

THEY DON'T REALLY CARE ABOUT US: THE STORIES OF PREVIOUSLY  
INCARCERATED BLACK MEN IN SCARBOROUGH AND THEIR EXPERIENCES WITH  
DISPLACED ANGER THROUGH A CRITICAL RACE THEORY PERSPECTIVE

by

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An MRP

presented to Ryerson University

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

Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 2017

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## ABSTRACT

They Don't Really Care About Us: The Stories of Previously Incarcerated Black Men in Scarborough and their Experiences with Displaced Anger through a Critical Race Theory

Perspective

Master of Social Work, 2017

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This narrative qualitative research study investigates aspects of the life journey of Black male adults in the urban context, Scarborough, Ontario through a Critical Race Theory (CRT) Perspective. Four Black male adults who lived in Scarborough as teenagers with previous incarceration were interviewed. Using the counter-storytelling method through CRT, these Black men discussed their experiences with incarceration, school, life in Scarborough as Black males and displaced anger and mental health issues. This data was analyzed using Composite Narrative analysis. The narratives of these young men affirm that their experiences, including those associated with racism and lateral violence, from their school and family settings to the streets in Scarborough, confused their masculinity, affected mental health experiences, and contributed to suppressed anger which displaced in aggressive or violent ways. These men's stories also confirm that being incarcerated further exacerbated this displaced anger phenomenon, especially surrounding masculinity and certain mental health concerns and did contribute to feelings of hopelessness when trying to reintegrate back into Scarborough following their release.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to take this opportunity to thank a number of people who have supported me throughout this educational experience. Thank you, God and Jesus Christ, for instilling in me the strength, intellect, discipline and perseverance I needed to complete this journey. Thank you to my supervisor Dr. Samantha Wehbi for the excellent advice, feedback, guidance and mentorship throughout this whole process. Thank you to various Ryerson University Social Work professors who have helped me along the way. Thank you to my fiancée, parents, brother and classmates who have helped me throughout this whole process. Lastly, thank you to the participants Jeremiah, Malachi, Damian and Isaiah (pseudonyms) without whose participation, this major research paper would not have been possible.

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this Major Research Paper to my parents, brother and fiancée because this would not have been possible without their various types of support. I additionally dedicate this paper to the participants of this study and to all the Black men and youth that live in Scarborough and all other inner cities across Toronto and North America.

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## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The *angry Black man* and *woman* stereotype has become one of the most dominant stereotypes used to describe many Black men and women across North America (Bryant, 2013; Coprew, 2014; Roker-Jones, 2013). In order to combat this stereotype, I have observed many Black people often deny this feeling of anger or use euphemisms such as “frustration” or “being upset” to describe their anger. Consequently, we as Black people only become more enraged due to not being able to express our true emotions out of fear of being labelled an “angry Black person.” Other mental and physical health consequences occur when we as Black people suppress our anger such as high blood pressure or hypertension, higher alcohol consumption and mental health concerns such as depression or anxiety (Hall, Cassidy & Stevenson, 2008; Pittman, 2011). Rather than pathologizing anger, it needs to be recognized that anger is a very healthy and helpful emotion in making changes in one’s life (Novaco, 1976).

In this MRP, I will be exploring the deep-rooted racism and discriminative barriers that have shaped the masculinity of urban Black men, subtly discouraged Black men from achieving in schools, subjected Black men to disproportionate incarceration and maltreatment in inner cities and contributed to displaced anger, poor mental health and violence among these men. The counter stories of these Black men are to expose the inherent emotional and mental health distresses and displaced anger these men may experience or may have experienced when reintegrating back into Scarborough from prison as adults and/or juvenile detention centres as youth. Understanding these narratives can alternatively challenge and deconstruct this stereotype of the “angry Black man” and create new narratives about urban low-income Black men, particularly those who have been incarcerated.



Many other Black people, Black men in the context of this MRP and I are *fed up* with being told how to feel and having our anger misunderstood. Our anger is deeper than simply being the root of our issues, “rather, anger is the fruit of issues that have perpetuated themselves for generations, particularly for the Black male in the United States” (Bryant, 2013) and I argue Canada additionally. I argue that the reason why movements such as Black Lives Matter and the Civil Rights movement became so powerful and influential is because these movements were built on anger concerning the longstanding systemic racial inequality Black populations continue to experience. Successively, we can see that these movements transformed their anger into action through protests, petitions and marches bringing about social change. In a 1964 Democratic Freedom Party speech, Malcolm X, an African American male minister and civil rights activist, reiterates this requirement of anger to bring social change by exclaiming,

...Usually, when people are sad, they don’t do anything. They just cry over their condition. But when they get angry, they bring about a change. When they get angry, they aren’t interested in logic, they aren’t interested in odds, they aren’t interested in consequences. When they get angry, they realize the condition that they’re in—that their suffering is unjust, immoral, illegal, and that anything they do to correct it or eliminate it, they’re justified. When you and I develop that type of anger and speak in that voice, then we’ll get some kind of respect and recognition, and some changes from these people who have been promising us falsely already for far too long. (Online video by Anuro, 2016)

Novaco (1976) elucidates that anger is not the problem, rather the manner of which people express their anger or what they do when they are angry.

As a young first generation, Black Jamaican-Canadian, cis-gendered, heterosexual man who was born and raised in Scarborough, I personally have seen too many urban Black men in

my community and other low-income, marginalized communities pick up guns and consequently express and displace their anger in unhealthy violent and fatal ways towards their fellow Black brethren and sometimes their own children and partners. Similar to these men, I also have been an individual who has displaced their anger in violent and unhealthy manners. Some of the factors that influenced my anger was experiencing and witnessing racial inequality and harsh discipline from teachers and police officers. I grew up having to understand different definitions of manhood from my parents, my friends and acquaintances in the “streets”, teachers, pastors and police officers. Additionally, I had to endure the pain of losing Black and other racialized male friends and family members to homicide, suicide and imprisonment all while witnessing my parents struggle through times of poverty to provide the best life they could for my brother and I. As a result of experiencing these obstacles in my life, I often found myself angry, yet instead of acknowledging this anger and understanding where it came from, I displaced my anger against peers in my community, female partners, teachers, and sometimes my parents and brother through verbal and physical aggression.

While I learned to express and displace my anger in healthier manners such as through leadership, mentorship, sports, music and dance, I was also fortunate to not have my displaced anger and aggression ever result in me being incarcerated, commit homicide nor be the victim of homicide. Contrarily as stated earlier, many of my friends, family members and peers in my community were not as fortunate. Due to being personally connected to shootings through previous friendship with victims of fatal violence and the perpetrators as well as being an urban Black man who could at any time in my community be the victim of violence, I do not have the *luxury* to ignore or cast aside this issue as it continues to deeply affect me and the Black community in Scarborough. Readers must understand that for multiple centuries, Black men

have been bombarded with negative images, stereotypes and messages and have begun to internalize and understand them as our own image (Kumsa, Mfoafo-M'Carthy, Oba & Gaasim, 2014, p. 27-28). Research states that understanding these negative images has subconsciously led Black men to self-loathing and instead of rebounding their anger, hurt and frustration back to the oppressor, many Black men project or displace violence and their anger towards other oppressed people (Kumsa et al., 2014, p. 27-28), in this case, other Black men. This phenomenon is entitled lateral violence (Kumsa et al., 2014, p. 27-28).

Scarborough, Ontario is located in the eastern part of Toronto and is home to a population of 625,930 people of various ethnicities as of 2011 (City of Toronto, 2014). While Scarborough's community is famous for its reputation as being the 'best ethnic food suburb' (Pelley, 2015), 'food capital of the world' (Paris, 2016) and one of the most ethnically diverse communities in all of Canada (The Scarborough Hospital, 2014), Scarborough simultaneously is recognized as having some of the highest child poverty rates in all of Toronto (The Scarborough Hospital, 2014; Toronto Child & Family Poverty Update, 2015). The Toronto Child & Family Poverty Update (2015) stated that "overall, 18 of 25 neighbourhoods in Scarborough had child poverty rates greater than 30%" (p. 3). Hulchanski's (2010)<sup>1</sup> report on Neighbourhood Change in Toronto, shows that from 1980-2005, almost all of Scarborough's neighbourhoods fell into the City #3 category which was considered low income and where incomes decreased consistently since the 1980's. Additionally, in 2006 as seen in Cowen and Parlette's (2011)<sup>2</sup> report on Scarborough's infrastructure, the map demonstrates that most of Scarborough's neighbourhoods

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.urbancentre.utoronto.ca/pdfs/curp/tnrn/Three-Cities-Within-Toronto-2010-Final.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <http://3cities.neighbourhoodchange.ca/files/2011/06/Cowen-2011-Social-Infrastructure-in-Scarborough-N-Change.pdf>

were considered low income and had a medium to high density of people living in them (Cowen & Parlette, 2011). Scarborough was the only municipality of Toronto to have the majority of its community fall into this low-income category while the other parts of Toronto only had sections (Hulchanski, 2010); specifically the western part of North York, the northern part of Etobicoke past Eglinton Avenue West and large parts of East York and York (Hulchanski, 2010). Furthermore, almost half (6/13) of Toronto's "priority neighborhoods" are located in Scarborough (The Scarborough Hospital, 2014).

Last (2013) stated that in both 2011 and 2012, Scarborough had a higher homicide rate than the rest of Toronto. While Scarborough makes up 23 % of Toronto's population, 26 % of Toronto's homicides occurred in Scarborough in 2012 and 28% in 2011 (Last, 2013).

Subsequently, studies have consistently demonstrated the correlation of gun violence and crime with poverty and racism (Ezeonu, 2008; Khenti, 2013; Weekes, 2006) and these epidemics have affected Scarborough drastically seeing as a high percentage of Scarborough's residents, in conjunction with living in poverty, are racialized immigrants or racialized Canadian born individuals (Ezeonu, 2008; Weekes, 2006).

Since the 1980's, the Black population has made up roughly ten percent of Scarborough's inhabitants, making them the third largest visible minority population in Scarborough and Toronto (City of Toronto, 2014; City of Toronto, 2008; City of Toronto, 2004; Ornstein, 2006). Additionally, authors argue that the Black community in Scarborough and Toronto continues to be one of the poorest racial groups (Ezeonu, 2008; Khenti, 2013; City of Toronto, 2010). This community has also been affected by the youth gang and gun violence epidemic where many of their young men were the perpetrators and victims of gun violence (Ezeonu, 2008; Khenti, 2013; Weekes, 2006). Since the 1980's and the introduction to "crack" and cocaine, the presence of

youth ethnic gangs in Toronto, particularly in many parts of Scarborough, began to increase and become increasingly violent (Powell, 2010). As a result of the increased gang activity and gun violence in Scarborough and other racialized parts of Toronto, these communities also have the highest incarceration costs as articulated in Rankin's (2009) article and seen in Toronto's map of Provincial Incarceration Costs<sup>3</sup>.

Of the many shootings that have occurred in Scarborough, I looked at a few, for instance, the slaying of two Black men, Ryan Hyde and Kennado Walker and the Danzig BBQ shooting (News Staff, 2007; Tantalizing\_t2, 2007). Ryan was fatally shot and killed by Kennado Walker in Scarborough and Kennado was shot and killed hours later that day also in Scarborough, a couple of intersections away (News Staff, 2007; Tantalizing\_t2, 2007). The most notorious shooting in Scarborough being the Danzig BBQ shooting, resulted in two people dead, twenty-two people injured and various Black men charged with several accounts of murder, one of which was convicted and sentenced to life in prison and another who received 11 years in prison (Janus, 2016). Looking at these cases, I began to become interested in this dangerous cycle of lateral violence that many urban Black men in Scarborough and other low income centres are caught up in and how the concepts of displaced anger, dehumanization and powerlessness are intertwined in this phenomenon. These concepts concerning urban Black men in Scarborough are deeper and more complex than simply addressing factors like poverty and racism. Rather, I believe it is critical to understand how racism has been deeply embedded in the different institutions such as schools and the legal system to contribute to the high poverty rates of this

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<sup>1</sup>[https://www1.toronto.ca/city\\_of\\_toronto/social\\_development\\_finance\\_administration/files/pdf/incarceration\\_costs.pdf](https://www1.toronto.ca/city_of_toronto/social_development_finance_administration/files/pdf/incarceration_costs.pdf)

population and additionally to the above concepts and poor mental health of many urban Black men.

