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Overrepresentation and disparity of Black children reported under the child protection system:
The need for effective cross-system collaborations

par Alicia Boatswain-Kyte

École de travail social
Faculté des arts et des sciences

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Résumé

Élaborée à partir de trois articles, cette thèse vise à développer une compréhension plus approfondie de la surreprésentation des enfants Noirs suivis par le système de protection de l'enfance au Canada. Le premier et le deuxième article examinent les taux de disparité des enfants faisant l'objet d'un signalement au Centre Jeunesse pour un échantillon d'enfants Noirs, Blancs et d'autres minorités racisées résidant à Montréal, Québec. Les résultats du premier article indiquent que comparativement aux enfants Blancs, les enfants Noirs étaient cinq fois plus susceptibles d'avoir leur signalement retenu et que le motif de celui-ci se révèle fondé. Le taux de placement était également cinq fois plus élevé que celui des enfants Blancs. Les résultats du deuxième article révèlent des différences dans la durée de placement et la probabilité d'une réunification familiale. Lorsqu'on compare la durée de placement des enfants Noirs, Blancs et d'autres minorités racisées, les enfants Noirs avaient une durée de placement plus longue. De plus ces enfants étaient moins susceptibles de réintégrer leur famille une fois le placement terminé. Cette probabilité réduite de réunification familiale s'explique statistiquement par l'impact de trois variables : l'instabilité du placement, l'âge de l'enfant et le type de maltraitance subie. Il est suggéré que l'accessibilité des services de soutien social au sein de la communauté de l'enfant est un facteur qui permet de protéger contre la pauvreté et diminuer la surreprésentation des enfants Noirs. Le troisième article dans cette thèse s'appuie sur une enquête qualitative conçue à partir d'une approche thématique afin d'identifier certains défis engendrés par la collaboration entre un Centre Jeunesse et un organisme communautaire. La création d'un partenariat a été proposée comme solution visant la réduction de la surreprésentation des enfants Noirs pris en charge par le Centre Jeunesse. Il s'agit d'une collaboration ayant pour but de rehausser les conditions socioéconomiques des ménages tout en permettant d'offrir un éventail de services plus adaptés aux particularités culturelles des parents noirs. Des entrevues semi-structurées ont été menées auprès des gestionnaires responsables de l'implantation du partenariat. Les résultats obtenus révèlent que le contexte organisationnel, le niveau de soutien sociopolitique et la culture organisationnelle des agences de la protection de la jeunesse influencent considérablement l'efficacité du partenariat.

Cette étude dresse un portrait des facteurs contribuant à la surreprésentation des enfants Noirs suivis par le système de protection de l'enfance au Canada. Elle suggère que la précarité socioéconomique des familles Noires s'explique partiellement par le traitement différentiel accordé aux dossiers impliquant des enfants Noirs. Elle met également en lumière certains obstacles potentiels à la mise en œuvre des solutions proposées.

Mots-clés : Centre jeunesse, enfants Noirs, surreprésentation, collaboration, partenariat, intervention communautaire

Abstract

This three-paper dissertation examines the overrepresentation of Black children reported to child protection services in Canada. The first and second papers examine rates of service disparities using clinical-administrative data provided by a child protection agency for a sample of Black, White, and other visible minority children residing in Montreal, Quebec. Findings from the first paper reveal that compared to White children, Black children's protection reports were five times more likely to be screened in, substantiated, and brought to court. Black children were also five times more likely than White children to enter out-of-home placement. Findings from the second paper demonstrate disparity in exits from the child protection system through comparison of Black, White and other visible minority children on time spent in out of home placement and likelihood of family reunification. Of these three groups, Black children spent the longest time in out-of-home placement and had a lower proportion of children experiencing family reunification. This decreased likelihood of reunification was statistically associated with three variables: placement instability, age of the child and type of maltreatment. The accessibility of support services within a child's community to help moderate exposure to risk conditions has been offered as a possible solution in addressing the overrepresentation of Black children. The third paper in this dissertation uses qualitative inquiry employing a thematic approach to highlight some of the challenges faced by a collaboration between a child protection agency and community organization. The creation of the partnership sought to reduce overrepresentation of Black children receiving services from the child protection system. It aimed to improve socioeconomic conditions faced by Black families by providing access to support services to address their needs in a culturally adapted manner. In depth-interviews from members of the stakeholder committee composed of management staff from both the child protection agency and community organization cited challenges pertaining to the child protection agency's organizational context, level of socio-political support and organizational culture as obstacles to an effective partnership.

Together, these three papers document the nature and potential causes of overrepresentation and disparity faced by Black Canadian children. It suggests that the disproportionate need faced by Black families is an important factor explaining their differential treatment within child

protection systems. This study also highlights some of the potential barriers in implementing solutions.

Keywords : Child protection, Black children, overrepresentation, disparity, collaboration, partnership, community intervention

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List of abbreviations

ACDPN : African Canadian Development and Prevention Network

BYFC: Batshaw Youth and Family Centres

EPF: Empowering Parents and Families

For Theodore Nkoy and Chloe-Zola

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Foreword

Before beginning, it's important that I situate myself in respect to this area of research. I became a child protection worker at 25 years old. Having grown up middle-class in the suburbs with no children or responsibilities, I wasn't prepared for work on the "frontlines" of social work. My position of privilege, while being a member of a visible minority, prevented me from being aware of some of the damaging effects of my practice. Looking back at those beginning years of my career, my practice resembled more like one that strived to maintain social order rather than promote social change. I naively believed: *"If parent's abused and neglected their children it must be because they didn't care enough to do better…"*

It was only after five solid years in the field that I began to think critically about my practice and the child protection system. While I had expected that child protection work would consist of "saving children" what became clear was that if children needed saving, so did their parents. In all my years as a child protection worker, I never came across a parent that did not want the best for their child or was not trying their best given their circumstances.

"Insider" knowledge both from my experience as a member of a visible minority and social worker within the child protection system, influenced this dissertation through its analysis of data and interpretation of findings. While I strived for impartiality, I am not sure whether that was realistic or even recommended. This research, from the perspective of a middle-class Black woman, who used to be a child protection worker, is my attempt to bring further attention to an area that is needed. Through longitudinal exploration of Black children's overrepresentation and disparity within a child protection system in Canada and through examination of a collaboration between a child protection agency and community organization, this dissertation is my attempt to further advance efforts in reducing the disparity faced by Black children receiving child protection services in Canada.

Chapter 1 : Introduction

This doctoral thesis is organized as a series of three interconnected studies (see Annex 1 for three-article authorization letter). Taken together, the three studies examine the overrepresentation and disparity of Black children reported to a child protection agency in Canada and a cross-system collaboration between a child protection agency and community organization aimed at reducing overrepresentation. The first study examines overrepresentation and service disparity for a subsample of Canadian Black children reported to the child protection system and discusses potential causes for disparity. The second study compares service outcomes on Black children's length of time spent in out-of-home placement and examines factors associated with the probability of family reunification. The third study describes the development and challenges faced by a cross-system collaboration between a child protection agency and community organization that partnered to reduce the overrepresentation of Black children reported to the child protection agency.

1.1 Background

Overrepresentation of certain racial[1] groups in the child protection system, requires that we thoroughly examine its possible causes to ensure that service disparities are not a result of systemic discrimination. In the United States, Black American children have been overrepresented in the child protection system since the 1950s (Cross, 2008). Since the 1990s, their overrepresentation has been one of the main reasons for calls to reforming the US child protection system (Bartholet, 2009; Roberts, 2009). Over the years, these calls for reform have been debated given inconclusive findings over the causes for Black American children's overrepresentation within child protection systems.

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[1] The term race is used as nomenclature throughout this dissertation and makes reference to other forms of categorization including "ethno-racial" and "ethno-cultural".

Researchers and practitioners have offered several competing explanations for overrepresentation that can be grouped into three primary causes: 1) Black children experience a disproportionate level of need when compared to other children, 2) Black children lack accessible services within their communities to address these needs and 3) Black children experience a reporting bias that stems from the discriminatory practice of professionals based on a child's race (Barth, 2005; Boyd, 2014; Dettlaff et al., 2011; Fluke, Harden, Jenkins, & Ruehrdanz, 2010; Hill, 2004; Rivaux et al., 2008). In an attempt to determine where to concentrate efforts, research has juxtaposed the disproportionate need faced by Black children with the presence of racial bias within the child protection system. If Black children are overrepresented because of disproportionate need, prevention services within their communities should help moderate the risk of child maltreatment. On the other hand, if Black children are overrepresented because of racial bias within the child protection system, cultural-competency training and changes to child protection policy should help reduce service disparities. More than likely, overrepresentation of Black children is a result of both disproportionate need and bias within the child protection system, that when unaddressed pose deleterious effects for Black children (Dettlaff & Rycraft, 2008).

Most of the research on the overrepresentation of Black children in child protection systems has been conducted in the United States. Generalizability of American findings to a Canadian context can be argued because of similarities between US and Canadian child protection systems and that Canadian Black families face many of the problems of discrimination and poverty that plague American Black families. However, there remain several noteworthy differences between both countries that require some caution in extending research findings. Black Canadian families do not experience the same depth of poverty that some Black American families face in the United States (Attewell, Kasinitz, & Dunn, 2010). Families living in poverty in Canada are covered by a free healthcare system, live in communities with lower crime rates, have access to better funded public schools and an array of poverty reduction and family support services (Fréchet, Lechaume, Legris & Savard, 2014; Prus, 2011; Reitz, Zhang, & Hawkins, 2011; Shaefer, Wu, & Edin, 2017; Swift & Callahan, 2006). Thus, the influence and strength of the relationship between poverty and child maltreatment is particularly

interesting to consider in Canada, where there have been clear and sustained efforts to reduce the effects of poverty through socially progressive family-centered policies and services. As a result, Black families in Canada should face less disparity regarding rates of maltreatment when compared to Black families in the United States because of Canada's plethora of social capital.

