences with child welfare agencies

You will be asked to participate in 1, 1-2 hour interview to talk about your experience.

Due to the limited number of participants you may not be chosen for this study.

If you are interested in participating in this study or for more information, please contact:

Email: m3felix@ryerson.ca

Mary Felix, MSW candidate, Ryerson University, as part of my degree requirement at the Yeates school of Social Work.

This research study has been reviewed and approved by the Ryerson University Research Ethics Board.



APPENDIX B

Letter of Introduction and Informed Consent Form

Study Title: Highlighting the Experience of 2-3 Black parents experience with Child Welfare systems in Ontario

Researchers: Mary Felix

Letter of Introduction and Informed Consent Form

Before agreeing to participate in this research, I strongly encourage you to read the following explanation of this study. This statement describes the purpose and procedures of the study. Also described is your right to withdraw from the study at any time. This study has been approved by the Research Ethics Board of Ryerson University, Ontario.

Explanation of Procedures

This study is designed to highlight the experiences of 2-3 Black families experience with Ontario's child welfare agencies. Participation in the study involves a one-time interview lasting between 1-2 hours. The interview will take place in person. The interviews will be conducted by me (Mary Felix), audio-taped and later transcribed for the purpose of data analysis.

Risks and Discomforts

There are minimal risks or discomforts that are anticipated from your participation in the study. Potential risks or discomforts include possible emotional feelings of sadness when asked questions during the interview.

Benefits

The anticipated benefit of participation is the opportunity to discuss feelings, perceptions, and concerns related to the experience of Black families when they encounter child welfare agencies, and to contribute to decision-making during child welfare policy reforms.

Confidentiality

The information gathered during this study will remain confidential in secure premises during this project. Only the researcher will have access to the study data and information. There will not be any identifying names on interview notes or interview transcripts; they will be coded and the key to the code will be kept locked away. Your names and any other identifying details will never be revealed in any publication of the results of this study. The tapes will be destroyed at

the completion of the study. The results of the research will be published in the form of a research paper and placed in Library. The knowledge obtained from this study will be of great value in guiding professionals to be more effective in

Withdrawal without Prejudice

Participation in this study is voluntary; refusal to participate will involve no penalty. You are free to withdraw consent and discontinue participation in this project at any time without prejudice or penalty. You are also free to refuse to answer any question we might ask you.

Further Questions and Follow-Up

You are welcome to ask any questions that occur to you during the interview. If you have further questions once the interview is completed, you are encouraged to contact me using the contact information given below as I will provide you with a copy of this consent form and my information separately from this form.

If you have other questions or concerns about the study, please feel free to contact my research supervisor at the Yeates School of Social Work Dr. Gordon Pon at 416 979 5000 ext. 4786 or via email at g2pon@ryerson.ca.

I, _____ (name; please print clearly), have read the above information. I freely agree to participate in this study. I understand that I am free to refuse to answer any question and to withdraw from the study at any time. I understand that my responses will be kept anonymous.

Participant Signature

Date

If: (a) you would like a copy of your interview transcript once it is available (b) you are interested in information about the study results as a whole and/or (c) if you would be willing to be contacted again in the future for a possible follow-up interview, please provide contact information below:

Check those that apply:

_____ I would like a copy of my interview transcript

_____ I would like information about the study results



**SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK
FACULTY OF COMMUNITY SERVICES**

Accredited by the Canadian Association of Schools of Social Work

Consent Agreement

You are being invited to participate in a research study. Please read this consent form so that you understand what your participation will involve. Before you consent to participate, please ask any questions to be sure you understand what your participation will involve.

Study: Examining the Overrepresentation of Black Children in Ontario's Child Welfare Systems.

INVESTIGATORS:

This research study is being conducted by Mary Felix, School of Social Work, Social Work student. The supervisor of this research study is Gordon Pon, MSW, PhD at Ryerson University.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact, Mary Felix, 350 Victoria Street, Toronto, ON M5B2K3, m3felix@ryerson.ca Or you may contact Gordon Pon at 416-979-5000, ext. 4786, g2pon@ryerson.ca

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:

This study is designed to explore the experiences of Black parent's experience with Ontario's child welfare agencies.