### **Critical Race Theoretical Perspective**

Critical Race Theory will be informing this research study and will help in further analyzing and deconstructing various racial inequalities. CRT is a theory viewed by Mari Matsuda (as cited in Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) as,

The work of progressive legal scholars of color who are attempting to develop a jurisprudence that accounts for the role of racism in American law and that work toward the elimination of racism as part of a larger goal of eliminating all forms of subordination. (p. 25)

CRT stems from sociology, law, history, ethnic studies and women's studies (Howard, 2008; Richmond & Johnson, 2009; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). This theory was founded by Derrick Bell and Richard Delgado as academics who were both discontented with race and its relationship with socially constructed hierarchies (Subotnik, 1998). During this time, Critical Legal Studies (CLS) began to gain recognition, which was a movement comprised of primarily white scholars, focused on the law not being "apolitical, neutral or determinate and that therefore the law and legal institutions, including law schools, necessarily reflected and sustained power relationships" (Subotnik, 1998, p. 684). As this development began to gain recognition, racial scholars began to gravitate towards this movement, however there grew animosity between the Black and White scholars (Subotnik, 1998). CRT was then born in the 1980's where the group became not only comprised of Black writers but also Latino/a and Asian writers whose work was published in all elite journals and dominated racial discourse and scholarship (Subotnik, 1998). Alternatively, the emergence of this CRT movement was to communicate to white scholars the

need to encourage Black and other racial scholars to write and succeed in the civil rights field and for these white scholars to redirect their efforts and talents in other areas (Subotnik, 1998). In other words, racial scholars were expressing to white scholars to let those who have experienced this oppression write about it as they have experiential knowledge. Scholars have now extended this paradigm's lens to examine the role and impact of racial inequalities and racism in education and in the criminal justice system, specifically prison (Caton, 2012; Howard, 2008; James, 2012; Richmond & Johnson, 2009; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

CRT theorists work with the ideology that only overt racism, mainly the exclusion of people, was addressed in the civil rights movement (Richmond & Johnson, 2009). Consequently, the subtle racism that continues to plague the American society persists and remains supported by the legal system (Richmond & Johnson, 2009). Additionally, CRT is also necessary in the Canadian context in order to expose the realities of similar subtle racism that exists in Canada, specifically Toronto, through the disproportionate amount of Black youth suspended and expelled (Salole & Abdulle, 2011), overrepresented in the child welfare system (Gosine & Pon, 2011), the disproportionate amount of Black people experiencing mental health concerns (Khenti, 2013; Logie, James, Tharao & Loutfy, 2013) and the overrepresentation of the Black population in the prison system (Khenti, 2014; Lawson, 2012). To reaffirm my point about the complexity of racism, CRT can allow for the investigation of racism perpetuated by social systems and institutions in more depth rather than looking solely at discrimination based on skin colour (Richmond & Johnson, 2009). CRT helps expose how racial identity and inequalities remain embedded in institutions, community, politics and culture (Richmond & Johnson, 2009).

Of the many themes of CRT discussed in Richmond and Johnson's (2009) article, three of them will help guide this research study. First, race and racism cannot be separated from

power structures due to always being impacted by outside influences (Richmond & Johnson, 2009); second, CRT investigates the use of color-blind policies, meritocracy and race neutral policies (Richmond & Johnson, 2009); third, CRT utilizes the techniques of social justice to centre oppressed individuals in the research rather than being peripheral (Richmond & Johnson, 2009). These three themes collectively demonstrate racism is deeply engrained in institutions and systems of power and has transcended through authoritative figures, hegemonic messages and practices to continue to subordinate racialized individuals (Richmond & Johnson, 2009). This research study will utilize CRT to expose potential feelings of powerlessness due white privilege and master narratives about the Black man's anger and other stereotypes associated with Black men since the 16<sup>th</sup> century such as being lazy, criminally prone, hypersexual, intellectually inept, and violent (Payne, 2011).

White privilege is essentially the most dominant concept of CRT and will be used in this research study (Caton, 2012; Parker & Lynn, 2002; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). White privilege is defined by Delgado and Stefanie (as cited in Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) as “a system of opportunities and benefits conferred upon people simply because they are White” (p. 27). It is crucial to recognize the power of White privilege in the construction of race (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). White privilege helps to maintain the story of racism because it is often invisible due to being considered the “norm” (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). It is because of White privilege that counter-stories or minority stories from racial minorities are essential in challenging “majoritarian” stories (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Majoritarian stories or master narratives, which are stories that privilege “Whites, men, the middle and/or upper class, and heterosexuals by naming these social locations as natural or normative points of reference” (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 28), perpetuate the legacy of racism and simultaneously deem White people's



racial privilege as natural (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). These stories are built on assumptions of those benefitted by racial privilege, and are incorporated into conversations of racism, sexism, classism and other forms of subordination (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). In the context of this research study, majoritarian stories concerning Black men are that we as Black men are supposedly considered savages, naturally more animal-like, more violent, more nefarious, less involved with our families as fathers, more likely to underachieve and more criminally prone than other races (Caton, 2012; Coprew, 2014; James, 2012; Payne, 2011).

From my understanding of CRT, I believe another majoritarian story that even some Black individuals perpetuate is the story concerning the “anger of Black men.” As stated earlier, many Black individuals think that dismissing or encouraging the use of euphemisms to mask the anger of Black men specifically, combats this “angry Black man” stereotype. In reality, I would argue that this only encourages the perpetuation of the majoritarian story that Black men are somehow less human and do not experience emotions such as anger, frustration, sadness or discontent like White people. We as Black men are not inherently angrier or more aggressive than other races (Caton, 2012; Coprew, 2014; James, 2012; Payne, 2011); rather, we as Black men are angry because this “angry Black man” stereotype has been wrongly placed on us and is one of many that “we struggle against in the battle to better educate society on the true meaning of what life is like as a Black male” (Coprew, 2014, p. 1) in the United States and Canada. Furthermore, factors like racism, poverty, high crime rates, high unemployment rates and the lack of economic resources in the poor urban neighborhoods that many Black men reside in would further contribute to the presence of mental health distresses and feelings of anger, hopelessness, powerlessness, especially if these same Black men have been incarcerated (Hall et al., 2008; Khenti, 2014; Oliver & Hairston, 2008; Pittman, 2011; Powell, 2008).

In this research paper, I will be using CRT to help unveil the deep-rooted barriers and racist hegemonic messages that disproportionately marginalize Black youth and adults in school and prison institutions (Caton, 2012; Howard, 2008; James, 2012; Richmond & Johnson, 2009; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). This research study will use CRT to deconstruct this white majoritarian narrative of the “angry Black man” and the web of stereotypes that follow Black men in schools, the criminal justice system and mental health services. The CRT lens can further look at how gender, class, sexual orientation, language, national origin and other forms of subordination intersect with race as this theory’s larger end goal is to work to eliminate these forms of oppression (Caton, 2012; Howard, 2008; James, 2012; Richmond & Johnson, 2009; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Additionally, CRT will help readers understand how displaced anger, mental health concerns and the disproportionate incarceration of Black men in Scarborough relate to institutional racism and persistent systemic racism.

This research study will utilize CRT to address race in the legal system and potentially expose certain racial populations who are deemed deviant by society and are essentially cast aside and forgotten (Richmond & Johnson, 2009). CRT can help question what systemic disadvantages influence higher rate of incarceration for Black men than the overall population in Canada and the United States (Crichlow, 2014; Richmond & Johnson, 2009). This theory will help inform my research to demonstrate how in insidious ways, institutional and systemic racism is continuously reinforced in society by Black males continuing to make up the majority of the prison population and have the highest high-school drop-out/suspension and expulsion rates (Caton, 2012; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). CRT can help unveil the implicit ways that society sets up Black men in Scarborough for failure and a life in the ‘streets’ and prison due to their neighborhoods being over-policed and lacking equitable access to resources, these Black men

being the targets of police harassment as well as being suspended and expelled from high-schools at alarming rates (Rios, 2009; Salole & Abdulle, 2015). This research paper will also use CRT to demonstrate how racism has played a large role in sustaining feelings of powerlessness among these Black men which has potentially contributed to lateral violence, consequent incarceration and further displaced anger and mental health concerns of this population. This paper will look at white privilege, dehumanization and powerlessness as important concepts that affect these Black men and demonstrate the need for CRT in order to eliminate these forms of subordination.

This MRP will begin with a review of the literature surrounding this topic and describe the research design being narrative counter-storytelling undertaken for this study. I will then describe the data analysis method utilized to figure out the themes of the findings. Lastly, I will conclude with recommendations for social workers to address the issues highlighted in this MRP. A note on terminology before proceeding further; the term Black will be used throughout this paper to signify a universal struggle and to focus on displaced anger amongst many Black male diaspora in poor urban communities in Canada and the United States. There will be times where Black is interchanged with other identifying terms like, Jamaican and African American.

## **CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

There were four prominent themes in the literature reviewed: masculinity and hypermasculinity, school-to-prison pipeline, mass incarceration and displaced anger and mental health. The literature reviewed was mainly comprised of qualitative studies from American and some Canadian sources. Disciplines present in the literature include: social work, psychology, sociology and journals related to incarceration, urban education and urban environment.

### **Masculinity and Hypermasculinity**

Empirical studies highlight that urban Black adolescent males face many tough challenges; while experiencing normative development (i.e. identity development) many of them are living in impoverished, high-risk stressful environments (high crime, police brutality, few positive neighborhood facilities and more) and simultaneously battling contextual racism, discrimination and economic deprivation (Coprew & Cunningham, 2012; Hall et al., 2008; Lindsey et al., 2010; Pittman, 2011; Rios, 2009; Seaton, 2007). Navigating through all of these difficult circumstances, Black male youth consequently become more vulnerable than other adolescent groups due to having fewer opportunities to fulfill traditional masculine roles (Coprew & Cunningham, 2012; Seaton, 2007). Research suggests that in order to mask these vulnerabilities and insecurities, Black male adolescents may utilize “bravado attitudes as a means of externalizing rejection, sensitivity and depression” (Coprew & Cunningham, 2012, p. 573). These bravado attitudes are also referred to as hypermasculinity (Coprew & Cunningham, 2012; Rios, 2009; Seaton, 2007).

Rios (2009) defines hypermasculinity as an “exaggerated exhibition of physical strength and personal aggression that is often a response to a gender threat and is expressed through physical and sexual domination of others” (p. 151). Hypermasculinity plays out in various ways

for Black boys and men depending on the context. Rios (2009) investigated how important insights about crime, race, and gender are gained through analyzing the experiences of urban, low income, Black and Latino adolescent males as they navigate through the criminal justice pipeline. He argues that the expression of hypermasculinity is encouraged through a criminal justice pipeline and fundamentally confuses the masculinity of these young men of colour (Rios, 2009). Rios's (2009) study focused on three aspects of the criminal justice system that were essential in producing hypermasculinity among these youth: policing, incarceration and probation. Rios (2009) contends that "youth of color are inculcated into a set of hypermasculine expectations that often lead them to behaviours that conflict with the structures of dominant institutions" (p. 152). Subsequently, in order to be considered and respected as a "real man" by important institutions and people (peers and family) these young men "must pass multiple litmus tests" such as exercising "rough and tough" attitudes (Corprew & Cunningham, 2012; Hall et al., 2008; Hammond & Mattis, 2005; Rios, 2009). Furthermore, Anderson (as cited in Rios, 2009) describes, "young male syndrome" as the "perceived, expected, and often necessary pressure to perform tough, violent and deviant manhood to receive and maintain respect" (p. 152).

Many inner-city Black and Latino boys are constantly met with contradictions due to coming from the streets where "breaking the law," acts of "toughness and violence" and going to jail is all part of "true masculinity"; yet are contrarily being taught by police officers, correctional officers, probation officers and the rest of society that "true masculinity" emphasizes "hard-work, law abidance, and an acceptance of subordinate social positions" (Rios, 2009, p. 153). Instead of these law personnel attempting to understand that many of these youth inherently want to do right but are pressured by their environmental circumstances and peers to do wrong in order to be a "real man," these authoritative figures continue to penalize these

vulnerable boys without consideration of the two conflicting messages of manhood these boys are receiving. Rios (2009) argues that in order to survive their difficult environmental circumstances, these marginalized youths *must* go against societal and the criminal justice's expectations of masculinity and choose hypermasculinity over hopelessness in order to be self-affirmed. Consequently, their hypermasculinity assists the criminal justice system in further penalizing these marginalized youth (Rios, 2009). This recurring harsh penalization further demonstrates how through gender processes, the criminal justice system is involved in reinforcing racial inequality (Rios, 2009). On the contrary in academic settings, Coprew and Cunningham's (2012) study findings demonstrate that not all young Black boys from low-income urban contexts utilize hypermasculinity to cope with the challenges they face in their school environments. There are many of these same Black boys in these school settings who choose positive alternatives, *other* than sports, to cope with these challenges such as being on school councils, focusing on their studies and attaining phenomenal grades with the goal of going on to reputable colleges (synonymous word for university in the U.S. context) (Coprew & Cunningham, 2012; Howard, 2008; Wilson, Henrikson, Bustamante, & Irby, 2016).

While there are studies similar to Rios (2009) and Coprew and Cunningham's (2012), studies that focus on hypermasculinity in the criminal justice and education system and the confusion of masculinity for low income urban Black boys, studies do not look at hypermasculinity and how it affects these boys as they become men. These studies also do not look at the correlation it has specifically with displaced anger and other possible mental health distresses. These studies do not discuss concepts of displaced anger/aggression and how Black men may exercise displaced aggression or anger towards those around them due to their confusion with masculinity. There are also no studies that document hypermasculinity and the

correlation this has with poor mental health and displaced anger of Black males in Canada, specifically Scarborough who have been previously incarcerated. These studies also do not look at how previous incarceration affects ideas about masculinity for these same Black men in both Scarborough and other urban centres and the possible correlation with mental health concerns and displaced anger and aggression.

### **School-To-Prison Pipeline**

Studies continue to illustrate the disproportionate amount of Black male students who are underachieving, placed in special education, alternative schools, and remedial classrooms (Allen & Smith, 2014; Caton, 2012; Howard, 2008; Salole & Abdulle, 2015). Caton (2012) reports, “A study of 19 middle schools in the Midwest USA, found that Black males were sent to the principal’s office more than their counterparts for more subjective reasons such as “disrespect” and “perceived threat” (p. 1057). Allen and Smith (as cited in 2014) claim that “third and fourth grade reading test score data along with high-school dropout rates are used to predict what space is needed in state prisons” (p. 445). The results from all these studies and others similar demonstrate that harsh and exclusionary disciplinary policies combined with continuous poor school performance inevitably leads to high suspension and expulsion rates and consequent dropping out (Allen & Smith, 2014; Caton, 2012; Howard, 2008; Salole & Abdulle, 2015). Once many of these urban Black males are removed from the classroom, this removal or dropping out of school sparks the “chain-reaction” of the school-to-prison pipeline (Allen & Smith, 2014; Caton, 2012; Howard, 2008; Salole & Abdulle, 2015).