Secondly, it is also important to note that immigration patterns of Black Canadians and Black Americans are different. The majority of Canada's Black population are immigrants who arrived after 1960, whereas more than 85% of Black Americans can trace their ancestry three or more generations to the United States (Attewell et al., 2010). As a result, Black Americans carry a heritage of slavery and segregation that is more pronounced in the United States than in Canada. The existence of Black urban ghettos caused by the American Black residential segregation and the resulting lack of access to jobs, social services and other resources, has resulted in concentrations of poverty accompanied by high rates of crime and other social problems (Massey & Denton, 1993). Historically, Black Canadians have not experienced the same level of neighbourhood residential segregation as compared to Black Americans. Thus, while many Blacks in Canada may live in neighbourhoods with a substantial number of Blacks, very few live in neighbourhoods with Black majorities (Attewell et al., 2010). In addition, studies have found that generational differences exist between first, second and third generation immigrants with regards to educational, occupational and income success of racial minorities (Attewell et al., 2010; Reitz et al., 2011). Second generation immigrants have been found to experience more successful integration and upward economic mobility than first and third generation immigrants, irrespective of countries (Attewell et al., 2010; Reitz et al., 2011). Thus comparing findings on overrepresentation becomes interesting given the majority of Black Canadians are either first or second generation immigrants versus the majority of Black Americans who are third-generation.

Research in Canada on the overrepresentation of Black children in the child protection system has been primarily documented within the province of Ontario and Quebec. Findings report that Black children are between almost two and five times more likely than White children to be reported for maltreatment and placed in out-of-home care (Children's Aid Society of

Toronto, 2015; King et al., 2017; Lavergne, Dufour, Sarmiento, & Descôteaux, 2009). These studies have been cross-sectional and do not examine service trajectories beyond placement. This limits our understanding of the trends and variations in service trajectories of Black children as they move from point of entry to exit from the child protection system. This lack of knowledge also limits our capacity in developing efforts to reduce overrepresentation and disparity, given we are unable to account for how their causes influence child outcomes within the child protection system over time. Research using longitudinal methods is required to fill this gap.

Lastly, although the overrepresentation of Black children in child protection systems has been identified as a persistent problem, research on what can be done to effectively reduce overrepresentation needs to be developed. Ensuring Black children gain access to support services offered through community-based organizations has been proposed as one way to moderate exposure to risk conditions within marginalized communities. These services can help reduce the likelihood of involvement by the child protection system by addressing some of the underlying social and economic risk factors that make it difficult for parents to address the needs of their children. As a result, child protection agencies have been increasingly encouraged to partner with community organizations to form cross-system collaborations. For the most part, this argument and its perceived benefits remain hypothetical. Studies on the development and feasibility of models of cross-system collaborations reducing overrepresentation are scarce. Failure to develop scholarship in this area hinders the dissemination and implementation of effective models of cross-system collaboration.

The current dissertation aims to further our knowledge on the overrepresentation of Canadian Black children receiving services within the child protection system through use of longitudinal data that will allow for examination of service trajectories from a child's point of initial investigation to their exit from out-of-home placement. This will enable research in Canada on overrepresentation to go beyond a snapshot of Black children's involvement in the child protection system so that we can better understand and observe disparity over time. In addition, given the little we know about cross-system collaborations in the area of

overrepresentation, this dissertation documents the development and challenges of an agency-based initiative to reduce overrepresentation through their partnership with a grass-roots community organization. Through development of this area of research, we can begin to narrow the gap between knowledge on the benefits of cross-system collaborating and its applicability in child protection practice.

1.2 Theoretical frameworks

The second and third chapters of this dissertation draw on a range of theoretical frameworks and models to help in our understanding of the various risk factors of child maltreatment and the causes of overrepresentation of Black children within the child protection system. Belsky's ecological perspective was chosen for its ability to provide an overview of risk factors relevant to child maltreatment (Belsky, 1980, 1993). In addition to its emphasis on the interaction of these factors rather than their mere presence in the occurrence child maltreatment. Barth and Drake's models of overrepresentation were chosen for their ability to identify risk factors for Black families that result in them being more prone to child maltreatment, and their focus on how bias within the child protection system influences overrepresentation (Barth, 2005, Drake et al., 2011). The fourth chapter of this dissertation uses Arnstein's ladder of participation (Arnstein, 1969), a critical perspective to understanding the challenges of participation within collaborations. An overview of each of the theoretical frameworks that inform this three-paper dissertation is presented.

1.2.1 An ecological perspective on the etiology of child maltreatment

An ecological perspective encourages a comprehensive analysis of the various factors surrounding an individual and how their interaction shapes human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Bronfenbrenner (1979) divided ecological contexts into three systems: the microsystem, exosystem and macrosystem, to consider how forces within a person's

immediate environment and those within their larger social environment influence each other. Belsky (1980) applied the ecological perspective to child maltreatment, by including factors at the ontogenetic development of the parent to account for individual differences in child maltreatment within the parent's primary microsystem. Belsky's model consists of four levels of analysis to understanding the etiology of child maltreatment by naming factors situated at the ontogenetic development, the microsystem, the exosystem and macrosystem. These form the basis of his developmental-ecological analysis that consists of: the developmental context, the immediate interactional context and broader context. Belsky argued that child maltreatment is determined by multiple factors within a child's individual, family, community and societal context. He added that each of these factors are "ecologically nested" within one another and that child maltreatment is a dynamic process posing methodological challenges in predicting the necessary conditions for child maltreatment to occur. Table I provides a description of the various risk factors identified by Belsky (1993) that situates each factor within their various context.

Table I. Risk and protective factors of child maltreatment

RISK FACTORS		
Child Factors	Parent Factors	Community Factors
Age	Parental substance abuse	High rates of crime
Temperament	Parental mental illness	High rates of unemployment
Physical/Developmental challenges	Social isolation	Low quality schools
Self-esteem	Domestic violence	Lack of child care, low quality
Insecure parent attachment	Single parent	Poor housing
Behaviour	Parental stress	Repeated exposure to racism, bias and discrimination
	Developmental history	Low socioeconomic status
PROTECTIVE FACTORS		
Child Factors	Parent factors	Community Factors
Secure parent attachment	Education	Service accessibly
Good temperament	Religion	Good schools
Positive peers	Consistent family structure	Healthy communities
Positive school experience	Strong extended family support	Good social capital
Good health and development		Good social connections within community

Belsky's theory contributes to our understanding of overrepresentation through identification of risk factors that make certain children more prone to maltreatment and its emphasis on maltreatment as a dynamic process. As a result, we are able to identify risk factors that expose Black children to maltreatment that go beyond parenting behaviour. Subsequently,

child protection interventions with prescriptive measures to improve parenting are limited in their ability to ensure child safety and developmental well-being because of their inability to account for the socioeconomic context through which children are parented. If Black children are more prone to being maltreated, it thus becomes imperative that we give consideration to factors not only within the child's immediate family environment but also within their community environment. This is something that child protection systems cannot do on their own. Belsky's theory refutes single causes of maltreatment and discourages polarization of factors, rendering arguments of disproportionate need and bias within the child protection system mute. Thus according to Belsky's theory, overrepresentation is a result of multiple factors interacting in ways that result in Black children facing disparate outcomes of maltreatment.

1.2.2 Theory of overrepresentation of Black children

Several frameworks have been proposed to understand the overrepresentation of Black children with the child protection system. Generally, causes can be grouped into three primary reasons for overrepresentation 1) Black children experience a disproportionate level of need when compared to other children, 2) Black children lack accessible services within their communities to address these needs and 3) Black children experience a reporting bias that stems from the discriminatory practice of professionals based on a child's race (Barth, 2005; Boyd, 2014; Dettlaff et al., 2011; Fluke et al., 2010).

The earliest framework, developed by Barth (2005), claims that overrepresentation is the result of four models that he refers to as: (a) risk, incidence and benefits; (b) child welfare services decision-making; (c) placement dynamics and (d) multiplicative. The risk, incidence and benefit model attributes overrepresentation to the lack of services among Black families that experience risk factors to a greater degree than families of other backgrounds. These risk factors may come in the form of: unemployment, teen parenthood, poverty, substance abuse, incarceration, domestic violence mental illness. In this model, poverty is considered to be a driving force for overrepresentation. Black families are thus overrepresented in the child

protection system because they face higher levels of poverty than White families. Researchers have been cautious in reporting these findings, insisting that being poor does not cause maltreatment. Rather, poverty increases the likelihood of maltreatment when combined with other risk factors. The decision-making model postulates that agencies allow race to affect the decisions they make regarding children, resulting in discriminatory practices that disadvantage Black families. The placement dynamics model explains overrepresentation through racial differences in types of placements, length of stays in out-of-home placement and decreased likelihood of reunification. It suggests that Black children exit the child protection system more slowly than White children increasing their representation within the system. The last proponent of the model, the multiplicative domain, specifies that small differences at each stage of the child protection system accumulate to create a larger disparity between Black and White children at each decision point (Barth, 2005). Of note, Barth's model does not elaborate on the importance of each domain on resulting overrepresentation and disparity for Black children.