I am completing this research to complete my major research paper requirement of my Master of Social Work degree. The results will contribute to my major research paper.

There will be 2-3 research participants recruited for this study. You are being invited to take part in this study because you have identified as a Black parent who have an ongoing relationship with Ontario's child welfare agencies. You have identified as a parent who identify as Black (who identify as African, Caribbean, Afro-Latina and African American).

WHAT YOU WILL BE ASKED TO DO:

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following things:

CONSENT FORM

- 1) Sign the Ryerson University consent form. Take the time to read this form and ask questions about anything that you do not understand. I will also be reviewing this consent form with you. After you have read the consent form and if you accept to be a participant in the study, please sign the areas requiring your signature.

ARRANGE A TIME TO MEET

- 2) You and Mary Felix, the researcher, will arrange a time to meet for the interview. The interview can take place at Ryerson University in a private room that is secured with aural and visual privacy to ensure confidentiality. This is especially important due to the sensitivity of the information that may come up in the interview. You also have the option to choose a location that you would like to meet other than Ryerson University. The preferred location should be in a secured place with aural and visual privacy to ensure confidentiality. Public areas like coffee shops will not be used for interview due to the sensitive nature of the research topic.

REVIEW INTERVIEW GUIDE

- 3) Review the interview guide prior to meeting the researcher for the interview. Take the time to read the interview guide to see what kinds of questions are going to be asked during the interview. You are welcome to note, at any time throughout the interview, any question you do not wish to answer for any reason.

Two sample research questions are: Can you tell me what your experience was like? Did you feel like the social worker had your best interest in mind?

MEET FOR THE INTERVIEW

- 4) Meet with the researcher at the agreed interview time. Interview will last between 1 to 2 hours in length. There will only be one interview for this research study.

REVIEW TRANSCRIPTION

- 5) Once the researcher transcribes the interview you will have an opportunity to read the transcription if you would like to. Transcript will be provided to you within 14 days. Once you approve the researcher to move forward the researcher will proceed to complete the research paper. This can be sent to you through email or mailed to your preferred address.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS:

I cannot guarantee that you will receive any benefits from participating in this study. However, this study aims to bring light to the experiences and feelings of Black parent's experiences with child welfare services. It may also provide an opportunity to share your story.

While confidentiality will be maintained, there are some instance in which mandatory reporting may be required, e.g., discussion of imminent harm to self or others, discussions or suspicions of child abuse or neglect.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL RISKS TO YOU AS A PARTICIPANT?

Psychological risk (e.g. feeling anxious, upset or uncomfortable)

Questions and topics that come up during interview about your experiences as Black parents may be triggering for you and make you feel anxious, upset or uncomfortable as sensitive topics are being discussed. The risk of this happening is low/minimal. A community resource sheet will be provided at the beginning of the interview for parents who feel they would like some support after the interview. If any questions make you uncomfortable you can skip those questions and you can stop participation in the interview at any time.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

Everything pertaining to the study will be kept confidential and all transcriptions will be kept in a password protected file. Your names will be pseudonyms and your real name will never be used. You will be reminded about confidentiality before and after interview to ensure they understand that your names will not be used in the study. No personal information of identity will ever be included in the completed research publication. You will be asked to review/edit their interview transcripts as well as approve the final information to ensure you are comfortable that the information does not identify you to potential readers.

Information in this study will not be released to any other party for any reason, except for my research supervisor Gordon Pon a professor at Ryerson's school of social work. The audio recordings and interview transcriptions will be kept in secured file on a computer in the researcher's home that only the researcher has access to. These files will be password protected in addition to the password needed to be able to log onto the computer. These files will remain on the researcher's computer until the final draft of the major research paper is complete (estimated completion August 2017). Once the final draft is submitted to school of social work, all files and transcriptions will be deleted from the computer. The audio files will be deleted once the transcriptions have been complete. I anticipate completing the transcriptions within two weeks of each interview. The transcriptions / data need to be kept until the final paper is submitted for me to go back and make necessary changes with the information. you have the right to review the audio and transcriptions of interview anytime that you would like.