As easy as it is to overlook this issue thinking that this is strictly an American phenomenon, Salole and Abdulle’s (2015) research findings clearly demonstrate that this epidemic is also occurring in Canada, specifically Toronto. Salole and Abdulle (2015) studied

the concerns about the multiple and increased connections between schools and prisons and how Toronto public schools are losing their ground, as safe havens for the most marginalized youth. These scholars contend, “From surveillance cameras; to hall monitors; to an increased emphasis on student identification; to police officers stationed within schools, some Toronto-area high schools are looking increasingly similar to their American counterparts” (Salole & Abdulle, 2015 p. 126). The Black male and female participants in Salole and Abdulle’s (2015) study communicated that the lack of flexibility and understanding when it came to enforcing rules and regulations, specifically pertaining to minor offenses, reinforced the students’ feelings of exclusion and disengagement from school. The study’s findings indicate strong similarities between the treatment within prisons and the treatment within schools and their inner-city neighborhoods from the constant surveillance and harsh discipline measures inflicted on these students (Salole & Abdulle, 2015).

Although the technology used in all Toronto District School Board (TDSB) high schools may be similar, their intentions behind them are different (Salole & Abdulle, 2015). A professional research participant who travels to different Toronto high schools said this:

Some schools are like gated communities, it’s [surveillance] to keep people out and what’s inside safe. And you can see that in the positioning of the cameras. Other schools, the schools in the tougher areas, these schools are like prisons. The video surveillance is on the students and it’s to collect information and police them. (Salole & Abdulle, 2014 p. 156)

Black males continue to be denied and excluded from “meaningful educational opportunities, and are tracked out of upper ability or college preparatory programs and into remedial, vocational, or even special education programs” (Allen & Smith, 2014 p. 452). This is



seen in Allen and Smith's (2014) study that reports the negative treatment and intentional and "unintentional" exclusions of Black male students from advancing academically by guidance counsellors, *despite* their high academic achievement, or being the victims of punitive measures by teachers and other school administrators. Consequently, similar to Salole and Abdulle's (2015) study, this criminalization and persistent disproportionate use of exclusionary punitive methods is a gateway to the similar treatment within the juvenile and adult criminal justice system (Allen & Smith, 2014; Caton, 2012; Howard, 2008; Salole & Abdulle, 2015). Therefore, as Idil Abdillahi (I. Abdillahi, personal communication, 2016), an Assistant professor from Ryerson stated in a panel discussion at Social Justice Week, "are these schools actually pipelines to prisons or are they as an institution becoming *prisons*?"

Other than the Salole and Abdulle's (2015) study that looks at the school-to-prison pipeline in Toronto, there are no studies that examine this phenomenon in schools in Scarborough in particular. There are very limited studies in the Canadian context that discuss incarceration of urban Black males from their own perspectives and their struggle with marginalization in urban schools, displaced anger and mental health distresses and how this is related to hypermasculine attitudes these Black boys have to exert in their challenging neighborhood contexts. Although Caton (2012) and Howard's (2008) study on Black male students and education looks at it through a CRT perspective, they only look at the concepts: hypermasculinity or the school-to-prison pipeline, from the perspectives of the students. In addition, these studies are conducted in American contexts. There have been no studies that have looked at all of the above concepts through a CRT perspective in Toronto, specifically Scarborough.

## **Mass Incarceration**

There has been consistent research surrounding the mass imprisonment of Black men and juveniles across North America and how it is one of the most significant and detrimental challenges affecting Black families and communities (Desai et al., 2012; Howard, 2008; Oliver & Hairston, 2008; Payne, 2011; Rios, 2006; Rios, 2009; Salole & Abdulle, 2015; Smith & Hattery, 2010). Although most of the research focuses on the mass incarceration of Black adults, recent evidence demonstrates that this mass incarceration epidemic is also occurring with Black male juveniles (Desai et al., 2012; Rios, 2006; Rios, 2009). Scholars document the severity and long-term damage that mass incarceration can have on Black inner-city male youth culturally, politically and economically, due to the label of “deviant” remaining with them throughout their adulthood (Rios, 2006; Rios, 2009; Desai et al., 2012). This label enables these criminal justice institutions to treat these boys as “serious, violent criminal threats” even if they had only been arrested for minor infractions such as drug possession or status offenses (Rios, 2006; Desai et al., 2012).

Once a Black male youth has become involved in the jail and prison system, their chances of reoffending are extremely high (Caton, 2012; Oliver & Hairston, 2008). As mentioned above, punitive exclusionary discipline measures and the resulting dropping out of high school both correlate with the recurring involvement within the criminal justice system. I contend that this is a major contributor to the continued overrepresentation of these Black males in youth jails and adult prisons. Payne (2011) argues that what may also contribute to the involvement in criminal activity and what I argue may influence a consequent increased rate of youth incarceration and street involvement is that many of these inner-city Black male youths routinely observe the incarceration of Black adult men as well as the Black adult males’

involvement in the “street life” (hustling such as selling illegal drugs and pimping, involvement in gangs and more) within and outside of their familial context. This frequent incarceration of Black male adults creates instability within homes, which can significantly decimate Black families and communities (Oliver & Hairston, 2008; Payne, 2011; Smith & Hattery, 2010; Western & Wildeman, 2009).

This research helps me understand that this same predicament that forces these young Black males to use hypermasculinity to survive, simultaneously leads to a life of incarceration. It is also evident that this same predicament is also reinforced through the school setting by teachers and school police officers, demonstrating, what I deem a hypermasculinity-prison life trajectory for these urban Black male youths. Additionally, although these urban Black males understand that their behaviours will only result in physical bodily harm, incarceration and/or death, based on their disadvantaged circumstances, many find the risk worth it due to gaining respect from their peers (Payne, 2011; Rios, 2006). Although there are studies looking at some of the effects of incarceration on these urban Black men and their families and some of the factors influencing this mass incarceration of Black men epidemic, there is a paucity of research describing how incarceration affects the mental health of urban Black males, specifically urban Black men in Scarborough and how it may be one of the factors influencing displacing anger and aggression within and exhibited by many urban Black men.

### **Displaced anger and Mental Health Concerns**

It is unfathomable the degree of racism, marginalization and harsh treatment Black men, especially from low income urban centres, experience from their juvenile years into their adult years. Not surprisingly, numerous years of continuous racial injustices in all the contexts (criminal justice and education system, impoverished neighborhood contexts, relations with

police officers) Black men are in, begins to take a mental and emotional toll on these young men. Studies state that negative mental health consequences and deep-seated anger as a result of these inequalities can begin to develop within these Black men during their adolescent years (Hall et al., 2008; Lindsey et al., 2010; Oliver & Hairston, 2008; Pittman, 2011). Scholars have consistently documented the devastating effects racial discrimination has on the mental and physical health of the Black community and how barriers resulting from racial inequalities translate into lack of access to affordable housing, adequate education, and secure employment (Hall et al., 2008; Lindsey et al., 2010; Oliver & Hairston, 2008; Pittman, 2011).

One of the findings from Pittman's (2011) study on African Americans' perceptions of acute and everyday racial discrimination and the role of active and passive anger on mental health as a coping response to these forms of racial discrimination, was that there is a relationship between household size and mental health. Those typically in larger households (five people or more) who used active anger to cope with racial discrimination experienced less mental health well-being. Pittman's (2011) findings also mention that due to the different experiences of racism in connection with other daily stressors of the African American family members, these different experiences may increase stress and frustration within the home. Findings in this study also note that within the large household, other family members consequently become targets of displaced anger and aggression by the irritated individuals (Pittman, 2011). The results of this study also reported that African American men used active anger to cope with racism more frequently than African American women (Pittman, 2011). This is not to ignore the inequalities African American women experience; rather to recognize that African American men have their own unique racial and gender inequalities (Pittman, 2011). Dealing with high unemployment and incarceration rates as well as other stressors like police

brutality can cause additional frustration and stress, leading to anger as a coping mechanism for African American men in conjunction with their other daily and persistent negative experiences (Pittman, 2011). Consequently, I argue that this active anger as a coping mechanism may subconsciously translate into lateral violence towards other Black men as a way of displacing their initial anger and frustration from the above racial inequalities imposed by the White man, onto their Black brethren sometimes in fatal manners.

There continues to be stigma and lack of acknowledgement surrounding the prevalence of mental health concerns in the Black community, particularly with Black boys. There is also a lack of research in this area, and Lindsey's et al. (2010) study acknowledges this gap by examining how mental health stigma and perceived social support predicts depressive symptoms in African American adolescent boys and how help-seeking behaviours can increase depressive levels (p. 463). Their findings demonstrate how stigma of mental health and social support influence depressive symptoms among urban African American adolescent boys in different ways (Lindsey et al., 2010). Studies indicate that Black boys may also be reluctant in seeking help outside of their family context due to their high-risk contextual stressors and negative interactions with other authoritative figures (security guards, school professionals, police officers) (Hall et al., 2008; Lindsey et al., 2010; Pittman, 2011).

Displaced anger/aggression can be used to disguise other emotional hurt or frustration as demonstrated in Oliver and Hairston's (2008) study. The authors' findings indicate that when some heterosexual Black men are released from prison and realize that there has been an alteration in power dynamics due to their female partners achieving independence, self-sufficiency and assertiveness following the Black man's imprisonment, this can create potential conflict (Oliver & Hairston, 2008). This is because these Black men may feel their manhood

being potentially threatened due to his lack of economic independence and authority and their female partners' increase in power and authority within the household (Oliver & Hairston, 2008). These potential feelings by these Black men can sometimes turn into acts of displaced anger and aggression or explicit violence against their girlfriends or wives (Oliver & Hairston, 2008).

Looking at all of these themes from the literature, no research has focused on how these themes have contributed to Black men exhibiting displaced anger and aggression towards other urban Black men and other urban Black individuals and negatively affected their mental health. Additionally, no research has looked at this social problem through a CRT perspective and how it affects urban Black men in Scarborough. Therefore, my study is to bring awareness through a CRT perspective, the challenges of urban Black males who have been previously incarcerated either as youth or adults and how they experience hypermasculinity in the Scarborough community and schools, displaced anger and mental health distresses, particularly when growing up and reintegrating back into Scarborough from jail/prison. This study attempts to answer the following research question: What are the stories of Black males in Scarborough who have been incarcerated and their experience with displaced anger, hypermasculinity and school in their teenage and adult years? How are these experiences tied to mental health?

### CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH DESIGN

A narrative approach was utilized in this research study in order to best capture the experiences of these Black men in Scarborough. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) explain, “Narrative is a way of characterizing the phenomena of human experience and its study which is appropriate to many social science fields” (p. 2). Storytelling is not only an important aspect of the narrative approach as Connelly and Clandinin argue that humans are “storytelling organisms” (p. 2) but is also a long-lasting tradition for Caribbean (Greenidge & Daire, 2010), African and African American, Indigenous, Latin and Mexican communities (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Storytelling is also an important aspect of CRT, especially in the form entitled *counter-storytelling*, which is defined as, “a method of telling the stories of those people whose experiences are not often told” (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 32).

Counter-storytelling not only tells the stories of those who have been historically silenced, but also challenges majoritarian stories that continue to remain the dominant discourse (Caton, 2012; Love, 2004; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Counter-storytelling ventures deeper than merely telling a fictional story, rather, tells a real story to challenge, expose and analyze hegemonic stories about racial privilege (Love, 2004; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). This methodology alters the traditional forms and content of research, as well as conversations about events, situations and societal participation (Love, 2004). Love (2004) explains that “counter-storytelling situates and centers race as a filter for the examination of prevailing stories and constructions of reality” (p. 232). Additionally, counter-narratives, “enable the discourse to move beyond the broad label of racism, which can cover a wide range of behaviors at the individual, system, institutional and societal levels to reveal specific experiences and circumstances that limit and subordinate” (Love, 2004, p. 232). Counter-storytelling is a

methodology that focuses on undoing ethnocentrism and the unconscious way of viewing the world *one* way and invites and introduces the reader to an unfamiliar world, while helping the reader gain a better understanding of the realities of the storyteller's world (Caton, 2012; Love, 2004; Parker & Lynn, 2002; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

When creating counter-narratives, two concepts are important in order to create these counter-stories which are cultural intuition and theoretical sensitivity. Similar to Solórzano and Yosso (2002), I have used both of these concepts from (a) the data gathered from the research process itself, (b) the existing literature on the topic(s) and (c) my own personal experiences. Delgado Bernal (as cited in Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) describes cultural intuition as extending, ...one's personal experience to include collective experience and community memory, and points to the importance of participants' engaging in the analysis of data...cultural intuition is achieved and can be nurtured through our personal experiences...the literature on and about Chicanas, our professional experiences, and the analytical process we engage in when we are in a central position of our research and our analysis. Thus, cultural intuition is a complex process that is experiential, intuitive, historical, personal, collective, and dynamic. (p. 33-34)

Theoretical sensitivity differs from cultural intuition in that it refers to "the attribute of having insight, the ability to give meaning to data, the capacity to understand, and capability to separate the pertinent from that which isn't" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 33).