Drake and colleagues (2011) contrasted two competing explanations within Barth's model: that overrepresentation is caused by Black children's increased exposure to risk conditions (i.e. the risk, incidence and benefits model) and that overrepresentation is causes by biased practice within the child protection system against Black children and families (i.e. child protection system's decision-making). They used data drawn from national child protection and public health sources available in the United States to develop a "risk" and "bias" model as illustrated in Figure 1 and 2. The "risk model" stipulates that rates of child maltreatment accurately report child abuse and neglect of minority group children given their higher exposure to risk conditions for maltreatment that results in higher referrals to the child protection system. The "bias model" stipulates that bias from both reporters and caseworkers investigating allegations of child abuse and neglect results from hyper-surveillance and discriminatory treatment of Black children and families by the child protection system (see Figure 2). The model also indicates that the presence of moderating factors, in the form of protective cultural factors specific to the minority group may serve to offset the actual occurrence of rates of abuse and neglect. While their study failed to account for what these factors were, factors such as traditional family practices and religious beliefs and practices have shown to be cultural

protective factors against community risk (Nasim, Fernander, Townsend, Corona, & Belgrave, 2011).

RISK:
Minority group has higher exposure to risk factors associated with CA/N (poverty)

Child abuse rates influenced by risk

ACTUAL OCCURRENCE:
Higher actual incidence of CA/N in minority group

Reportes and CPS system respond to risk

OFFICIAL VICTIMIZATION:
Higher official victimization rates in minority group

Figure 1.   The risk model[2]

RISK:
Minority group has higher exposure to risk factors associated with CA/N (poverty)

ACTUAL OCCURRENCE:
Equal rates of CA/N in minority and White groups

OFFICIAL VICTIMIZATION:
Higher official victimization rates in minority group

MODERATING FACTORS:
Protective cultural factors specific to minority group

BIAS:
Reporters and CPS system are inappropriately biased by race of child

Figure 2.   The bias model[3]

While much of the debate has centered around determining whether Black children are overrepresented because of disproportionate need or bias from the child protection system, methodological limitations in our ability to accurately measure and analyze constructs of racism and bias prevent us from concluding that they do not play a factor. Racism and bias are often implicit and unconscious rendering their detection difficult. While they may not be driving

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[2] The risk model (Drake et al., 2011, p. 473)

[3] The bias model (Drake et al., 2011, p. 473)

forces of overrepresentation, they do merit consideration. By failing to acknowledge potential for bias, we create an environment where prejudice and stereotypes go unchecked. Until evidence demonstrates that child protection systems are immune to the effects of bias, efforts to address racial bias are warranted. Fluke et al., (2010) in their conceptual model of overrepresentation of children of color, delve into some of the forms of racial bias and discrimination attributed to child protection system processes and resources. They refer to racial bias and discrimination from professionals reporting families to child protection officials as well as child protection worker's applying differential treatment of families based on race. In addition, they name system processes and resources such as a lack of agency resources, inequitable resources available to families of color, and cultural competence as factors that affect service provision of children of color. They add, that while some of these discriminatory practices may not be intentional, they stem from resulting policies and practices within the child protection system.

Increasingly it is being acknowledged that failure on the part of institutions to consider how their policies, practices and processes impact particular groups differently constitutes a form a systemic racism (McKenzie, 2017). While the child protection system may not be overtly biased to Black families, a lack of response to the structural barriers faced by Black families within society is equally damaging. Attempting to change society by ensuring equitable distribution of resources and opportunities is difficult and requires a great deal of time and effort. While changes in reforming and restructuring child protection systems may also be difficult to generate, the scope of potential change efforts are narrower and more manageable to target than society at large. Failure in doing so, results in a child protection system that penalizes families for being poor. Inclusion of community organizations in redesigning child protection services thus becomes necessary in addressing the underlying social conditions that contribute to disproportionate need.

1.2.3 Participatory processes within child protection: A theory of public participation

Building social capital within impoverished neighborhoods and increasing accessibility of family support services to parents is one strategy of reducing child maltreatment. However, there is little evidence on how collaboration between child protection and community can be promoted into meaningful participation from community actors. Wood & Gray (1991) define collaborations as requiring voluntary autonomous membership, with some transformational purpose or desire to increase systemic capacity by tapping into shared resources. Partnership between government and non-profit organizations, would thus exclude contractual relationships where power is not shared or committees that meet regularly but have no specific goals (Huxham, 2003).

According to Fosler (2002):

> Collaboration generally involves a higher degree of mutual planning and management among peers, the conscious alignment of goals, strategies, agendas, resources and activities; an equitable commitment of investment and capacities; and the sharing of risks, liabilities and benefits.

Cross-system collaboration within child protection systems can take on a variety of shapes and forms and is best viewed on a continuum ranging from informal infrastructures for sharing information to more formalized structures and merging of resources. The definition described by Fosler (2002) makes reference to collaboration that is situated at the far right of the collaboration continuum, where the relationship between organizations is one of equals void of power imbalances.

This thesis is particularly interested in cross-system collaborations with grass-root organizations, non-governmental bodies that provide support services to disadvantaged communities. These organizations often differ in infrastructure and resources when compared to child protection systems, which questions their ability to have genuine bargaining influence

over the outcome of the collaboration. Participation on the part of community organizations in the area of child protection is also made more complex by the forensic nature of child protection interventions coupled with the burden of risk management carried solely by the child protection agency. This may inadvertently lend itself to a cross-system collaboration resembling more like service coordination and cooperation than partnership.

In her theory of public participation, Arnstein (1969), distinguishes between participation as an *empty ritual* and participation from *a position of power* in her comparison of various federal community programs in poor US neighborhoods in the late 1960s. She highlighted that participation without redistribution of power is an empty and frustrating process for the powerless, that allows the powerholders to claim that all sides were considered but really maintains the status quo. She proposes a typology of eight levels of participation resembling that of a ladder to describe the participation of service users. The lowest two rungs *manipulation* and *therapy* represent forms of non-participation symbolizing collaboration without protest. Under this form of participation, the real objective is not to enable participation but rather to "educate" or "cure" participants. The next three steps *information, consultation and placation* indicate levels of tokenism that allow possibilities for hearing and being heard but remain the total extent of participation. Under these conditions participation lacks the power to ensure that their views and opinions will be regarded. She further elaborated that collaborations of this nature have no follow-through or "muscle" to affect change, with the powerholders retaining the continued right to decide. The top three rungs of the ladder *partnership, delegated power and citizen control* are true examples of participation because each of these steps allow for the codetermination of decision-making and policies. These top three rungs are synonymous with inclusion, which is basically participation with opportunities for shared planning. Quick & Feldman (2011) refer to inclusion as continuous coproduction of processes, policies and programs for defining and addressing public issues.

This three-article dissertation draws on aspects of all of these theoretical perspectives to help in our understanding of overrepresentation of Black children within the child protection system, and what can be done to promote community engagement in cross-system collaborations. An ecological framework of child maltreatment helps in understanding the inter-

connectedness of the various environments of parenting. Child maltreatment is not a causal relationship between risk factors and outcomes. While it is important that we be able to identify risk factors that influence child maltreatment, an ecological perspective argues that child maltreatment is determined by multiple factors interplaying in a dynamic process unique to each child's individual, family and community environment. This is echoed by the various models of overrepresentation of Black children in the child protection system that make reference to overrepresentation being driven by disproportionate need and bias in the form of child protection system infrastructure, policy, decision-making, organizational culture and resources. The consensus from the majority of these scholars is that addressing overrepresentation requires a multi-faceted approach that: 1) aims to address the socioeconomic disadvantage faced by Black families within society and 2) simultaneously addresses potential bias within child protection systems. Lastly, cross-system collaborations between child protection systems and community organizations have been identified as one way of reducing overrepresentation. However, in order for community organizations to actually influence outcomes for Black families, their participation in cross-system collaboration must go beyond tokenism and provide genuine opportunities for inclusive practice.

1.3 Literature review

This section provides a brief overview of studies examining overrepresentation and cross-system collaborations. Please refer to Chapters 2 through 4 for a more comprehensive review.

1.3.1 Overrepresentation of Black children in the child protection system

Black children have been overrepresented in child protection reports, investigations and foster care entries since the 1950s (Courtney, Barth, Berrick, Brooks, & others, 1996; Dunbar & Barth, 2008; Foster, Hillemeier, & Bai, 2011; Putnam-Hornstein, Needell, King, & Johnson-

Motoyama, 2013; Sedlak, McPherson, & Das, 2010).   Overrepresentation refers to Black children representing a higher than average proportion of children receiving child protection services when compared to their respective proportion in the general population.   Disparity makes reference to comparison between Black and White rates of overrepresentation usually through use of a population-based disparity index (PDI) that compares the rate per 1000 of each racial category. Within the United States rates of disparity between Black and White children vary across jurisdictions and decision points.   Some jurisdictions have reported rates of disparity between Black and White children as high as 8, suggesting that Black children are 8 times more likely than White children to be investigated by the child protection agency (Hill, 2007).   At the national level within the United States, average population disparity indexes indicate that Black children are 1.7 times more likely to have their reports investigated, 1.9 times more likely that these reports will be substantiated and 3.4 times more likely to enter foster care than White children.

Most recently in Canada, Ontario analyzed the disparity faced by Black children in the child protection system through population disparity indexes and found that Black children were anywhere from 1.4 to 1.6 times more likely than White children to be investigated, have their maltreatment substantiated, be transferred to on-going services or placed by the child protection system (King et al., 2017).   Similar findings were found in Quebec, indicating that Black children were 2.0 times more likely to be investigated, 1.8 times more likely to receive a substantiated investigation and 1.4 times more likely to be placed than White children when compared to all children (Lavergne et al., 2009).   These findings indicate that Black children in Canada and the United States share similar rates of disparity. However, given the lack of longitudinal data in Canada, we know little about how this disparity compares over time.

Notwithstanding similarities between both countries, Canada and the United States differ with regards to the immigration patterns of their Black population and social welfare policies. Further research becomes necessary in Canada to better understand how the causes of overrepresentation and disparity are influenced within a Canadian context.