The transcriptions are only kept until the final publication for my being able to review them and write my paper. Estimated completion date is August, 2017.

PARTICIPATION:

You will not be paid to participate in this study

COSTS TO PARTICIPATION:

If the interview is held at Ryerson University, I will cover parking costs to a maximum of \$9 which is 3 hours of parking.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL:

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You have the right to remove yourself from the study at any time and you have no obligation to complete it. Withdrawal from the study will not influence future relations with the researcher Mary Felix or Ryerson University. You have the right to remove yourself from the research at any time and you have the right to request that your interview be destroyed and not used in the study. During the interview, you have the right to refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to discuss or which makes you uncomfortable.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY:

If you have any questions about the research now, please ask. If you have questions later about the research, you may contact. Mary Felix, Social Worker, 350 Victoria Street, Toronto, Ontario M5B 2K3, 416-979-5000, m3felix@ryerson.ca, or Gordon Pon, research supervisor MSW, PhD, 416-979-5000, ext. 4786, g2pon@ryerson.ca

This study has been reviewed by the Ryerson University Research Ethics Board. If you have questions regarding your rights as a participant in this study please contact:

Research Ethics Board
c/o Office of the Vice President, Research and Innovation
Ryerson University
350 Victoria Street
Toronto, ON M5B 2K3
416-979-5042
rebchair@ryerson.ca

Examining the overrepresentation of Black Children in the Child Welfare System.

CONFIRMATION OF AGREEMENT:

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 participate 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 (please print)

Signature of Participant

Date

AUDIO-RECORDED

I agree to be audio-recorded for the purposes of this study. I understand how these recordings will be stored and destroyed and only the researcher will have access to them.

Signature of Participant

Date

A follow-up check-in will be done at your request to keep you updated on the study.

Follow-up

- ☐ Opt-in
- ☐ Opt-out



Appendix C

List of Resources:

Maison d'hébergement pour femmes francophones

Scarborough South

Office phone: 647-777-6419

Crisis phone: 647-777-6433

Fax: 647-777-6429

Email: info@lamaian-toronto.org

Website: www.lamaian-toronto.org

Ernestine's Women's Shelter

Mail address: Box 141, Toronto, ON M9W 5K9

Office phone: 416-743-1733

Crisis phone: 416-746-3701

TTY: 416-746-3716

Fax: 416-743-1732

Email: contact@ernestines.ca

Website: www.ernestines.ca

Tropicana Community Services Organization

Address: 1385 Huntingwood Dr, Toronto, ON M1S 3J1

Office phone: 416-439-9009

Fax: 416-439-2414

Email: info@tropicanacommunity.org

Website: www.tropicanacommunity.org

Jamaican Canadian Association. CAFCAN Social Services

Address: 995 Arrow Rd, Toronto, ON M9M 2Z5

Office phone: 416-746-5772

* CAFCAN: 416-740-1056

Fax: 416-746-7035

Email: info@jcaontario.org

Website: www.cafcan.org

222 Tips Toronto

Website: 221Toronto.ca

Phone: 222

APPENDIX D

Research Questions

1. Did you feel like the social worker had your best interest in mind?
2. Did the social worker provide a list of supports for your family? If yes, please elaborate.
3. Did you find the services useful and adequate for the supports you needed?
4. Was your child apprehended?
5. What was that process like?
6. Were you or are you given the opportunity to fairly advocate for your family.
7. Did your child return home? If so, how long did she spend in foster care?
8. Do you believe you have the right supports in place right now in this process?
9. Do you know your rights and responsibilities surrounding child welfare in Ontario?
10. Do believe that you were unfairly treated and targeted by social worker(s)? If yes, please explain.

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