This research study used counter-narratives to ultimately challenge the dominant discourse surrounding the anger of Black men, specifically those from poor urban neighbourhoods. The counter-stories can challenge long lasting racist ideologies and maltreatment of Black men in education and how this maltreatment has insidiously created and



pushed many Black male youth onto a school-to-prison trajectory (Caton, 2012; Parker & Lynn, 2002; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). The counter-stories of these participants can also shed light on the overt and covert racial microaggressions in the criminal justice system, challenge and deconstruct myths surrounding the stereotype “angry Black man.” The counter-stories can expose, critique and refute the master narrative of neighbourhood equity, and the criminal justice and education system being fair by showing the over-surveillance, harsh and exclusionary punishment in schools, police brutality, the epidemic of “mass incarceration” of Black men and the prison industrial complex affecting Black families (Allen & Smith, 2014; Caton, 2012; Howard, 2008; Payne, 2011; Rios, 2009; Salole & Abdulle, 2015; Smith & Hattery, 2010; Western & Wildeman, 2009). Lastly, the counter-narratives of these Black men can help in shedding light on the overt and covert racism in the mental health system which could play a large role in stigma surrounding mental health for Black men and consequently discouraging these Black men from seeking help for mental health concerns (Hall et al., 2008; Lindsey et al., 2010; Pittman, 2011).

## **Participants**

The participants included four Black male-identified individuals between the ages of 20-27 who had spent time being incarcerated. Of the four participants, one had spent time in adult prison, one had spent time in youth jail, but all but of them had spent time in adult jail. All of the men were of Caribbean descent, specifically Jamaican, with two participants being mixed, which was not intended as part of recruitment or selection of participants. All of the participants had spent time imprisoned for robberies, with one of the participants spending time in prison for possession of crack-cocaine. With the exception of one participant who resided in Scarborough for the majority of his life, the other three participants moved frequently all over Toronto and

throughout the GTA but spent much of their teenage years residing in Scarborough, including attending school in Scarborough.

## **Recruitment**

The recruitment consisted of emailing friends who fit the potential participant requirements once without any follow-up to ensure that self-selection is voluntary. Please see email attachment in Appendix A. I contacted community workers, community agencies that work with individuals reintegrating into society and counsellors that work within this community. I contacted family members and friends that met the requirements for the interview (Please see attached email attached in Appendix B). I also recruited through my social media (Facebook and Instagram). Please see Facebook and Instagram message in Appendix C. This research used criterion sampling, a method that “utilizes a predetermined set of criteria in which participants must meet” (as cited in Ciupa, 2006, p. 26).

## **Data Collection**

Before agreeing to complete the interview or meeting the researcher, some of the participants were initially reluctant to participate due to past studies painting them in a negative light. I believe that my positionality and identity allowed for greater rapport with the participants. Specifically, when the participants met me and saw that I was a young Black man with both ears pierced with earrings, shoulder length dreadlocks, tattoos and two decades of residence in Scarborough, the participants gradually let their guard down and after I demonstrated my knowledge of Scarborough slang through my speech, as well as its culture and history, particularly related to the street-life, followed by a thorough explanation of the purpose and implications of the interview and research study, the participants established a strong and

positive rapport with me and were much more comfortable sharing vulnerable feelings during the interview.

With the participants' consent, I conducted individual in depth semi-structured interviews to collect the data about their experiences while audio recording. Specifically, these men told counter-narratives informally in response to specific questions. For example, a question was: Tell me a story about a typical day in jail as a youth and/or tell me a story about a typical day in jail/prison as an adult. For areas where I needed clarification such as what they were feeling during those moments in their story, I asked probing questions such as: what were your feelings the time(s) you entered jail as a youth and/or as an adult? What were your feelings entering prison as an adult? Please see Appendix D for the interview guide.

### **Data Analysis**

Interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed by drawing out main themes and then grouping them together to construct Composite Narratives. I used Thematic and structural narrative analysis to analyze the data. Thematic analysis is analyzing specifically *what* is said including the language and specific wording verbatim (Riessman, 2005). Through thematic analysis, I proceeded to take these specific words, feelings and phrases and group them under different themes. On the other hand, structural narrative analysis focuses on the *way* stories are told and *how* the words, phrases and sentiments are communicated (Riessman, 2005). Due to this analysis method essentially focusing on syntax and "prosodic features of talk," a phrase that describes the rhythm, tempo, intonation and more of a text, sometimes used in poetic work (Riessman, 2005, p. 4), this method is not suitable for large numbers, but for comparing various narratives such as within this research study due to the small sample size. Once themes were created based on these two analyses, I created Composite Narratives.

Composite Narratives or Stories are narratives that depict the “data” in a story format in order to recount people of colours’ experiences of racism, classism, sexism and more (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002); in this context, I focused on the experiences of Black men. Composite characters are created to represent the biography and/or autobiography of the author and/or participants (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). These characters are then placed in social, historical and political situations to discuss racism, sexism, classism and other forms of marginalization and subordination (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). Different from fictional story-telling, these “composite” characters in these counter-narratives represent real life characters and experiences while using actual empirical data and real life, not fictitious, contexts and social situations (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). The next chapter will discuss the findings from the interviews which will be articulated through these composite narratives.

## CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The stories in this chapter speak thoroughly about the experiences of these young Black men from Scarborough with the school system, jail/prison, their mental health concerns and being Black men and navigating their masculinity in these various settings and the rest of society. Additionally, these stories illuminate how the mental health of these Black men was affected throughout their lives from the time of their juvenile years. As noted earlier, the themes are constructed from the interview data as well as the experiences of the writer. Discussion of the themes and the stories will also be presented following each story.

Moreover, these stories were written by the author based on real events experienced by the participants and the author and use Scarborough's Ebonics which is a mixture of Jamaican Patois, Black American Ebonics and certain phrases that have roots in Scarborough as the basis of the dialogue to make it sound more authentic. Stories contain direct excerpts from the participants which are bolded to stand out from the rest of the story. In addition, in order to align with the research questions, as well as the real accounts and experiences of the participants and researcher, the stories include violent events, drug use, excessive profanity and the constant use of the word *nigga* by the characters, a colloquial word that is rooted in the original word *nigger*, which is a historically racist and pejorative term used to degrade members of the Black community. However, the participants through the characters use the word 'Nigga' contrarily as a form of endearment and brotherhood, notwithstanding the traumatic history of the original word.

Moreover, some readers may object to all of these components of the stories as further contributing to the perpetuated stereotype of Black people being uneducated, criminally prone, drug abusing, and violent. However, it must be emphasized that **not** highlighting the specific

realities of these Black men and many other Black men and women living and experiencing these same situations in similar contexts, or denying that these experiences even exist, negates the underlying premise of *counter-stories*. This negation would continue to make this population, their perspectives and realities invisible and maintain white privilege/supremacy by “white-washing” their realities. However, in order to not trigger Black readers, specifically the vivid depiction of the colloquial N-word, when this N-word is used amongst the Black male characters, it will be censored. However, the original word will be written out one time when used by a white correctional officer in order to demonstrate the vivid harsh treatment and racism that occurs in jails. These stories are to depict and provide insight into the realities of many Black men who reside or have resided in Scarborough, especially the ones who have been incarcerated and to highlight their resilience against white privilege/supremacy across various circumstances. Finally, each story is preceded by a brief background to allow the reader to place the narrative within a context.

### **The Pain is Worth It**

This story is told in first person and begins with the narrator, James, a 21-year-old Black male who is back from scholarship-funded university studies for the summer time. He is going to visit one of his best childhood friends nicknamed Dready due to his mid-back long dreadlocks, who was just released in the previous week from a 6-month jail bid for armed robbery. They are heading to Johnny’s Hamburgers, a staple and popular restaurant of the Scarborough community.

As I hail Dready from outside of my whip, Dready walks past me towards my whip, danking of Kush as usual with a hint of alcohol, looking vex, gets inside and slams the door. N\*\*\*\* didn’t even raise his head to hail me. I shrugged it off because with Dready, you never know, his emotions are always unpredictable. Plus he’s struggled with depression and his mood swings ever since he got out and this could be one of those types of moments. So I just went with the flow and hopped in the whip. I begin driving and I look at him and realize he has not looked up from the floor since he got in the whip, nor has he unclenched his fists. Then I notice, as I look closer in the light of my car, I

notice blood stains on his pants and a bit on his shirt. Something I couldn't see outside in the dark. I pull over to a parking lot of some strip plaza and turn off the car. I look at him and softly ask, "N\*\*\*\* why is there blood on your pants? Whose ass did you whoop?"

Dready doesn't respond at first, then slowly moves his head up, looks at me with a stern look on his face but with his eyes watering and replies softly, "Why do they hate us so much fam? Why did they mess us up?"

I look at him confused and respond, "Who?" He answers, "White people, Fucking White people! Like I just crushed a N\*\*\*\* earlier because he stepped on my Jays (Jordan shoes) and then started beaking (insulting someone/talking non-sense), that's why there's blood on my pants. But like, fam, I didn't even need to crush the dude naw mean? It wasn't even that serious. But like think about it fam, **with Blacks, we only have so much of the pie to get, especially when you're a Black man, there's only so much opportunities for you.** I ain't got shit, these jays, this chain, my pride is all I got and I can't ever let no man disrespect me. I ain't no bitch, I got pride N\*\*\*\*! I'm a man! It ain't nuttin to catch a next charge and lose my freedom for that shit, that's light work bredren (brother). I ain't got shit anyways. But at the end of the day, I know I'm a fucking man!

I gently put my arm on his shoulder and refute calmly, "But see fam, that's what the White man wants you to do. That's why there's so many young brothas in the bin. Yeah I know the White man done fucked us for years. This fuckery been going on for nuff years bredren and then they wanna fuck us over even more by throwing us in the bin at high rates for likkle insignificant tings like possession of kush hence the reason for this epidemic I learned about in school called the mass incarceration of Black men. It's part of White people trying to break up the Black family! Shiit we just some field niggas in the bin, slavery ain't finished, it just relocated to the joint. But we only perpetuating the issue by participating in this violence amongst each other b. Look at how your pops, brothers, male cousins and uncles are all in the bin. Is all that pain really worth it fam? Really worth losing your freedom? All because of some damn pride?"

Dready looks down and lets out a thundering yell of anger with his hands squeezing his head exclaiming, "You're right B! But like shit man, **if you're a man, you have to have pride, you have to have respect for yourself and if you feel like someone violates that, then you have to defend it, but he didn't... yoo I think to jail-ish, like, I think like too last resort...not last resort...but like I feel so hopeless, like fuck it bro, I'm just gonna be like how I'm in jail!** I'm institutionalized dog. I ain't got no skills. All I have is my damn pride. **Especially in our Black communities... like they take away so much from us that sometimes all we have is our pride you know what I mean?** I'm hopeless. My moms and ma whole fam don't like me, ain't got no education, got a criminal record and even though they say you can't discriminate because of that, but we all know ain't no one tryna hire a N\*\*\*\* with dreads, tattoos and a criminal record. But it is what it is bredren, sure dis shit makes me depressed and shit but you know what? That's what helps me stay on my gangster shit. I thrive on it ma N\*\*\*\*. It numbs me cuz it helps me realize I ain't got nuttin to lose. It just makes me want to fight, rob people and do all dat shit anyways. You know me, I been in and out of jail, fighting, robbing and slingin'(selling drugs) and shit since I was 12. It's all I know, it's all I'll ever know.

From this story, it is apparent that Dready who represents the feelings of the participants, has much pent up anger and feelings of hopelessness. This feeling of hopelessness for Black men in this society in relation to their inability to contribute to society and attain success, particularly because of their criminal record, was explicitly communicated by the participants through Dready. We see that Dready also alludes to the Black community always being neglected and only having certain opportunities available to them. This sentiment was shared by all of the participants who believed that simply living in Scarborough, being Black men and being considered “troubled” and involved in the streets and consequently prison, limited the amount of opportunities available to them.

This reality as discussed by the participants reflects the scholarship and CRT in the recognition that Black men and Black adolescent boys in North America, specifically in poor urban centres, are particularly vulnerable due to having to navigate through the challenges of poverty, lateral violence and racism (Cassidy & Stevenson Jr., 2005; Khenti, 2013; Payne, 2011; Seaton, 2007; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). Similar to Dready, all of the participants alluded to having even more restrictions to opportunities due to being criminalized and stereotyped by teachers, police officers, correctional officers and other societal members from first impressions and initial encounters. This was typically based solely on their appearance, mainly their skin colour as Black men with an additional focus on their facial hair and their physical size. Black men continue to be the victims of pathological stereotypes and constructions while continuing to be feared and demonized, a negative phenomenon that has endured for over 500 years since the 16<sup>th</sup> century (Payne, 2011). Contrary to popular belief, all the participants admitted to knowing that they caused trouble and were not the best students in school and on the streets. However, they collectively emphasized that while their white peers in school or in jail may have been



committing similar acts and receiving consequences for them, they were still treated much more humanely than the Black men were. Indeed, this occurrence of Black men being more likely to be criminally profiled, and feared in prisons, schools and in society overall is reflected in the literature (Caton, 2012; James, 2012).