1.3.2 A comparison between Canada and the United States: disproportionate need, service accessibility and bias

Whereas the majority of the Canadian Black population immigrated after the 1960s, and are first generation Canadians, the majority of Black Americans are third generation Americans who were brought to the United States as slaves during the colonial period (Attewell et al., 2010). Authors have argued that because Black American's carry a larger heritage of slavery and segregation, disparity in Black-White outcomes in the United States should be higher than disparity of Black-White outcomes in Canada because of greater disproportionate need experienced by Black Americans (Attewell et al., 2010; Prus, 2011; Reitz et al., 2011). However, research by Attewell and colleagues (2010) in comparing racial income gap between Canada and the United States found that both countries produced similar levels of racial inequality. This was primarily attributed to differences in the experience of subgroups of immigration generations. Their study found that racial income gaps for first generation Black Canadians were higher than those of first-generation Black Americans. In both countries second-generation Blacks fared much better that first-generation Blacks, with second generation Black Canadians faring better than second generation Black Americans. Lastly, in both countries third plus generation Blacks faced similar and increased levels of economic disadvantage compared to their White counterparts. After disaggregating by generation and controlling for differences in education and region, the Black-White wage gaps in the United States and Canada were found by the authors to be quite similar (Attewell et al., 2010).

While racial disparity in disproportionate need experienced by the Black population appears to be similar in both countries, Canada and the United States differ with regards to their social and economic policies that results in services being made more available for marginalized communities. This results in several differences in employment, education, universal health care and social support programs. Often considered to be more "socially progressive" than the United States, Canadian social policy aims to "facilitate reasonable access to health services without financial or other barriers" ensuring that every citizen have the same ability to access health care

services (Government of Canada, 2017; Maioni, 2010). The availability of health and social services has been shown to play a role in improving access to care, particularly for marginalized communities (Pylypchuk & Sarpong, 2013). Therefore, given differences between Canada and the United States, we would expect that racial disparity in health and well-being would be less extreme in Canada because of its more favourable social policies. However, availability of services does not guarantee that those services will be accessed. Research on help seeking-behaviour and service utility of African American parents has demonstrated that they experience lower levels of help-seeking and service utilization (Dempster, Davis, Faye Jones, Keating, & Wildman, 2015). Research to date has shown that help-seeking behaviour is made complicated within African American families because of lower socioeconomic status, problem perception, stigma related to mental health and cultural values (Bailey, Patel, Barker, Ali, & Jabeen, 2011; Bussing, Zima, Gary, & Garvan, 2003; Masuda, Anderson, & Edmonds, 2012; Murry, Heflinger, Suiter, & Brody, 2011). African American families have been shown to be more likely to obtain help from family members, friends, community and church supports than from mental health professionals (Matthews, Corrigan, Smith, & Aranda, 2006). This may be associated with cultural norms that family problems should not be discussed outside of family/community because of a greater fear of labelling and perceptions of negative consequences (McMiller & Weisz, 1996; Murry et al., 2011). These findings support previous research suggesting that African American families are more likely to seek services when treatment is made accessible within their community (Chronis, Chacko, Fabiano, Wymbs, & Pelham, 2004).

Given the particular historical context of slavery and segregation of Black Americans, bias, discrimination and systemic racism tends to be viewed as more entrenched in the United States than in Canada. The racialized mass incarceration of Black men in the United States resulting in the severe social and economic distress of poor urban African American families, is often cited as America's most blatant form of systemic racism (Western & Wildeman, 2009). Within Canada, similarly to the United States, racialized incarceration has resulted in Black communities being overrepresented within the federal offender population in prisons (Khenti, 2014). Incarceration rates of Black Canadians in federal prisons show that they are 3.4 times

their representation within the general population (Owusu-Bempah & Wortley, 2014). Similarly, in the United States the incarceration rate among Black Americans was 2.9 times higher than their representation in the general population in 2009 (West, 2010). Systemic racism in the United States has also been illustrated through the presence of racially exploitive medical and public health practices that generate and sustain structural discrimination of Black Americans (Feagin & Bennefield, 2014). McKinnon et al., (2016) in comparing Black and White disparities in pre-term births between Canada and the United States found that preterm and very preterm birth rates were similar in magnitude between both countries. This racial disparity in preterm births persisted even after controlling for sociodemographic variables. While the authors were unable to provide evidence of causes accounting for similarities in racial disparities of preterm births between both countries, they suggested their findings point to an equal existence of socioeconomic disadvantage and racial discrimination in Canada and the United States.

Comparison of findings between the United States and Canada on how the causes of overrepresentation influence outcomes for Black children and families beyond child protection would suggest that Black Canadians and Black Americans share similar disparate outcomes with regards to their racial income gap, rates of incarceration and preterm birth rates. These findings are puzzling given differences in the profile of Black Canadians from Black Americans, and the difference in structure of our social policies. More research in Canada is required to better understand how disproportionate need, service accessibility and bias influence outcomes for Black children under a Canadian context over time.

1.3.3 Causes of overrepresentation of Black children in the child protection system

In the last decade, researchers have attempted to better understand the causes of overrepresentation, with significant tension between the role of poverty-related risk factors versus the presence of racial bias within the child protection system. With regards to the former explanation, studies have demonstrated how exposure to risk conditions (i.e. substance abuse,

depression, isolation, unemployment, teenage pregnancy and domestic violence) lead to greater rates of child maltreatment (Gillham, B., Tanner, G., & Cheyne, B., 1998; Stith et al., 2009; Walsh, MacMillan, & Jamieson, 2003) Low-income parents are often faced with multiple systemic stressors that may weaken their ability to appropriately parent which can result in child maltreatment (Coulton, Korbin, Su, & Chow, 1995; Garbarino & Sherman, 1980). It is thus widely accepted by researchers that child poverty is intrinsically connected to involvement in child protection and that conditions of poverty lead to greater rates of child maltreatment (B. Drake & Jonson-Reid, 2014; Pelton, 2015). However, several authors have taken a more anti-racist stance claiming that regardless of the level of poverty, racial bias in the form of decision-making, service accessibility and policy play significant roles in overrepresentation within the child protection system (Harris & Hackett, 2008; Hill, 2004; Roberts, 2009; Rodenborg, 2004) This racial bias may be internal or external (i.e. socioeconomic disadvantage) to the child protection system but results in differential treatment of Black families resulting in a greater number of their children entering the system.

In order to test both competing explanations, Drake and colleagues (2011) compared rates of infant mortality and poor birth outcomes (i.e. low birth rate and premature birth) with administratively recorded child abuse and neglect. They argued that other measures of child well-being (i.e. infant mortality and poor birth outcomes) are sensitive to the same risk factors of child abuse and neglect but not bias within the child protection system. Thus, comparing group rates of infant mortality and birth outcomes could be used as a proxy for actual differences in rates maltreatment. They found that Black and Hispanic families, despite having similar rates of disparity in poverty (i.e. when compared to White children), had different rates of child well-being. Hispanic families, while experiencing greater poverty than White families, had comparable rates of child well-being between Hispanic and White children. Black children were found to have lower rates of child well-being, with evidence of bias being disputed given their rates of well-being mirrored rates of child victimization. The authors thus concluded that bias from the child protection system was not a large-scale driver of overrepresentation of Black children.

The emphasis on disproportionate need differentiating Black families from White families has been argued as the primary cause for overrepresentation (Bartholet, 2009). Thus, increased number of referrals to the child protection system stems from Black children's increased exposure to risk conditions associated with maltreatment. However, similar disproportionate need faced by Hispanic families does not result in comparable rates of overrepresentation and disparity between Black and Hispanic children (Hill, 2007). Findings from this dissertation will determine overrepresentation and service disparity between other-visible minority children (i.e. including South Asian, Arab, West Asian, Chinese, Filipino, Southeast Asian, Korean, Japanese, and Latin American children) and White children. Similarly to the United States and its Hispanic population, other visible minority populations in Canada have been shown to face similar levels of poverty when compared to the Black population.

1.3.4 Black children in out-of-home placement: disparity beyond the "front-end"

While we are beginning to better understand the mechanisms that influence how Canadian Black children enter the child protection system, we know very little about the factors that influence their service trajectories and exit. Within the United States, an extensive number of studies on exits from the child protection system have been conducted. Their findings suggest that African American children have longer lengths of stays within the child protection system and are less likely to reunify with parents when compared to White children and Hispanic children (Cheng, 2010; Connell, Katz, Saunders, & Tebes, 2006; Courtney & Wong, 1996; Shaw, 2010; Wells & Guo, 1999)The causes for this disparity are complex and involve factors attributed to child and parent case characteristics, organizational factors within the child protection system and external factors including socioeconomic disadvantage(Hines, Lee, Osterling, & Drabble, 2007).

Family and child characteristics shown to influence the likelihood of reunification are: race; age of the child; presence of emotional, behavioural or health concerns impacting child functioning; family structure and the presence of parental lifestyle concerns. Studies have

demonstrated that children under age five are least likely to reunify when compared to other age groups (Courtney & Wong, 1996; Esposito et al., 2014). Child emotional and behavioural concerns were associated with a 50% decrease in the likelihood of reunification. Children with physical and mental disabilities were also significantly less likely to be reunified (Courtney & Wong, 1996). In examining how family structure interacts with race on the timing of reunification, African American children from single parent families were particularly unlikely to reunify, whereas two-parent Hispanic families had significantly higher rates of reunification when compared to two-parent White and African American families (Harris & Courtney, 2003). Certain studies have also used the type of maltreatment investigated as a proxy for family problems. Younger children reported for neglect have poorer reunification outcomes compared to younger children reported for physical and sexual abuse (Barber, Delfabbro, & Gilbertson, 2004). Removal because of child behavioural concerns or delinquency was also associated with faster exits to reunification when compared to neglect or abuse (Wells & Guo, 1999). In addition, numerous studies have found that parental lifestyle concerns such as substance abuse significantly decreases the likelihood of reunification (McDonald et al., 2007; Shaw, 2010).