James, the narrator, alludes to how the epidemic of mass incarceration (Western & Wildeman, 2009) is another form of slavery, only situated within jail and prison cells, an important fact that reflects the argument in the film, *13<sup>th</sup>*, which argued that the slavery of Black men was not eradicated, rather migrated to prison cells to prey on poor, uneducated Black men (DuVernay, 2016). Navigating through these racist hegemonies and structural challenges, it is no wonder that these Black men and many other poor, urban Black men in communities similar to Scarborough have to exercise these hypermasculine attitudes as a protective mechanism as illustrated in this story. The participants all explained that while they all had so little in their lives to call their own due to having so many opportunities taken or never available to them, the small amount of possessions they had such as their Jays, their chain and most importantly their pride, had to be protected and defended from anyone who posed as a threat. They also unanimously agreed that any pain or trouble that was a result of defending these possessions was worth it. As we see in this story, part of this defensive process and hyper masculine attitude, specifically beginning in their adolescent years, was the men's exhibition of aggression such as robbing individuals at random or inflicting violence onto someone, which they justified as helping to protect their inner vulnerabilities and hurt from family breakdown for example, or fear experienced in violent street activities. Cassidy and Stevenson Jr. (2005) confirm this point by suggesting that hypermasculinity demonstrated by these men may actually serve as a mask, "a 'hyper-mask-ularity,' that disguises the vulnerability and powerlessness that may emerge in

dangerous, unpredictable contexts” (p. 57). Lastly, participants also said that their mental health concerns like depression for example, helped numb their pain and actually helped them thrive in these activities because they were able to displace their hurt, fear and anger onto another person.

### **Gotta Stay High While I Survive**

This story is told in third person and begins with Big Caine, a name that the character earned due to his heavy size and his past experience as a crack-cocaine dealer, returning from prison for a two year and a half bid for possession of crack-cocaine. Big Caine is in Wiz’s room, short for Wisdom due to always providing wisdom and guidance to his friends and siblings. Wisdom just finished rolling a blunt (hollowed-out cigar filled with marijuana) and just took his first “hit.”

“Let me hit that shit boom, out here hoggin’ the blunt like I wasn’t the one who rolled it,” Big Caine shouts as Wiz continues to tump the blunt.

“Nize it you waste yute, I was just passin’ you da ting,” Wiz refutes back as he kisses his teeth and hands over the blunt to Big Caine.

“Whatever yo, **I was mad cuz I couldn’t smoke weed bro. Like all da time sitting there doing nuttin’, and I can’t smoke no kush like I was depressed, I was like yooo, when I touch road, I’m smoking** you understand!?” Big Caine says while laughing and smoking the blunt.

Wiz’s 13-year-old little brother, Derron, better known as Lil D, barges through the door as a thick cloud of marijuana smoke leaves the room and says, “Ahh mi big fren Caine! Wagwan bredren! Didn’t know you were free today still!” He then proceeds to dap (rhythmic handshake) Big Caine and asks if he can hit the blunt. As Big Caine smiles and gets ready to hand over the blunt to him, Wiz smacks D upside his head and yells, “Get the fuck outta here D, you don’t need to be smoking that shit! Best get your head back in them damn books N\*\*\*\*!”

D looks at him and kisses his teeth responding, “Whatever Wiz, gwanin’ like I never bunned a ting before,” and walks out of the room and closes the door.

Big Caine turns to Wiz and begins laughing. “Wiz why da hell are you whyling(actin “crazy”/outta control)? Let Lil D hit da ting, gwanin’ like we wasn’t blazin (smoking weed) at 12 years old. Plus dog your whole family smokes kush, like all your cousins smoke, even your **aunt smokes secretly!**” Big Caine exclaims while laughing hysterically.

Wiz turns and looks out the window and lets out a deep sigh and utters, “Yeah I know g. Shit’s fucked up doe. **Smoking weed all day. Drinking all day.** Shit ain’t right dog. Ain’t right that we all been practically homeless, like you’ve **been moving around since probably grade 6** and so many of us brothas been in the **same situation like either**

**with their grandparents, sleeping on couches and that kinda stuff.** All these beefs out here, Boidem (police) always fuckin' with us, N\*\*\*\*s dying, all dis fighting, shooting, stabbing like think about it fam. This...**shit happens...all the time, like...on the streets, like being a Black guy from Scarborough, same shit over and over again. Either in jail or out of jail, it's the same shit. You grow up in a place like Scarborough, like you have to...you have to find a sense of belonging you know what I mean?** We sadly found it in the gangsta/convict life, but D needs to find it in his books and music. I know most of our family situations are fucked up so it just makes us want to smoke weed and drink liquor even more to drown it all out, but I ain't tryna have dat for D though feel me? He too smart for all dat g. All these teachers tryna tell him all he gon be is a thug like me and not amount to shit, yet dis N\*\*\*\* still got the highest grades in his school and be nice on the trumpet and shit. He can't be getting caught up blazing and getting involved in this gang shit and prove them right fam. For you atleast, even though your **parents separated from when you was young, your pops was always in the picture.** Although **he could only do so much he could** and with your **pops being older** and...**blind**, u know, he was still there. Most of us round here ain't as lucky. We ain't had our pops around, and **was growing up with our mom majority of the time, naw mean?** So I need to guide him in the right direction and to do better than how I did."

Big Caine replies in a slightly aggressive tone, "You teaching that nigga to be soft?! School ain't gon save you from these bullets fam ahaha! Lil D gotta realize that **when you're a Black man, there's no room for imperfection you know what I mean? Even if you're to gain that opportunity.** Don't matter if D got on a blessed suit looking greezy, these white devils only see him as a N\*\*\*\*, period. He can't be no slave to Babylon (corrupt government system/police) fam, he has to be strong! Plus we gotta stay high to survive out here B. Like Tupac says, gotta stay high while I survive, in the city where the skinny N\*\*\*\*s die." Big Caine laughs and then coughs violently after taking another hit of the blunt and continues saying in a raspy voice, "Weak N\*\*\*\*s don't make it out here fam, **the whole thing yo in the streets like you gotta be the big dog all the time. It's all bout being the big dog** and you know dat. Only the strong survive out here. They don't teach that shit in class. Iunno bout you N\*\*\*\* but **sometimes people can't even help me with my emotions, like smoking weed really helps.** Smoking weed also helps calm this anxiety and shit too B.

He then proceeds to take another hit of the blunt and puts the roach (remaining bit of the blunt) in Wiz's hand and lightly smacks Wiz's shoulder and walks away yelling, "Stay blessed king, likkle more (see you later)," and closes the door behind him.

Most of the participants, with the exception of one, communicated that one of the most important coping mechanism to get through their challenging circumstances was the excessive and routine smoking of marijuana; and alcohol for one other participant. Participants explained that this habit helped to calm their anxieties and depression, and helped regulate their emotions. In reference to the Tupac lyrics in the story which helped to create the theme name, when Tupac

expresses, “in the city where the skinny N\*\*\*\*s die,” he is not specifically talking about a slim body type, rather he is talking metaphorically about weakness and how people who are weak in his city do not survive (Rapdict, 2017) . This notion that as a Black man in Scarborough involved in the street life, being the “big dog” and not being weak not only coincides with the lyrics but also reinforced by the literature. The scholarship notes that displaying toughness is not only associated with masculinity as Black men (Cassidy & Stevenson Jr., 2005; Gaylord-Harden, Cunningham & Zelencik, 2011; Hall et al., 2008; Hammond & Mattis, 2005), but is a way of adapting to challenging environments and being accepted by inner-city peers (Cassidy & Stevenson Jr., 2005).

Furthermore, being intoxicated on marijuana or alcohol appears to assist these men in numbing the pain, fear or anxiety to rob, shoot, kill or physically hurt someone as the effects of marijuana can lessen awareness of surroundings and actions. For all of the participants, like many adolescent boys, smoking marijuana was originally simply a part of their teenage years as an amusing pass-time activity. However, as the men became more involved in street-life, spent time with family members and peers, and experienced more difficult circumstances in their families and households, the use of marijuana and alcohol ultimately increased. Many of the participants explained that there were so many different rules of the streets and traumatic situations in Scarborough that they had to maneuver through; the consumption of excessive alcohol and marijuana smoking, aggression and toughness became their outlet and protective mechanisms to numb and mask their fears and vulnerabilities such as feelings of hurt, disparity, anxiety and depression.

Wiz in this story also makes visible the trajectory of many of these Black males in Scarborough from the time they are in school and the subtle discouragement they received from

teachers, principals and other school administrators, even if they were doing well in school like Lil D was in the story. The school administrators were only concerned with placing a stereotypical label such as “thug, gangster or troubled” onto them as students while imperceptibly encouraging them to leave school or enter into a more vocational based school setting. All of them alluded to causing mischief without actually getting caught in school like typical teenagers such as smoking weed or not attending class, but were often being reprimanded by administrators for these acts without any evidence. The men disclosed that it was not a debate on whether they did it or not, rather it was the fact that teachers and principals never provided evidence to demonstrate how they discovered it was them who committed the acts and would instead tell them that they simply knew it was them and would proceed to suspend them with minimal to no discussion. Is it then a wonder why many of these Black adolescent boys are disproportionately dropping out and ending up involved in the street life and on a path towards jail/prison? If the school administrators do not want them there, with all the other challenges these Black boys have to experience on the street, at home and in school, why bother with school if they are not being encouraged to succeed? As Stephen Lewis notes in a report on Race Equity in Education (as cited in James & Turner, 2017),

...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. (p. 7)

Sadly, we see through Wiz and Big Caine that these men from this study believed that they did not necessarily have a choice on whether or not they wanted to participate in the street-life in Scarborough; it was a part of surviving and helping their families from the time they were in

their adolescent years. The Black men in this study from their adolescent years were engaged in high-risk behaviours involving sexual acts with women, witnessing frequent incarceration of close peers and family members, violence, robberies, drug-dealing and more and so by the time they reached their adult years and had additional criminal records, these men became hardened and accustomed to the street life and did not necessarily see an option other than the streets. A 17-year-old participant in Payne's (2011) study validates this reality by explaining,

...It's kids that's like thirteen or fourteen years old that got to be the man of their house, because their mother's on crack or whatever. So they got to pay the bills and stuff like that. So, they ain't got no choice but to go into that game [street life] because they can't get no real job at fourteen, fifteen years old. (p. 434)

While none of the participants' mothers may have been "on crack" or addicted to any other substances like in the above excerpt, it is the fundamental understanding of these young Black men that they have to grow up faster than other typical people in their adolescent years based on their circumstances. While half of the participants completed school even though they had other stresses to worry about, they all collectively understood from a young age that school became less of a priority due to having to become adults quickly to attain money in all ways to help take care of themselves and/or their families. Payne (2011) authenticates this mentality by explaining that for the men in his study similar to the ones in this one, participating in the street-life was not necessarily a "choice" according to the men, rather it was a decision made as a result of the overwhelming nature of their personal and economic hardships. This is part of the reason why Big Caine in this story tells Wiz that school does not mean anything on a larger scale for Black boys and men because the traumatic events in the streets are not taught in classrooms. In other words, book knowledge is less important and useful than street knowledge in their

circumstances. This was a sentiment communicated by all the men in this research study who believed that they learned nothing useful in school, as well as how irrelevant the content being taught in school was in comparison to their everyday realities. This being said, through Big Caine, one of the participants alluded to the point that even with an education and credentials, there is no room for imperfection with Black men because of the constant over-surveillance and the reality that making a simple mistake results in all of the criticisms and stereotypes surrounding Black people befalling them.

### **They Got Me Caged like an Animal**

This last story is also told in third person and begins inside a prison with Diesel (Scarborough vernacular word for muscular), a name he received due to his intimidating muscular stature, being taken back to his prison cell after being held in segregation (better known as, The Hole) for 30 days, by a white, male correctional officer (C.O.) who has a reputation around the prison for being a racist and cruel officer. His new cell-mate, Pops, a name he received because of his reputation for being a father figure to everyone in the prison, awaits Diesel in the cell.

“AND IF I CATCH YOUR BITCHASS NIGGER SELF ACTING OUT AGAIN, IMMA FUCK YOU UP AND THROW YOUR BITCH-ASS BACK IN THE HOLE! NOW GET THE FUCK BACK IN YOUR CELL,” The C.O. screams at Diesel as he throws him to the floor back in his cell with his new cellmate, Pops.

Pops slowly puts his book down and gets up from the bottom bunk of the bunk-bed of the 6x9 matchbox cell and begins walking towards Diesel as Diesel gets up, brushes off his orange jumper and puts back on his left-foot blue “jail” slipper that fell off during his tumble to the ground. Diesel looks up and quickly drapes (grabs him) up Pops by his jumper and throws him up against the wall violently and shouts, “Yo guy! Da fuck you runnin’ up on me like!? Don’t try nuttin wit’ me ‘for I stab yo bitchass!”

Pops replies in a deep and calm voice while putting his hands up in surrender, “Ayy moss (relax/cool down) fam. I’m just here to do my time like you zeen? Dey call me Pops, what dey call you?”

Pops reaches his hand out for a dap. Diesel takes a minute and looks at Pops’ hand, then slowly releases him, daps him and responds, “They call me Diesel as you can see,” and proceeds to flex his defined and pronounced muscles on his right arm covered

in a beautiful and realistic, tattooed portrait dedicated to his mother and father. Diesel proceeds to wash his face in the metal sink and continues saying, "My bad yo, **I had a 1 2 cellies that I didn't like. They were weird naw mean?** They always tried a ting wit' me and I always had to bang out naw mean?"

Pops nods his head and utters, "Trust me fam, I get it. It's hectic in here. **Mans are getting banged out like mans that are in PC tryna come to general population.** Like one dude I remember was **tryna sneak in and shit, but 3 mans crushed him!** Cuz we all know, **you can't go to PC naw mean?**"

"Or talk to them racist-ass CO's or **they'll label you a snitch and shit.** But fuck man, like dem C.O's, **they're just...they're actually assholes, it's fucked!**" Diesel says while giggling and getting on the floor to do some push-ups.

Pops laughs and proceeds to sit down on his bunk and looks at Diesel as he does his push-ups and asks him, "Why'd you go to the hole?"

While in and out of breaths from his push-ups, Diesel responds, "Fighting inmates, cussin (cursing someone) the C.Os, all dat shit. I been in the hole bare times fam, can't even keep up with which reason it was this time."

Pops shakes his head and responds back gently, "Let me tell you something. You young Black men from the hood remind me of me so much when I was your age, it's scary. Young. Black. Poor. And so Angry. You're just giving right into the White man's stereotypical image of us. That we're animalistic, savage-like, intellectually inept, nefarious individuals. Now I get that **you're just angry and just wanna go back outside. You just wanna go back to your regular life. You start planning your life towards the jail, like "I want my soap like dis, or I wanna keep my room clean" and stuff like dat, you start living here. Then you start forgetting what's going on outside you know?** I get the anger and you have all reason to be, but it's not simply bout being angry and resorting to violence brother. It's about being angry and expressing it in a more positive and healthier manner. The White man wants you to displace your anger and aggression onto your own instead of him; that's what they call lateral violence young brotha."

Diesel finishes his 100<sup>th</sup> push up and stands up while panting wiping the glands of sweat dripping down his face. He then stands with his back against the wall lets out an accentuated sigh as he looks up towards the ceiling and says, "But Pops, **if people step to you in the bin, you're pretty much gonna have to fight if you don't wanna get fucking bitched the rest of the ting.** Like Pops, you realize they don't care about us in here. It's everyone for themselves. Just like teachers ain't give a shit about us in school, CO's and society don't give a shit about us N\*\*\*\*\*s here. Sure in the bin **it's more of like to the extreme. But it derives from the same thing, but like the jail is the real deal now.** But I get it, like here in the bin, **you're actually what they're depicting you as. They're depicting me as a criminal on the street, and then when you're in jail, like now you're actually a fucking criminal now.** Pops I'm angry because this system is fucked up! I'm from Scarborough and we're already **neglected** as it is. **There's only so much available to us. And whatever we aren't able to attain, we have to go and get it on our own or which is why there is so much people robbing, selling drugs you know what I mean?** Now I'm here shackled up with chains from head to toe like a damn slave sitting in a damn cage; they got me caged like a fuckin' animal! All I remember is them teachers looking at me and telling me I was nothing but a troubled, savage child but



weren't they right? I mean look where I'm at. All I been thinking and reflectin' on since that cell door first closed was, '**Fuck...I can't come back here!** I was always anxious not knowing whose gonna run up on me every minute on the street but now here in the bin with adults **there's even more heightened anxiety** than when I was in youth jail. Like how many months ago, I **woke up and was like fuck I thought I was home like you're dreaming, all crazy yo, it's fucked up yo...**' Diesel begins to weep softly as tears slowly trickle down his cheeks.

Pops sits next to him and comforts him by answering, "You need to realize your potential young brotha. You have something positive to contribute to this world. Don't let this deeply engrained system of racism and white supremacy bring you down, regardless of how hard it is. Use your anger positively towards succeeding in this world and proving this racist system and society wrong about us Young Black men from the hood. We are more than these chains on us. We are more than thugs and gangsters. We are more than just some troubled boys. We are strong, resilient Black boys and men that have something significant to contribute to this world.

In this last story, it becomes clear the detrimental effects of incarceration on these young Black men's mental health. The previous stories demonstrate the effects of jail when these men are released but this story specifically illustrates the continued and heightened racism that persists inside jails and prisons, the mental health challenges these men experienced, and all the pent-up anger that is typically released in aggressive and violent ways as a means of survival. While all of the men agreed that once they were released from jail or prison they never wanted to return, all of them also mentioned how emotionally difficult it was to transition back into their regular life once they were out. For example, 75% of the men explicitly spoke about always wanting to be outside to enjoy the fresh air the first couple of months after being released because of being locked up inside without sunlight for so long. Just like Diesel articulates in the story, these men were literally caged up as if they were animals.

The participants also alluded to the fact that some jails and prisons constantly had lockdowns where prison inmates would have to remain in their prison cells for 23 hours until the correctional officers ended the lockdown. It was during times like this the men were grateful to either have a cell-mate in general or wishing to have a cell-mate they had good relations with.

Having a cell-mate they had good relations with meant great conversations, exercising together, laughing or crying together and more. On the contrary, participants said that having a cell-mate they did not get along with meant having to fight or defend themselves from being abused by this cell-mate. Furthermore, not having a good cell-mate meant having to keep themselves occupied with working out, reading, remembering songs from when they were free and more. This resulted usually in some of them, and definitely other cell-mates they knew, falling into a period of depression. However, the men all agreed that contrary to people outside of jail/prison who have fear of sharing their mental health concerns, in the context of jail/prison, it is expected that most of the men have experienced some sort of mental health challenge, therefore there is no real reason to hide these experiences.

Nevertheless, while these men may not have had any physical altercations with anyone while incarcerated where they displaced their anger or aggression, they witnessed many other men inside who displaced their anger and aggression onto other inmates violently either to cope with their mental health concerns or as a result of something else they knew was happening on the outside such as family dysfunction, financial issues and more. The men all agreed that the physical act of doing “time” in jail/prison is not the difficult component of jail/prison. Instead, the difficult component of being incarcerated is doing the “time” mentally and trying not to become institutionalized and mentally unstable. We can see this in the story when Pops describes how easy it is to become institutionalized when one begins planning their life towards prison and creating their own sense of civilization inside, resulting in the insidious process of forgetting one’s life and relationships outside of prison/jail. Overall, the men all agreed that they all were able to survive in jail/prison with minimal to no altercations with other inmates because they kept to themselves, remained reserved, and did not cause problems.

Another idea we see in this story surrounding prison and jail are the rules and principles that surround masculinity. As in Rios's (2009) study, we see how this criminal justice pipeline encourages the expression of hypermasculinity through the confusion of these young men's masculinity. We see this by the men expressing how being incarcerated, part of being a man, especially one who is respected, is understanding that there is typically no choice of whether one wants to physically fight or not when someone has a problem with them. It is mandatory to fight and defend oneself. Another part of being a man is not snitching on anyone, no matter what. This includes not going to protective custody (P.C.), the place where the men explained people go in order to be protected from other inmates who are preying on them. Otherwise the consequence can be the man being violently harassed, used and abused by other inmates, especially when released from P.C. back into general population.

Additionally, we can see that both Pops and Diesel illustrate the participants' feelings about C.O.'s and how physically and verbally abusive they are, especially when it comes to Black inmates. As the men explain, in adult jail and prison, contrary to youth jail, C.O.s do not care about them and consistently dehumanize them when they have the chance. The men articulate that that all of the stereotypes and negative constructions of Black men as criminals and violent savages are now validated when they enter jail/prison. Moreover, the men described that the harsh treatment, discipline and reprimands they received from teachers, police officers and other societal members may not have been as extreme as it was within prison, but the foundation of the treatment from these authority figures was the same. This corresponds with the literature as scholars note that the construction of Black male students as trouble-makers, the "web of stereotypes" (James, 2012) that follow these Black men when they were boys, the gradual and subtle discouragement of Black boys to continue or challenge themselves in school

and criminalization of Black male students, leads them on a straight path towards jail and/or prison (Allen & Smith, 2014; Caton, 2012; James, 2012; James & Turner, 2017; Salole & Abdulle, 2015). Another aspect to add to this was Diesel sharing about how these men felt that purely residing in Scarborough, they were neglected as a city. Having only so many opportunities available to them, with additional hindrances and restricted opportunities due to being Black boys and men, they had to discover other methods to attain financial gain and take care of themselves, which typically resulted in drug dealing and robbing people.

Through Diesel, they also suggested that this was a big part of why there was so much drug dealing, violence and robbing happening around them growing up. This not only influenced them to become involved in these acts but also contributed to them leading to and ending up incarcerated. Therefore, similar to what Big Caine was explaining about the unimportance of education for Black men in the hood, in order to survive on the streets of the Scarborough community context due to the lack of opportunities, systemic and environmental racism and lack of economic prosperity, they had to go against traditional value systems. Freitas and Downey (as cited in Payne, 2011) explicitly allude to this point by elucidating:

In areas of concentrated poverty where conventional means of achieving self-worth (e.g., productive employment, quality education) are mostly absent, achieving the respect of others, often through violence or intimidation, is widely valued by adolescents. Thus, the goal of not being disrespected may be more likely to be peer sanctioned in economically disadvantaged areas; however, family and societal institutions such as schools may promote incongruent goals such as to go to college. (p. 430-431)

Through these three stories, it becomes evident that the experiences of these men while incarcerated, in the streets and in school mostly reflect the scholarship. However, there were

some instances where the participants' experiences actually countered some of the literature, such as one participant saying that he suffered from depression when he was on house arrest rather than being incarcerated. Another participant said that with the exception of some moments, he actually felt he had a good relationship with teachers. These responses from these participants demonstrate that although many of their experiences foundationally were the same, they all differed in many unique ways.

Throughout these three stories, some ideas that definitely stuck out is how the confusion of masculinity for these men is based on their circumstances in the streets in Scarborough, responsibilities from a young age, their negative experiences in schools and how to cope with them, and their experiences while imprisoned. We see from these stories and the quotes from participants that while teachers may encourage students to succeed in the classroom for example, regardless of that Black child exceeding expectations and becoming a scholarly student, that teacher is still going to criminalize that boy and negatively construct him based on his cornrows, dreadlocks, clothes, or his incarcerated brother or father.

Moreover, while correctional officers may have a job to control and maintain order within jail and prison cells, they are verbally and physically abusing inmates, especially Black inmates regardless of if they are making an effort to not make problems. While the government is telling society that the criminal justice system is fair and equitable, there continues to be a disproportionate number of Black boys and men in youth jail and adult jail and prison in North America (Khenti, 2012; Payne, 2011; Rios, 2009; Rios, 2006; Salole & Abdulle, 2015; Western & Wildeman, 2009). On top of all of that, these young Black men in North America are told to be law-abiding citizens, work hard as employees and become scholarly students, yet live in a society that sees Black boys and men as predators and criminalized individuals who additionally

reside in high-stress communities with high rates of poverty, violence, unemployment, social disorganization and the absence of economic means. Being left between a rock and hard-place, their way of being resilient, irrespective of the consequences in order to survive in their context is to engage in illegal activity in order to attain “financial freedom” and respect among their peers, a critical aspect of living in their community.

The contradiction plays out when the law punishes these men for committing illegal acts, yet fails to acknowledge that through white supremacy and white privilege, a racist system with racist policies in education and the criminal justice system, specifically anti-Black racism (James & Turner, 2017) was established with the objectives to progressively dismantle the Black family. We see this through epidemics like mass incarceration, discrimination against Black people in housing, employment and to incriminate Black students, particularly Black boys and men based on negative perceptions and subconscious deep seated hate and fear of them (James, 2011; James & Turner, 2017; Powell, 2008; Rios, 2009; Rios, 2006; Western & Wildeman, 2009).

Through CRT, we can see that the stories of these men counter majoritarian stories about them being intellectually inept or unremorseful gangsters who are unaware of consequences of their actions. These men are neither oblivious nor unaware of their reality and what the consequences of their illegal actions are. They are critically aware of their actions and similar to the participants in Payne’s (2011) study, they find the risk worth it because of the belief that they have genuinely nothing to lose. Contrary to common belief, through the narratives of the participants and in line with the scholarship, all of the participants’ values quite closely align with those of white middle class North America, such as the value of an education, a nuclear family, working hard and non-violence. However, they find it extremely difficult to abide by these values because of their impracticality in their communal context of Scarborough. This

results in men, like Big Caine overgeneralizing by espousing opinions such as education generally being pointless only because of their circumstances and reality. Wilson (as cited in Payne, 2011) argues,

aspects of ghetto behavior described as pathological in the studies of the mid-1960's were reinterpreted or redefined as functional because, it was argued, blacks were demonstrating their ability to survive and even flourish in an economically depressed and racist environment. Ghetto families were portrayed as resilient and capable of adapting creatively to an oppressive society. (p. 440)

Society continues over-surveillance primarily on the behaviours of these Black boys and men in these marginalized urban centres like Scarborough without considering how they are in fact adapting to their environment. This is not a conversation about whether their actions are right or wrong; rather this is a conversation about what the reality of their lives and circumstances are, how they survive them, and how they are resilient in the face of persistent negative societal perceptions created in a system designed to see them fail in the most extreme ways of being incarcerated or in a grave. These Black men are living in a society seeking to exterminate their existence as well as exterminate the existence of functional Black families.

## CHAPTER 5. IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

We have now heard from the voices of these young Black men who articulated their struggles, pain, times of content and experiences contributing to their anger and mental health concerns. What this means for social workers first and foremost is practicing a key skill entitled *active listening*. When social workers are working in schools, in the community, in hospitals, in jails/prisons and other professional settings and are working with Black boys and men in any manner, we need to genuinely listen to their concerns and issues. These individuals want to be heard, in some cases, for the first time. This is why I chose to use counter-stories to captivate the essence of their experiences that continue to be interpreted negatively in ways that benefit the dominant group by catering to their long-standing white privilege. The men all explained that they do not want to continue to be pathologized and categorized as “crazy, troubled boys from broken homes.”