Organizational factors within the child protection system shown to be associated with the timing of reunification are: type of placement; placement instability and discriminatory practice. Children placed in kinship care (i.e. cared for by a relative or someone whom they have a close relationship with) experiencing longer delays to reunification as compared to other settings (Goerge, 1990) . African American children are more likely than other racial category to be placed with kin (Bartholet, 2009). While kinship care is considered a best-practice approach for African American cultural values, it is not in line with permanency goals identified by the child protection system that strives for adoption. African American children experience more placement instability compared to other racial categories, that can result in longer time spent in out-of-home placement and decreased likelihood of reunification. Risk factors associated with placement instability have also been shown to be more prevalent among African American children than White children in part because of their increased exposure to poverty (Kohen, Leventhal, Dahinten, & McIntosh, 2008; Newacheck, Stein, Bauman, & Hung, 2003). Discriminatory practice in the form of institutional racism, has been attributed to poorer

outcomes for Black children within the child protection system. While difficult to measure and analyze, a number of studies have demonstrated that decision-making, agency infrastructure, organizational culture and quality of services effect outcomes across decision-points for African American children (Harris & Hackett, 2008; Hill, 2005). More specifically with regards to measurable effects on reunification, African American children were found less likely to receive support services when compared to White families (Courtney et al., 1996).

External factors such as socioeconomic hardship is negatively associated with the likelihood of reunification. It has been measured in many ways, through factors such as poverty, scarcity of resources and single parent status. More recently, much attention has been given to the social structural context in which children and their families reside, and their influence on the likelihood of timely reunification. Wulczyn, Chen, & Courtney (2011)found that social structural factors such as the proportion of female-headed households, families living below the poverty line, urbanicity, racial composition, and placement rate of children all influence reunification and are most important during the first 6 month of out-of-home placement. Other factors external to the child protection system such as the accessibility of social and community-based services to help families address maltreatment behaviours in the form of identified needed services have been shown to effect exits from placement (Cheng, 2010; Choi & Ryan, 2007; D'Andrade & Nguyen, 2014; Murphy, Harper, Griffiths, & Joffrion, 2017). In a systematic review examining interventions utilized by child protection agencies between 2006 and 2016, successful reunification was critically influenced by whether parents received comprehensive services that were specifically matched, and this regardless of the chosen intervention model (Murphy et al., 2017).

Building on this work, the following dissertation will examine outcomes for Black children beyond initial investigation to determine how the variables resulting in their overrepresentation at the front-end of the child protection system influences their service trajectories and chances of family reunification following out-of-home placement. This

dissertation will also compare case characteristics between Black, White and other visible minority children to determine what factors are associated with family reunification following initial out-of-home placement.

1.3.5 Engaging in cross-system collaboration

A review of literature on collaboration within child protection reveals a trend towards more formalized mechanisms of collaboration (i.e. cross-system collaborations) rather than simple cooperation and contracting of services. While part of the move towards more integrative collaborative efforts between child protection agencies and community organizations may be motivated by shrinking resources, there has also been a recognized shift in orientation of child protection services. As a result of the expansion of child protection mandates including forms of emotional maltreatment, exposure to conjugal violence and corporal punishment, the bulk of child protection investigations present no immediate concerns to child safety, but rather concerns relating to child well-being from living in difficult conditions (Trocmé, Kyte, Sinha, & Fallon, 2014). Involvement from the child protection system may stem from the toxic combination of families living in poverty with limited access to resources to address potential issues from health problems, disability, addiction, or interpersonal conflict. Child protection agencies are no longer simply investigating reports of maltreatment. They are also being solicited to provide services to a range of family problems that go beyond abuse and address concerns of child well-being (Waldfogel, 1998). The compatibility between a child protection and child welfare mandate has been criticized given the investigative nature of child protection practice (Pelton, 2015). In order to foster family engagement, child protection systems require collaborations with community organizations who are better suited in providing support services to families without the threat of child removal.

There have been several forms of cross-system collaboration implemented by child protection agencies across North America to address marginalized communities: use of cultural brokers, ethnic-specific services, out-stationing of caseworkers in communities and differential

response systems. The variability of these models, coupled with the specificity of each jurisdiction and actors, make it very difficult to draw conclusions on whether or not these collaborations are effective in reducing overrepresentation and to link efficiency to the collaborative model. Attempting to ascertain why certain collaborations are successful and the role community engagement plays in the process is difficult. Research on successful reduction of overrepresentation of Black families through community engagement, has primarily focused on legislated statewide partnerships between child protection systems and community-based organizations. The *Texas Community Engagement Model* developed by the Center for Elimination of Disproportionality and Disparities aimed to reduce disproportionality and disparities through a four-stage process that called for 1) building community awareness and engagement, 2) creating leadership amongst organizations and institutions 3) legitimizing the importance of community members and 4) ensuring mutual and reciprocal accountability and investment. Following implementation, Texas experienced a statewide reduction of foster care placements for all children. The *Point of Engagement* (POE) collaborative partnership model, developed in Compton, California enlisted the support of community providers to prevent and address child abuse (Marts, Lee, McRoy, & McCroskey, 2008). The multi-faceted approach emphasized shared decision making amongst community partners and included several components such as multi-disciplinary assessments, differential and alternative response (community-based formal and informal support services for families with inconclusive child protection referrals) and child safety conferences attended by community service providers. Following implementation, a reduction in the number of children removed from their families, an increase in the number returned to their families and a decrease in the number of case substantiations was observed (Marts et al., 2008). Lastly, Fresno County, California following implementation of *Family to Family* a national initiative developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, saw a decrease of Black children entering foster care and an increase in their reunification rates which they attributed to 1) strong leadership and commitment to ending disparity within the child protection system, 2) meaningful, robust and consistent community partnerships, 3) being in touch with the experiences of youth and families of color being served by the child protection system and 4) taking advantage of new funding and reform opportunities (Weber, 2015)The child protection system engaged in collaboration with community that

provided opportunities for reflection and ongoing collective development that yielded conditions necessary for effective partnership (Horwath & Morrison, 2007)

On a smaller scale, this dissertation examines a cross-system collaboration at a local level between a child protection agency and community organization seeking to reduce overrepresentation through offering support services to Black families reported to the child protection system. It will critically examine the feasibility and level of participation between both organizations in order to improve efficiency of cross-system collaborative partnerships in the area of overrepresentation within child protection systems.

1.3.6 Methodological variations in measuring overrepresentation and disparity

Methodological variations in measuring overrepresentation and disparity make comparison across studies difficult. As a result, variations in rates of overrepresentation and disparity differ across jurisdictions resulting in our inability to accurately compare and attribute differences to methodological strategy or jurisdictional context. There are three main methodological variations in the reviewed studies. First overrepresentation studies either use population-based denominators (i.e. unconditional) or decision-based denominators (i.e. conditional). Population-based denominators compare a target group's level of representation within the child protection system to their representation within the general population. Decision-based denominators compare a target group's level of representation within a particular stage within the child protection system (i.e. investigation) to another particular stage within the child protection system (i.e. substantiation). Fluke et al., (2010) in a study of overrepresentation comparing Black and White children investigated for child maltreatment in Colorado, found that Black children were two times more likely than White children to be investigated when using population-based denominators, but faced comparable rates of investigations when decision-based denominators were used. This difference in sampling frame can thus result in different findings depending on how the researcher chooses to measure disparity. This dissertation uses both unconditional and conditional sampling frames to measure

disparity stemming from representation in the general child population and disparity from within the child protection population.

Secondly, studies on disparity vary by who is chosen as the reference group. Shaw, Putnam-Hornstein, Magruder, & Needell (2008) in their approach to measuring disparity, compare the level of representation of one group, versus all others. Some of the studies reviewed have chosen to compare Black children's representation to "all other children" as a reference category, whereas others have only included comparison of Black children to White children. The use of an "all other children" reference group produces a disparity index that is sensitive to variability within the reference group. Thus, inclusion of First Nations children in an "all other children" reference group will lower abuse rates for Black children given the high abuse rates of First Nations children. As a result of these considerations, this study compares Black children's disparity to White children in the first study and compares Black children's disparity to all other children excluding First Nations children in the second study.

Thirdly, the bulk of the studies reviewed have been cross-sectional. This study design is unable to integrate a temporal dimension in understanding overrepresentation and disparity of Black children. Cross-sectional studies occur at a single point in time making them less able to account for the dynamic nature of family functioning and decision-points within the child protection system. Cross-sectional data thus potentially obscures important aspects of service delivery processes and outcomes that may affect the conclusions drawn from research on overrepresentation of Black children. This dissertation uses longitudinal data to determine whether Black children face disparate outcomes beyond their initial child welfare investigation and determines whether their service trajectory differs from other racial groups.

1.4 Methods

This dissertation includes three separate studies that shed light on the issue of overrepresentation of Black Canadian children receiving services from the child protection

system through three separate angles. The chapters follow a logical sequence beginning with documenting the extent and potential causes of overrepresentation and disparity. Determining whether the service disparity faced by Black children remains prevalent throughout their service trajectory influencing their ability to exit the child protection system.   Exploring the development and challenges faced by a cross-system collaboration between a child protection agency and community organization seeking to reduce overrepresentation by rendering support services more accessible to Black families.

The first study documents the level of overrepresentation and disparity of Black children reported to the child protection system. It uses secondary data from two different data sources: a clinical administrative dataset derived from the local child protection agency and the 2001 Census, 2006 Census, and 2011 National Household Survey (NHS) from Statistics Canada. The longitudinal child protection data is from the local agency mandated to provide child protection services for the entire subsample of children. Between April 1, 2002 and March 31, 2011, a total of 15,875 children under 15 were reported to the child protection agency. Racial categories[4] based on visible minority definitions from Statistics Canada were used to create equivalent categories within the agency dataset. A description of each child's maltreatment history, along with a number of individual and service level covariates can be constructed from this data. However, family composition, employment and income were not systematically collected and therefore was not available in the clinical-administrative child protection data. Data extracted from the Canadian Census (2001, 2006, 2011) was used to obtain socioeconomic characteristics for primary adult respondents that identified having at least one child in their census family and to calculate population-based disparity indexes through rate per 1000. Converting a rate per 1000 into a disproportionality index standardizes measures on the value of 1, which enables proportionate deviation from the reference group to be easily interpreted. Shaw et al. , 2008) measure disparity through comparing the representation of one group versus another, citing variability in findings depending on the comparison group. Both unconditional and conditional sampling frames were used to obtain population-based disparity and decision-based disparity

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[4] For further details on the racial categories please see detailed account in Chapter 2.

within the child protection system. The outcome measures studied include whether cases were: screened in for investigation, substantiated for maltreatment, petitioned for final court orders and placed in out-of-home care.

The second study uses Cox proportional hazard regression[5] to examine factors associated with length of time spent in out-of-home placement for Black children receiving services from a child protection agency and to more specifically determine whether disparate outcomes to reunification are associated with race. It uses secondary longitudinal clinical administrative data to compare case characteristics of children placed in out-of-home care between April 1, 2002 and March 31, 2011. A total of 1395 children entered out-of-home placement for the first time within the child protection agency. Categories[6] based on visible minority definitions from Statistics Canada were used to create similar categories within the agency dataset. A description of each child's maltreatment history, including individual and service level covariates were constructed. In addition, secondary data was extracted from the 2006 Canadian Census and was used to develop a composite index of socioeconomic disadvantage (see Esposito, Chabot, Rothwell, Trocmé, & Delaye, 2017).

For both secondary analyses from the first and second study, a decision to exclude First Nations children from the analysis was taken for several reasons. First, the overrepresentation and disparity of First Nations children has been well documented within Canada. Secondly, First Nations Principles of OCAP require any research on First Nations children be done in conjunction with First Nations communities. Furthermore, because First Nations children have been shown to have the poorest outcomes within the child protection system, including them in the sample reduces the ability to accurately measure disparity for Black children compared to White children.

The third study uses thematic analysis of six semi-structured interviews to document the development and challenges of a cross-system collaboration. This study was nested within a

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[5] The Cox proportional hazard model is explained in detail in Chapter 3.
[6] For further details on the racial categories please see detailed account in Chapter 3.

program evaluation of the parenting support program implemented by the child protection agency and community organization. The program evaluation sought to describe the parenting support program and its implementation process, as well as to evaluate the program with respect to the partnership between the two organizations. Study participants were recruited based on their membership in the stakeholder committee representing both the child protection agency and the community organization. A semi-structured interview protocol centering on participants' knowledge of the development of the collaboration, the ways in which the organizations were collaborating, and their experiences and perceptions of benefits and challenges of the collaboration was administered. Thematic analysis was used to generate themes from the interview data. Themes were identified using an inductive approach, with the specific research question evolving throughout the coding process(Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The proposed methodology within this dissertation attempts to further knowledge on overrepresentation of Black children in Canada through use of longitudinal data primarily obtained by the child protection system. It is thus unable to fully explore the causes of overrepresentation through the perspective of Black families. Interpretation of findings stemming as a result of this proposed methodology should be made with caution given its limited ability to fully account for bias and the contribution of discriminatory factors from the child protection system accounting for overrepresentation.

1.5 Summary

The series of articles in this dissertation contribute to the development of our current knowledge base through beginning to explore the three primary causes of Black children's overrepresentation in a Canadian context: (1) disproportionate need, (2) service accessibility and (3) discriminatory practice. By using longitudinal data to study racial disparity for Black children, its findings will serve to better documents trends and variability in service trajectory from a Black child's point of entry into the child protection system to their exit. Additionally, use of census data will serve to document the disproportionate need experienced by Black

children through providing measures of socioeconomic disadvantage within the general population. Lastly, the final study of this dissertation documents the development and challenges of a cross-system collaboration seeking to reduce overrepresentation within the child protection system through rendering support services more accessible and adapting child protection practice to a more culturally appropriate response to the Black community.

Knowledge generated from these three studies will help to better understand the extent, causes and proposed solutions to the overrepresentation of Black Canadian children receiving child protection services. Use of longitudinal data will provide for more accurate measures of overrepresentation and disparity through tracking Black children's service trajectories over time. This will help determine whether overrepresentation of Black children is solely a product of front-end overrepresentation or also stems from a lack of exits due to longer lengths-of-stays in out-of-home placement. The answer to this question, and others, will help to better tailor responses for Black children and their families within the child protection system. Findings from the last study of this dissertation, will help in determining whether cross-system collaboration is an effective way of reducing overrepresentation for marginalized communities in addition to highlighting important considerations to ensuring full participation of organizations. Furthering knowledge on cross-system collaborations will help to improve efforts on implementing effective models of cross-system collaboration.

1.6 Protection of human subjects

Children and families were not recruited for this dissertation. The secondary clinical-administrative data as well as Canadian census data used for the three studies were anonymized and did not include any identifying information. Study participants for the qualitative study were recruited from the child protection agency and community organization. Ethics approvals

were received by both the child protection university institute representing the agency the and Université de Montreal (REB: IUSMD-16-20). See Annex 2 for ethical certificates.

Chapter 2: Overrepresentation and disparity of a subsample of Black Canadian children receiving child protection services in Quebec

Abstract

This article examines rates of disparities using longitudinal clinical-administrative data provided by a child protection agency in Montreal, Quebec for a subsample of Black, White, and other visible minority children over a ten-year period. Rates per 1,000, a population disparity index (PDI) and a decision-based index (DDI) are calculated to determine the representation of each racial category at each decision-point in the child protection system. Results reveal that although Black children represented 9% of the general population in 2011, they made up 24% of those receiving child protection services during the corresponding year. Compared to White children, Black children's protection reports were five times more likely to be screened in, substantiated, and brought to court. Black children were also five times more likely than White children to enter out-of-home placement and were on average 9.8 times more likely to experience recurrence of maltreatment. Meanwhile, child protection reports concerning other visible minority children when compared to White children, were approximately twice as likely to be screened in with rates of disparity that gradually decreased across decision points. This is contrary to Black children whose rates of disparity remained consistent all throughout their service trajectory. The disproportionate level of need experienced by Black children compared to White and other visible minority children, as documented by population socioeconomic characteristics, is hypothesized as one factor contributing to disparate outcomes.

KEYWORDS: Child maltreatment, Child protection, Overrepresentation, Racial disparity, Black children, Black Canadians

2.1 Introduction

The overrepresentation of Black children and families in the child protection system has been studied by scholars for more than three decades. Black children continue to be overrepresented in child protection reports, investigations, and foster care entries (Courtney et al., 1996; Dunbar & Barth, 2008; Foster et al., 2011; King et al., 2017; Lavergne et al., 2009; Putnam-Hornstein et al., 2013; Sedlak et al., 2010). There are several competing explanations for overrepresentation that can be grouped into three primary causes; (1) Black children experience a disproportionate level of needs, when compared to other children, (2) Black children lack accessible services within their communities to address these needs; and (3) Black children experience a reporting bias that stems from the discriminatory practice of professionals based on a child's race (Barth, 2005; Boyd, 2014; Dettlaff et al., 2011; Fluke et al., 2010; Hill, 2004; Rivaux et al., 2008). Research has produced evidence that all three causes negatively impact outcomes for these children, making it difficult to accurately identify under what circumstances and under what conditions they influence outcomes for Black families. More than likely, their overrepresentation results from all three phenomena, compounding their deleterious effects for Black children (Dettlaff & Rycraft, 2008).

Within Canada, while a generalized racialization of child protection services has been documented (Lavergne, Dufour, Trocmé, & Larrivée, 2008; Sinha, Trocmé, Fallon, & MacLaurin, 2013; Trocmé, Knoke, & Blackstock, 2004). Longitudinal data on Black children receiving child protection services allows us to document trends and variability in service trajectories. Thus far, the majority of overrepresentation studies of Black children in Canada have been cross-sectional and limited to Ontario and Quebec. Research on First Nations children in Canada has made significant advancements through development of the First Nations Component of the Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect (FNCIS-2008) which examines differences between child, family, household, maltreatment and service response profiles of maltreatments investigations for First Nations children and non-Aboriginal children. Studies on pathways of

overrepresentation for First Nations children indicate that they disproportionately face risk factors contributing to their overrepresentation within the child protection system and increased disparities at each stage of involvement (substantiation, on-going services, placement, etc.) (Sinha et al., 2013; Trocmé et al., 2004). The risk factors for First Nations children result from a distinctive historical context of hardship that is not applicable to Black families. In the United States, where substantive research exists on the overrepresentation of Black children in child protection services, generalizability of these findings to Canada must be considered carefully. Canada and the United States differ with regards to the immigration patterns of their Black population and respective social welfare policies. Canada is distinct in its universal healthcare system and its extensive network of social programs that provide a political landscape that should be more favourable for Black families. These differences have been found to play an important role in improving access to care, particularly for marginalized subpopulations of society (Pylypchuk & Sarpong, 2013).