The participants stated that they would prefer speaking to a Black social worker, especially Black male social workers who understand their experiences as Black men in challenging communities. However, if they are to speak with white social workers—and the participants noted white women in particular--it is imperative that these white workers demonstrate that they actually want to help these boys and men. This is demonstrated through positive body language, not talking over them or speaking to them in condescending tones, taking the time to understand the history of the relationship with certain authority figures and settings/acts. For example, it would be important to listen to why it would not be a good idea to call the police in times of crisis, why these men may not feel comfortable coming to meet the social worker in certain communities due to enemy gang territories or bad relations with people



of that area, or even why these Black boys and men may have a deficit mindset when it comes to speaking about education and their potential.

Another implication this study has for social workers is that they need to understand how, they are perceived by these young Black boys and men; regardless of the race of these social workers. Many of these boys and men will come in and feel judged immediately because of the class difference and possible racial difference as well. It is not helpful to sit there as a social worker and ask these boys and men to be vulnerable with them as social workers without there being some sort of reciprocation. If a social worker is standoffish and does not understand, nor makes the effort to attempt to comprehend the complexity of certain urban or street issues or a family issue that the boy or man is speaking about, this results in the boys and men continuing to feel hopeless and dehumanized. These experiences continue to prove to them that the world does not truly care about their experiences or existence.

Social workers need to reveal their vulnerability and openness if they are not aware or do not fully understand the essence of what these boys' and men's experiences are due to possibly not ever experiencing or witnessing the experiences these men recount. This could be followed by genuinely asking the boys and men how the social worker could learn more about this or asking if the boys and men could share this world and reality with them. It could be argued that this again takes the responsibility off the social worker, especially if they are white, and validates the issue of marginalized populations always having to educate white people about their struggles. But I argue that in certain situations, this could empower certain groups and individuals who are accustomed to being ignored or silenced by social workers and other professionals and being told by the professionals what *they* understand is the problem and telling the individual how to fix it without any consultation.

An example could be if a social worker in a school is telling a 14-year-old Black boy, either implicitly or explicitly, that he is a troubled child due to his lack of punctuality at school or periodic absences without taking the time or caring to understand *why* this boy is demonstrating this behaviour, it dehumanizes the boy instantly. It also demonstrates to him that this social worker does not genuinely care about the circumstances influencing his behaviour. If the social worker took the time to understand by asking the boy what has been happening in his life to influence this absenteeism behaviour, maybe they could better understand the boy's situation; such as the heavy responsibilities all of the participants and I myself have felt during adolescent years, and as validated in the aforementioned research by Payne (2011). In order for social workers to effectively work with the Black population, particularly Black boys and men in marginalized communities participating in street-life, it is important for social workers to understand the circumstances of Black men and boys, the systemic and the institutional racism they have to navigate through. Social workers need to ask questions in an authentic manner to understand how these Black men and boys recognize and define their resiliency. But it is not enough to just understand it, rather it becomes crucial to act on it and work to help them implement change in their lives, if these boys and men desire to do so; and to help allocate or even implement the necessary resources or connect them to the appropriate services.

A last implication for social workers after understanding these Black boys' situations in the street, in their home lives, school and other settings, is to work to foster a positive relationship with them where they feel safe to express vulnerable emotions such as deep-rooted anger, or sadness. Also important is to work with these Black boys to help them understand mental health concerns if they are not aware of them to the continued stigma of mental health in the Black community. This would be a colossal step towards change that demonstrates to these

Black boys that someone in a professional role or purely someone in general, cares about them in a world that does not, sometimes including their own family members as a result of family dysfunction and breakdown. Social workers are supposed to be catalysts of change. While it is critical to work towards change in the lives of Black men, the reason I specifically talk about Black boys in this chapter is because it is indispensable that we help the upcoming generation. This is important in particular with Black boys from marginalized communities like Scarborough who are on the path of incarceration and heavy involvement in the streets. It is critical to work from a preventative approach rather than a reactive approach when working with any population, but especially with these Black boys. Social workers in alliance with policy makers, lawyers, politicians and other government and non-government professionals, need to recognize that Black lives do truly matter and to have this reflected in the policies and decisions affecting this population. This work needs to be done simultaneously while working with these Black boys and their families in service provision.

The issues presented in this paper are not new. They have persisted for centuries not solely in the “land of the free” of the United States but also on Canada’s precious “multicultural” soil. As Sandy Hudson, a prominent leader in the movement Black Lives Matter Toronto (BLM Toronto) dictates in her article, *We Cannot Be Placated*, “We know what’s wrong. You know what’s wrong. Politicians and policy makers know what’s wrong. The problems have been studied to death” (Hudson, 2017, p. 7). In other words, why are white decision makers looking for recommendations as if for centuries Black community members, educators, policy-makers and other professionals have not been offering suggestions? Or why are Black professionals themselves being restricted when they work to implement various policies and change? Current scholarship on the continued maltreatment of Black students, predominately Black males,

explicitly demonstrates how anti-Black racism has persisted in the education system for as long as anyone could remember with the additional detrimental effects on these students and families such as extremely high drop-out rates, extreme disproportionate suspension and expulsion rates and poor academic standings and success in post-secondary (James & Turner, 2017; Price, 2017).

We see from reports like James and Turners' (2017) as well as through the voices of the participants how this maltreatment, wilful neglect and systemic racism and discrimination leads these men on an insidious path towards incarceration. Additionally, these men strongly believe that they are obligated to exercise these hypermasculine attitudes to protect their vulnerable emotions and mental health in a world that has no remorse or care for them. Not being able to truly express their feelings and experiences because of constantly being silenced has shaped this deep-seated and pent up anger for the participants and many in similar circumstances; this anger is displaced onto everyone around them except towards the people and systems that have caused the anger in the first place. As Pops expressed in the third story, we need to create a society that tells these Black boys and men that they have something significant to contribute to this world and are valued members of society rather than second-class citizens. However, before we do that, it is crucial to humanize these Black boys and men for the first time in centuries and demonstrate to them that their lives do matter.

Some starting points could be implementing more Black male mentoring programs in Scarborough with Black professionals of any sort such as Rites of Passage of Woodgreen Community Services and making them available at various communal locations in Scarborough where many of these Black boys and men congregate is crucial to helping support these young men. Programs like these can help introduce a space to these Black boys and men where they can

talk about their vulnerable feelings of sadness, hurt, frustration and anger surrounding family life, the streets, school and more. It would be even more effective talking to relatable Black male professionals to demonstrate to these boys and men that they too can end up in such positions, in order to help uplift their self-esteem and confidence that they too can attain success. Also, programs like the Substance Abuse Program for African Canadian and Caribbean Youth (SAPACCY), an ethno-specific service out of CAMH are imperative to be implemented in Scarborough to help support many of these young men who struggle with mental health concerns and/or substance issues together, and to educate them on the effects of abusing substances, what mental health is and helping to regulate emotions such as anger. The SAPACCY program would also further prosper for these young men if there was a partnering Black male mentoring program with Black male professionals who have expertise in this to be further effective for these young men.

Lastly, this paper was not intended to continue to the negative perception of Scarborough that has been perpetuated for decades; and nowhere in this paper have I claimed that everyone in Scarborough experiences the life of these Black men in this study. This paper was also not intended to paint another negative light on Black people, particularly in the inner-city and demonstrate that Black people, specifically Black boys and men in Scarborough and other disadvantaged urban centres are angry individuals who all go to jail/prison, and experience mental health issues. This paper also does not aim to glamorize or encourage participation in illegal street activity, as I have personally grown up witnessing the detrimental consequences of street-life and similar to Payne (2011), agree that this life, "...can and will lead to 'self-destruction'" (p. 440). Instead, this study serves to illustrate that these Black male participants, "particularly as a function of blocked economic and educational opportunity, have turned to the

streets as a way to secure personal, group, and communal levels of resiliency and resilience” (Payne, 2011, p. 441).

Indeed, the overall objective of this paper was to illuminate the voices of this population and Black individuals struggling with these same or similar issues in the same or very comparable contexts. We cannot ignore the excessive amount of Black men and boys in Scarborough, Baltimore, Chicago, Philadelphia, New Orleans, Miami and other communities and cities who are being incarcerated and being shot at, abused and killed by their own community and police on a routine basis. We cannot continue to overlook the amount of these Black men and boys involved in illegal, risky and detrimental street activities nor can we disregard the amount of these individuals and their families who are impoverished having to resort to participation in street activities.

We cannot continue to discount these Black boys and men who are struggling with the ability to name and treat their suppressed anger and instead use it to mask their mental health concerns such as depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and more. Most importantly, I leave the reader with Seaton’s (2007) point about hypermasculinity and expressions of anger with urban Black boys through violence and aggression which sums up this research study delicately,

Hypermasculine expressions such as violence and explosive anger may have short-term adaptive benefits, but over the long-term prove to be maladaptive, self-destructive, or life-threatening. (p. 387)

This school-to-prison pipeline and hypermasculinity-prison pipeline needs to be disrupted and eradicated in order to repair the Black family again and ameliorate and invest into the lives of these Black boys and men.

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A

#### Recruitment Flyer

# RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS NEEDED

Are you a Black male from Scarborough who has been previously in jail or prison either as a youth or adult, who would like to share their story?

**What:** A 1.5-2 hour interview of you sharing your personal story in regards to experience with jail/prison, life in Scarborough as a Black male including your school experience, possible involvement in the streets and any anger or mental health challenges you may have felt in your life.

**Where:** Agreed location between the participant and the researcher, providing the most convenience to the participant as possible. Further details will be given once selected.

**Who:** To participate you must meet the following criteria:

- 18-46 years old
- Has been in jail as a youth and/or jail/prison as an adult
- Identify as a Black individual (African, Caribbean, Afro Latino etc.) including both parents
- Presently lives in the Scarborough area and has lived here for at least 5 years as a teenager OR previous residence in Scarborough for at least 5 years as a teenager

**Compensation:** Each participant will be given a 10\$ gift card to Tim Hortons. Contact for details.

For more information or to participate, please email David Grant at [d10grant@ryerson.ca](mailto:d10grant@ryerson.ca) OR call 647-921-2841.

This study is being conducted by a graduate student as requirement for program completion. Research supervisor can be reached at [swehbi@ryerson.ca](mailto:swehbi@ryerson.ca)

## APPENDIX B

### Email, Facebook Notice script for Recruitment of Friends and Family

Hi,

As you may know, I am a Social Work Graduate student at Ryerson University in the School of Social Work and I am seeking volunteers for my research study on investigating aspects of the life journey of Black male adults in the urban context, Scarborough, Ontario through a Critical Race Theory (CRT) Perspective. I am contacting you to see if you might be interested in participating in this research study.

This research is being done as part of my Master's project and my supervisor's name is Samantha Wehbi. The research question guiding this study is: What are the stories of Black Male adults who have been incarcerated and how are the feelings of these Black men from these stories related to hypermasculinity, displaced anger/mental health and the school-to-prison pipeline?

I'm contacting you because you fit the study criteria: To participate you need to be a Black male ages 18-46, have been in jail as a youth and/or jail/prison as an adult, present and self-identify as a Black individual (African, Caribbean, Afro-Latino etc.), presently lives in the Scarborough area and have lived here for at least 5 years as a teenager OR previous residence in Scarborough for at least 5 years as a teenager.

If you agree to volunteer you will be asked to participate in a 1.5-2 hour interview.

In appreciation of your time, you will receive a reimbursement of 2 TTC bus tokens (if you take the bus to the location) and a 10\$ Tim Hortons Card

Your participation is completely voluntary and if you choose not to participate it will not impact our personal relationship or your relationship with Ryerson University.

**I will not follow up on this one recruitment notice. Please do not feel obligated to participate and if you are not interested in participating please do not respond to this notice.**

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

If you are interested in more information about the study or would like to volunteer please reply

to this email, inbox me on Facebook or call 647-921-2841.



## APPENDIX C

### **General Email and Facebook/Instagram Notice script for Recruitment**

Hi,

My name is David Grant. I am a Social Work Graduate student at Ryerson University in the School of Social Work and I am seeking volunteers for my research study on investigating aspects of the life journey of Black male adults in the urban context, Scarborough, Ontario through a Critical Race Theory (CRT) Perspective. I am contacting you to see if you might be interested in participating in a research study.

This research is being done as part of my Master's project and my supervisor's name is Samantha Wehbi. The research question guiding this study is: What are the stories of Black Male adults who have been incarcerated and how are the feelings of these Black men from these stories related to hypermasculinity, displaced anger/mental health and the school-to-prison pipeline?

To participate you need to be a Black male ages 18-46, have been in jail as a youth and/or jail/prison as an adult, present and self-identify as a Black individual (African, Caribbean, Afro-Latino etc.), presently lives in the Scarborough area and has lived here for at least 5 years as a teenager OR previous residence in Scarborough for at least 5 years as a teenager.

If you agree to volunteer you will be asked to you will be asked to participate in a 1.5-2 hour interview.

In appreciation of your time, you will receive a reimbursement of 2 TTC bus tokens (if you take the bus to the location) and a 10\$ Tim Hortons Card

Your participation is completely voluntary and if you choose not to participate it will not impact our relationship or your relationship with Ryerson University.

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

If you are interested in more information about the study or would like to volunteer please reply to this email, inbox me on Facebook or call 647-921-2841.