This study determines the level of representation for English speaking Black Canadian children receiving child protection services within Montreal, Quebec between 2002 and 2013. Expecting that this population will be overrepresented, this study seeks to understand the reasons for overrepresentation by (1) comparing Black children's rates of disparity with White children; (2) examining decision-making disparity within the child protection system at various points of service; and (3) documenting the socioeconomic characteristics for Black, White and other visible minority racial categories at the population level. This study controls for the heterogeneity of the Black Canadian population by choosing to focus its investigation on specific group of Black children. Black Anglophones were present in Quebec as of the late 1800s, mostly residing in the industrial part of Montreal (Torczyner & Springer, 2001). However in 1967, a shift in Canadian policy allowed for immigration from the Caribbean and entry into a number of professional, technical and domestic employments (Government of Canada, 2015). As a result, a significant number of the Black population in Montreal are English-speaking second-generation immigrants (Torczyner, 2010). By choosing this more homogenous sample, we are able to minimize some of the confounding variables related to the migratory and settlement conditions of recent immigrants,

whose involvement with child protection services may stem from a lack of knowledge of child welfare legislation and cross-cultural differences in parenting practices.

2.1.1 Defining overrepresentation and disparity

The terms overrepresentation, disproportionality, and disparity are often used interchangeably in the literature. The "overrepresentation" of Black families refers to Black children representing higher than average proportions of children receiving protection services. This concept is also referred to as "disproportionality" and is commonly calculated by determining a rate per 1000 children (Shaw et al., 2008). It is a condition that occurs when the proportion of a racial group in a target population (i.e. child protection) differs from the proportion of people of a reference population (i.e. general child population) in an analogous target population. The term "disparity" refers to a comparison between one racial group's representation and that of another racial group's representation where both groups have experienced the same event; a disparity index (DI) is the standard measure of such differences (Shaw et al., 2008). This measure is also commonly referred to as a population disparity index (PDI). Disparity has also been used in reference to unequal outcomes experienced by one group when compared to another racial group. Under this definition, unequal service outcomes within the child protection system would be explained by differential treatment between groups. By calculating a decision-based disparity index (DDI) this study was able to describe disparity within the child protection system (Derezotes, Richardson, King, Kleinschmit-Rembert, & Pratt, 2008; Fluke, Yuan, Hedderson, & Curtis, 2003; Harris & Hackett, 2008).

2.1.2 Overrepresentation of Black children in the United States

Within the United States, Black children continue to be overrepresented in child protection reports, investigations, and foster care entries (Courtney et al., 1996; Dunbar & Barth, 2008; Foster

et al., 2011; Putnam-Hornstein et al., 2013; Sedlak et al., 2010). An analysis conducted in 2010, compared the proportion of Black children in foster care with their proportion in the general child population and found they were overrepresented in 46 states; the PDI ranged from 1.1 to 5.3 in these cases (A. J. Dettlaff, 2014). This represents a decrease in both the national and state levels since 2000, when PDI had ranged as high as 8.3 (A. J. Dettlaff, 2014). While foster care is typically used as a marker to measure disproportionality, rates for Black children have been shown to increase at each stage of the child protection process, beginning with the initial referral for investigation (Harris & Hackett, 2008). Fluke et al. (2003), using data from the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS), calculated disproportionality and disparity indices in five states for children who were subject of an investigation of child abuse and neglect and were later found to be victims of maltreatment. They found that in all five counties studied, African-American children were investigated disproportionately, with the PDI ranging from 1.33 to 2.04 (Fluke et al., 2003). This contrasted with White children, whose disproportionality indices were consistently less than 1 in all states. When calculating the disparity index between Black and White children, the index was greater than 1 across all five states. However, analysis of victimization indices using children who were the subject of an investigation, rather than the general population, as the denominator, indicated no disproportionality for African-American children suggesting that little additional disproportionality is added past investigation (Fluke et al., 2003). This finding is similar to other studies that used the general population as a comparison point for decisions across the child protection system demonstrating that initial disproportionate representation is carried through to later stages of intervention (Morton, Ocasio, & Simmel, 2011). Fluke et al. (2003) concluded that the disproportionality of African-American children within the child protection system is most influenced at the entry point when they are accepted for investigation.

Meanwhile, calculations of population and decision-based disparity indices of referrals to the child protection system for Hispanic children varied across states. Some studies have found Hispanic children to be more likely than White children to be referred to the child protection system, while others have found them to be underrepresented (Johnson-Motoyama, Moore, Damman, & Rudlang-Perman, 2017; Shaw et al., 2008). This plausibly suggests significant state

and regional variations in the representation of Hispanic children, with overrepresentation observed in certain states and underrepresentation observed in others (Dettlaff, 2011).

More recently, analyses using decision-based indexes (DDI), which rely on the preceding decision point to provide the denominator, have been argued to be a better method to assess bias within the child protection system. Morton et al. (2011) calculated decision-based disparity indices for substantiation and foster-care entry using all open cases at the previous decision point (i.e. investigation and substantiation). They found that the rates of disparity actually decreased as African-American children moved across the system, serving to return population-based disparity values closer to 1 for every decision point after investigation. Thus, while African Americans may have higher rates of substantiation and placement past the point of investigation, this is primarily the result of their disproportionate representation at the investigation stage. Investigation represents a significant gateway for later decisions that further affect substantiation and placement disparities (A. J. Dettlaff et al., 2011).

Given that rates of overrepresentation for African American children appears to be driven by an increased number of referrals to the child protection system, it has been argued that African American children face a disproportionate level of need through increased exposure to risk conditions associated with maltreatment. Thus, attempting to understand disparities within the child protection system requires that researchers control for various factors to isolate the effect of race. There is considerable evidence that maltreatment occurs disproportionately among poor families (Drake, Lee, & Jonson-Reid, 2009; Pelton, 2015). Given that African-American families have been found to be more than twice as likely as White families to live in poverty (Cooper, 2001; Jargowsky, 2015) and that they spend longer periods of time in poverty (Corcoran, 2001), examination of both race and socioeconomic status is required to fully understand the source of child protection disparities (A. J. Dettlaff et al., 2011). However, many studies have found that race had no effect after controlling for poverty (Bartholet, 2009; Drake et al., 2011), other studies have concluded that race alone accounts for the observed disparities (Hill, 2004; Lu et al., 2004; Rivaux et al., 2008). These contrasting findings may result from methodological limitations in

researchers' ability to accurately control, measure, and analyze poverty, racial bias and discrimination. Furthermore, given that poverty does not in itself cause maltreatment, increased attention is now given to geographical context and neighborhood effects on racial differences (Coulton, Crampton, Irwin, Spilsbury, & Korbin, 2007; Freisthler & Maguire-Jack, 2015). This may explain why Latinos, who have similar socioeconomic characteristics to those of African Americans, have been shown to be underrepresented within the child protection system. African American children were 14 times more likely than White children to reside in socio-economically segregated neighborhoods isolated from resources to help mitigate against child maltreatment (Drake & Rank, 2009). This finding was less pronounced for Latino children (Drake & Rank, 2009).

2.1.3 Overrepresentation of Black children in a Canada

A small number of studies have captured the representation of Black Canadians within the child protection system (King et al., 2017; Lavergne, et al., 2009; Sarmiento & Lavergne, 2017) . While the 2008 Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect included a First Nations component, a similar study does not exist for Black Canadians. Rather, each Canadian province has been left to determine whether documenting disproportionality and disparity data is relevant to their provincial child protection mandate. Quebec and Ontario are the sole provinces that have attempted to document the representation of Black children within their child protection systems. These provinces have the highest populations of Black children in Canada, with most residing in urban communities (Chui, 2011). Within Ontario, an analysis conducted by a Toronto child protection agency in 2015 found that Black children were five times more likely than White children to be reported for maltreatment, transferred to on-going services, and placed in out-of-home care, compared to White children (Children's Aid Society of Toronto, 2015). Data from the Ontario Incidence Study – 2013 found smaller rates of disparity suggesting that Black children were more likely to be investigated (PDI: 1.41), have a substantiated investigation (PDI:1.64), be transferred to ongoing-services (PDI: 1.49), and experience placement (PDI: 1.57) when compared to White children (King et al., 2017). Using decision-based analysis to determine differences

within the child protection system, the magnitude of these disparities diminished from the substantiation stage (PDI: 1.16), to transfer to ongoing-services (PDI: 1.06), and again for placement (PDI:1.05). What both of these analyses indicate is that given their representation in the population, Black children are more likely than White children to be investigated for maltreatment concerns. This effect results from the disproportionately higher number of referrals for maltreatment affecting Black children at the entry for service, rather than reflecting decision-making within the child protection system. Within Quebec, a cross-sectional study used data from 2003 to compare the rates of representation of Black children and other visible minorities receiving child protection services to all children within the child protection system. The findings from this study indicated that Black children were more likely to be investigated (PDI: 1.96), to receive a substantiated investigation (PDI: 1.77), and to experience placement (PDI: 1.40), than were White children. They also found that other visible minorities were less likely to be reported (PDI: 0.72), to have a substantiated investigation (PDI: 0.61), and to experience placement (PDI:0.44) than White children. Comparing results from Quebec and Ontario illustrates that in Ontario, rates of disparity for Black children appear relatively consistent across decision points, whereas in Quebec they gradually decrease. This may be a result of comparing Black children to all children, or of provincial particularities that provide more opportunities for Black children to exit the child protection system across decision points in Quebec. However, given both studies were cross-sectional in nature, this may explain inconsistent findings given the inability of each study to account for trends over time.