## APPENDIX D

### Interview Guide

#### **They Don't Really Care About Us: The Stories of Previously Incarcerated Black Men in Scarborough and their Experiences with Displaced Anger through a Critical Race Theoretical framework**

- **Reviewing consent**

**Before we begin the interview, we need to review the consent form and make sure that I answer any questions you may have. I also want to remind you that** information provided by you will only be viewed by the researcher and if necessary transcripts with no identifying information will be shared with their supervisor. Information will not be accessible to any other parties. However, if you disclose information related to harm to yourself or to others, please be aware that I am under duty to report. This includes any illegal activity performed in and outside of prison, in school, in the home or in the community such as the possession of illegal substances, robbery, pimping etc.

- **Opening Question**

- Tell me a story about what it was like growing up as a Black male in Scarborough.
  - Probing Questions:
    - How and where did you learn about manhood while living in Scarborough?
    - Describe times where you were confused about what it meant to be a man due to different ideas about manhood being taught to you

- **Family & Schooling**

- Tell me a story about a typical day in your home with your family
- Tell me a story about a typical day at school in Scarborough.
  - Probe Questions:
    - Describe times where you may have been disciplined harshly in school and how that made you feel.
    - Who raised you? How did this affect you emotionally? Did it affect how you understood manhood? If yes, how? If no, why not?
    - How was your relationship with your family?

- **Jail/Prison**

- Tell me a story about a typical day in jail as a youth AND/OR tell me a story about a typical day in jail/prison as an adult.
  - Probing Questions:
    - What were your feelings the time(s) you entered jail as a youth and/or as an adult? What were your feelings entering prison as an adult?
    - How did you cope with these feelings when you were inside jail and/or prison?
  - How was your manhood tested when you were imprisoned?

- Do you feel that the treatment you received in jail and/or prison was similar to the treatment you received in school or on the streets by police officers? If yes, how? If no, why not?
  - Tell me another story about what it was like being Black in Scarborough when you were released from jail/prison
    - Probing Questions:
      - What were your first thoughts and feelings when you were released from jail and/or prison?
      - Did being in jail and/or prison affect your mental health? If yes, how? If no, why not?
- **Displaced Anger & Mental Health**
  - Tell me a story about a time where you took out your anger on someone close to you
  - Tell me a story about **if/when** you experienced mental health challenges.
  - If you do not feel you ever experienced mental health challenges, tell me a story about emotional challenges you experienced and if anger was involved in coping with these challenges
  - Did you ever use anger as a coping mechanism to deal with these mental health challenges? Tell me a story about how this looked.
    - Probing Questions:
      - **If** you did experience mental health challenges, tell me another story about how you dealt with these mental health challenges.
- **Resilience**
  - Tell me a story about what helped you get through tough times living in Scarborough.
    - Probing Questions:
      - How did these tough times teach about manhood? Did you reject or accept ideals about manhood made in Scarborough (on the streets, in your home, in school, interacting with different law officials)? Why and how did this look?
      - How did these times contribute to being incarcerated/reintegration back into society?
- **Suggestions & Closing**
  - What recommendation would you make to help improve the lives of young Black boys living in Scarborough, particularly those who are involved in the streets and on a path to jail/prison?
    - Probing Questions:
      - What are ways to help address issues of anger and frustration to help Black boys living in Scarborough outlet it in positive ways?
  - What can Social Workers do to further help these young Black boys?
    - Probing Questions:
      - How can social workers speak to Black boys about mental health challenges and what are ways to help improve their mental health?

- What can social workers do to help these Black boys navigate through the various constructions of manhood they learn on the streets, in their communities, in school and from different law officials?
- What can social workers do to work with deterring Black boys from becoming involved in the criminal justice system?
- Is there anything else you would like to share before we end the interview?

## APPENDIX E

### Consent Agreement



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

*Accredited by the Canadian Association of Schools of Social Work*

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.

**THEY DON'T REALLY CARE ABOUT US: THE STORIES OF PREVIOUSLY  
INCARCERATED BLACK MEN IN SCARBOROUGH AND THEIR EXPERIENCES  
WITH DISPLACED ANGER THROUGH A CRITICAL RACE THEORY  
FRAMEWORK**

**INVESTIGATORS:**

This research study is being conducted by David Grant, supervised by Dr. Samantha Wehbi, from the School of Social Work, Faculty of Community Services at Ryerson University

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact David Grant at [d10grant@ryerson.ca](mailto:d10grant@ryerson.ca) or Samantha Wehbi at [swehbi@ryerson.ca](mailto:swehbi@ryerson.ca)

**PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:**

This study is designed to explore the experiences of Black men, specifically those who have been incarcerated either as a youth AND/OR as adults and how growing up in Scarborough as a *Black male* influenced this phenomenon and their masculinity. This study is designed to explore the feelings and mental health of these Black men, specifically concerning anger and how their experiences in jail/prison, on the streets, in schools etc. influenced these emotions AND/OR mental health challenges. For this study, Critical Race Theory is defined as a theory that works to eliminate racism and expose deep-rooted barriers that work to imprison many Black men and stopping Black men from succeeding in education. Critical Race Theory then takes these issues and puts them on a broader context to look at the historical, political and economic influences behind these issues.

Participants will be 18-46 years older who have been in jail as a youth and/or jail/prison as an adult and presently lives in the Scarborough area and has lived here for at least 5 years as a

teenager OR previous residence in Scarborough for at least 5 years as a teenager. They also should have gone to school in Scarborough as well. This study will interview 3-5 participants. This study is being completed by a graduate student as requirement for completion for their degree.

### **WHAT YOU WILL BE ASKED TO DO:**

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

- In a one-on-one interview session, you will be asked to share your story of life as a Black male in Scarborough and experiences in school and jail/prison as a youth or adult.
- Specifically, the researcher will be looking for experiences that may be due to racism
- The expected duration of interview is one and a half - two hours, the expected meeting location in a private study room in Ryerson University or any Scarborough library, whichever is more convenient for the participant.
- Participants can expect interview questions such as the following:

Tell me a story about a typical day at school in Scarborough.

Tell me another story about what it was like being back in Scarborough when you were released from jail/prison

Tell me a story about a time where you took out your anger on someone close to you.

Tell me a story about **if/when** you experienced mental health challenges. **If** you did experience mental health challenges, tell me another story about how you dealt with these mental health challenges.

Tell me a story about what it was like growing up as a Black male in Scarborough.

- Research findings will be made available to participants, which can either be emailed, mailed or picked up

### **POTENTIAL BENEFITS:**

Potential benefits include the positive feelings of sharing personal experiences that will further the growing literature of Critical Race Theory and Anti-Black Racism that is looking to make positive change for Black Males and their experiences with the education, criminal justice and mental health system. Findings can help start discussions of addressing issues specifically for individuals of Black ethnicity and experiencing mental health issues, maltreatment in the education system and disproportionate imprisonment. However, the researcher cannot guarantee that you will receive any personal benefits from participating in this study.

### **WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL RISKS TO YOU AS A PARTICIPANT:**

Participation in this study is low risk. You may experience discomfort when asked and answering questions in regards to school, mental health, masculinity and jail/prison experience. For some, sharing these experiences may be difficult and may result in feeling upset or uncomfortable. Participants are reminded they can take breaks, skip questions or stop participation, either temporarily or permanently. Resources in order to deal with stressful emotions will be provided. There is potential for social risk if your identity is revealed, specifically if your mental health or experiences in jail/prison are disclosed to a third party. Protection of your identity is discussed below.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY:**

Extensive measures will be taken to protect your identity in this study. Pseudonyms (fake names) will be assigned to you. Other potential identifying information, for example names of schools or jails/prisons, will be censored. Personal information including date of birth and address will not be recorded.

Information provided by you will only be viewed by the researcher and if necessary transcripts with no identifying information will be shared with their supervisor. Information will not be accessible to any other parties. Although your identity will remain confidential in the research report, you need to be aware that I do have a duty to report specific information to the authorities if disclosed during the interview. Reportable information includes, any information related to self-harm or intended harm to others, and any illegal activity you have been or are involved in in and outside of prison, in school, in the home or in the community such as the possession of illegal substances, robbery, pimping etc.”

The interview will be audio recorded. Audio will be recorded on a password protected device, where it will be transferred to a password protected computer. The audio file on voice recorder will be destroyed immediately after transfer, while the audio file on computer will be destroyed once research is completed in August 2017. Transcripts and participant email list will be password protected and destroyed in August 2018. Signed consent forms will be stored in a locked filing cabinet, these will be shredded in one year after the research study has been completed.

### **INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATION:**

Incentive to participate in study includes a \$10 gift card to Tim Hortons for in-person interviews. You will receive the gift card at the beginning of the interview.

### **COSTS TO PARTICIPATION:**

Reimbursement of a maximum of two bus tokens may be provided at the request of the research participant. Other cost of participation including parking and gas will not be reimbursed.

### **VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL:**

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If any question makes you uncomfortable, you can skip that question. You may stop participating at any time and you will still be given the incentives and reimbursements described above. If you choose to stop participating, you may also choose to not have your data included in the study. Your choice of whether or not to participate will not influence your future relations with Ryerson University or the investigator David Grant, or his supervisor, involved in the research.

The investigator also may understand that you as a participant may be a friend of the investigator and the investigator emphasizes that this research project is strictly voluntary and will in no way affect the relationship between you and the investigator if you decide not to participate or stop participating at anytime during the interview. If you decide to participate and stop at anytime during the interview due to tensions with the investigator, there will be a debriefing time at this time for the investigator and participant to talk this over. Whether the interview recommences or fully terminates at that moment is up to the participant and will not affect the relationship with the researcher.

### **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.

David Grant  
Researcher, MSW Candidate  
d10grant@ryerson.ca

Samantha Wehbi  
Supervisor  
swehbi@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](mailto:rebchair@ryerson.ca)



**THEY DON'T REALLY CARE ABOUT US: THE STORIES OF PREVIOUSLY  
INCARCERATED BLACK MEN IN SCARBOROUGH AND THEIR EXPERIENCES  
WITH DISPLACED ANGER THROUGH A CRITICAL RACE THEORY  
FRAMEWORK**

**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

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

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

I would like to receive a copy of the research findings at this address: (please indicate email or – physical address or if you would like to pick up the report:

\_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX F

### Resource List

#### **Black Daddies Club**

Contact Brandon- [brandon@theblackdaddiesclub.com](mailto:brandon@theblackdaddiesclub.com) [info@theblackdaddiesclub.com](mailto:info@theblackdaddiesclub.com)

- Develop a continuous support system for Black men and fathers to share their challenges and/or experiences.
- Work with Black fathers and the community at large to address issues facing Black fathers, children and families.
- Work with the media to provide alternate images of Black fathers, and assist in the creation of our own media that depicts Black fathers in a positive light

#### **TAIBU Community Health Centre and Black Daddies Club**

Contact Estella- Email: [ewilliams@taibuchc.ca](mailto:ewilliams@taibuchc.ca) Tel: [416-644-3539](tel:416-644-3539) ext. 224

- TAIBU Community Health Centre and Black Daddies Club is partnering to get the word out for the Black Men Health Challenge.
- A great opportunity for Black men, fathers, grandparents, etc. to come out and network with each other but also get healthy together and building a stronger community in the process.

#### **Black Health Alliance**

Contact Information- Telephone: [+1 \(647\) 367-6656](tel:+1(647)367-6656) E-mail: [info@blackhealthalliance.ca](mailto:info@blackhealthalliance.ca)

- The Black Health Alliance recognizes that Black people are over-represented among people with illness and disease such as hypertension, diabetes and HIV/AIDS
- We also acknowledge that racism and other forms of oppression affect our health. In direct response to these issues, we have defined our reason for being through our mission statement
- We reduce the racial differences in health outcomes and promote health and wellbeing for people from the diverse Black communities in Canada with emphasis on the broad determinants of health, including racism.

## APPENDIX G

### Ethics Approval Certificate

The logo for Ryerson University, featuring the name "Ryerson University" in white text on a blue rectangular background.The logo for the Research Ethics Board, featuring the text "Research Ethics Board" in black, with a yellow vertical bar to the left of the text.

To: David Grant  
Social Work

Re: REB 2016-428: They Don't Really Care About Us: The Stories of Previously Incarcerated Black Men in Scarborough and their Experiences with Displaced Anger through a Critical Race Theory Perspective

Date: January 30, 2017

Dear David Grant,

The review of your protocol REB File REB 2016-428 is now complete. The project has been approved for a one year period. Please note that before proceeding with your project, compliance with other required University approvals/certifications, institutional requirements, or governmental authorizations may be required.

This approval may be extended after one year upon request. Please be advised that if the project is not renewed, approval will expire and no more research involving humans may take place. If this is a funded project, access to research funds may also be affected.

Please note that REB approval policies require that you adhere strictly to the protocol as last reviewed by the REB and that any modifications must be approved by the Board before they can be implemented. Adverse or unexpected events must be reported to the REB as soon as possible with an indication from the Principal Investigator as to how, in the view of the Principal Investigator, these events affect the continuation of the protocol.

Finally, if research subjects are in the care of a health facility, at a school, or other institution or community organization, it is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to ensure that the ethical guidelines and approvals of those facilities or institutions are obtained and filed with the REB prior to the initiation of any research.

Please quote your REB file number (REB 2016-428) on future correspondence.

Congratulations and best of luck in conducting your research.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nancy Walton".

Dr. Nancy Walton, PhD  
(A) Co-Chair  
Ryerson Research Ethics Board  
416-212-4952  
nwalton@ryerson.ca

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. J. Macdonald".

Dr. Chris Macdonald, PhD  
(A) Co-Chair  
Ryerson Research Ethics Board  
416-979-5000 ext. 6903  
chris.macdonald@ryerson.ca

## REFERENCE LIST

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