       Similarly to the United States, Black children are overrepresented within child protection systems in Canada. However, in Canada we know less about the factors that may explain this phenomenon and how they influence outcomes for Black children. Additionally, given the multiple ethnic affiliations, varied cultural beliefs, differing practices, and contrasting migratory patterns of Black Canadians, documenting overrepresentation and disparity for a more homogenous group may provide a more nuanced portrait of overrepresentation and disparity.

2.1.4 Theoretical models of overrepresentation

Several theoretical models have been proposed to explain the overrepresentation of Black children in child protective services (Barth, 2005; Boyd, 2014; Drake et al., 2011; Fluke et al., 2010). Generally, these models suggest the three primary reasons for overrepresentation portrayed in Figure 3: (1) Black children experience a disproportionate level of need, when compared to other children; (2) Black children lack accessible services within their communities to address these needs; and (3) Black children experience racial bias that stems from the discriminatory practices of professionals or institutions (Barth, 2005; Boyd, 2014; Dettlaff et al., 2011; Fluke et al., 2010). The first hypothesis suggests that Black families experience a greater degree of risk factors than families of other backgrounds in the form of: unemployment, teen parenthood, poverty, substance abuse, incarceration, domestic violence, and mental illness. These risk factors make Black families more prone to poverty, which is considered a driving force of child maltreatment. The second hypothesis stems from a lack of community services and other protective resources among Black families to address social conditions preventing entry into the child protection system (Barth, 2005). The third hypothesis suggests that bias and discrimination within the child protection system results in Black children experiencing referral bias because of increased exposure to public social services (Derezotes et al., 2008) in addition to systemic racism from biased policies, practices, procedures and privileges that disadvantage Black children (Boyd, 2014). Attempting to isolate each of these reasons is difficult, pointing to the complexity of challenges faced by Black families at both individual and societal levels, as a result of structural and systemic racism. More than likely a "multiplicative model" that takes into consideration all three reasons for overrepresentation and disparity is required.
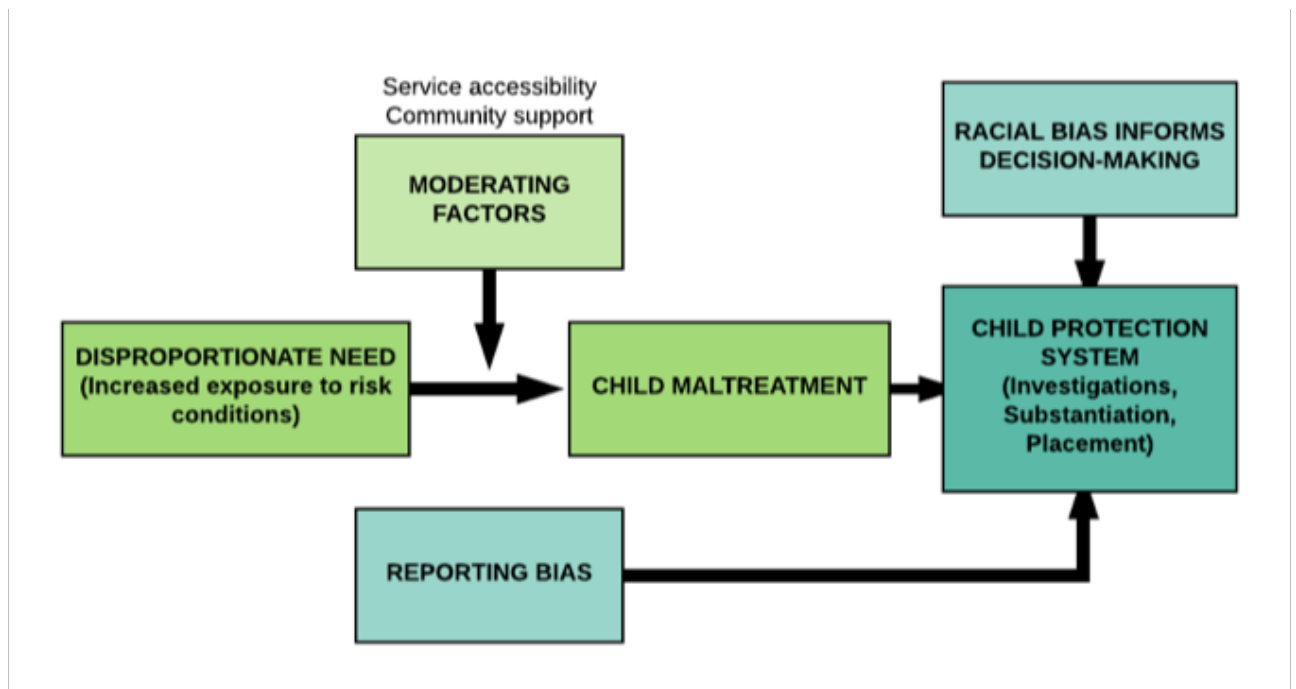
Figure 3.   Conceptual model of overrepresentation within the child protection system.

In addition to overrepresentation within the child protection system, studies have demonstrated that some racial groups experience underrepresentation within the child protection system. Asians, and to a much lesser degree Hispanic children, have been found to be underrepresented in the child protection system in the United States and Canada (Dettlaff, 2011; Lee, Fuller-Thomson, Trocmé, Fallon, & Black, 2016).   This underrepresentation may be attributed to a lower occurrence of maltreatment in these populations or the presence of cultural protective factors that help mitigate against child maltreatment (Drake et al., 2011). Studies have also suggested that underreporting may occur due to cultural perceptions, whereby professionals may be less likely to report maltreatment because of cultural norms (Cheung & LaChapelle, 2011; Maguire-Jack, Lanier, Johnson-Motoyama, Welch, & Dineen, 2015)

2.1.5 The current study

This study seeks to determine the representation of Anglophone Black Canadians receiving child protection services from a local child protection agency mandated to providing English-speaking services in Montreal, Quebec over a 10-year period. Canadian studies have been limited in their ability to control for the heterogeneity of the Black Canadian population and distinctive migratory patterns from recent immigrants to 17th century African slaves. By choosing a specific subset of Black Canadians, we are better able to make sense of disparity by using a more homogeneous sample within a specific jurisdiction. In addition, it has been argued that lower levels of aggregation provide better estimates of the true disparities that exist within the child protection system (Ards, Myers, Malkis, Sugrue, & Zhou, 2003). By focusing on a specific jurisdiction, we are able to get a better sense of how such disparities evolve over time.

Cross-sectional studies on racial disparities in child protection have been conducted within Canada; however, this methodology tends to overrepresent children receiving long-term services and underrepresent children having a more short-term experience (Esposito et al., 2016). This may prove particularly problematic in studying Black children, who American scholars have already demonstrated face longer-length of stays compared to other children (Hill, 2005). Longitudinal studies allow researchers to describe the child protection experience more precisely and track changes over time more effectively (Esposito et al., 2016). Determining the level of representation of Black children in a Canadian context through the use of longitudinal cohorts begins to address the knowledge gap by providing a more accurate depiction of the clinical population served and how their service disparity changes over time.

Finally, previous studies have relied on socioeconomic characteristics as defined through clinical administrative data completed by caseworkers within the child protection system. This study begins to better understand the contributing causes of overrepresentation by examining exposure to risk conditions at the general population level.

2.2 Methods

The study consisted of a secondary analysis using two different data sources: a clinical administrative dataset derived from the child protection agency in Montreal, Quebec and the 2001 Census, 2006 Census, and 2011 National Household Survey (NHS) from Statistics Canada. The use of population data eliminated the necessity for inferential statistics given that any measured differences represent true population characteristics. The clinical administrative dataset included anonymous, longitudinal child protection data from Montreal agency mandated to provide English-speaking child protection services for the entire sample of children. The agency dataset provided information on services received by the child in addition to a number of other covariates. This study tracked two groups of children based on their shared child protection service experience between April 1, 2002 and March 31, 2014: a service cohort that had a child protection report screened in by the child protection agency (children under 15) and a recurrence cohort (children under 17) that was tracked one year following case closure. Data from the service cohort included whether the report was screened in, whether maltreatment allegations were substantiated, whether a court order was obtained, and whether the child was placed in out-of-home placement. The recurrence cohort consisted of children for whom a substantiated child protection decision was subsequently made one year of the closure of the case.

To generate the estimates that were later used to obtain population-based disparity indexes of child protection involvement, data from the 2001 Census, the 2006 Census, and the 2011 NHS were filtered to select children who resided in the Census Dissemination Area of Montreal and whose first official language was English. A race variable was created that classified the Black, White, and other visible minority population into age groups corresponding to the cohorts tracked by the agency dataset. The category for other visible minority children included those who were not White, Black, or First Nations (including South Asian, Arab, West Asian, Chinese, Filipino, Southeast Asian, Korean, Japanese, and Latin American children). Census and NHS cycles were

matched by corresponding calendar year for each cohort (service and recurrence) within the agency dataset. Data from the 2001 Census corresponded to 2002 data from the child protection agency (given no data was generated in 2001); data from the 2006 Census corresponded with 2006 and data from the 2011 NHS corresponded with 2011 agency data. Similar matches were made between Census-based and agency data for the recurrence cohort and case characteristics derived from the agency data. In addition to obtaining general child population counts by race for each of the Census and NHS years, socioeconomic characteristics corresponding to the sample were obtained for adult primary respondents that identified having at least one child in their census family.

2.3   Sample

Between April 1, 2002 and March 31, 2011, a total of 15,875 children under 15 were reported to the child protection agency. Racial categories based on visible minority definitions from Statistics Canada were used to create equivalent categories within the agency dataset. Within this sample, race information was available for 60% of cases, coded as White (N=4010), Black (N=2731), other visible minority (N=2264) and First Nations (N=561). The cases of First Nations children were not analyzed, given similarities with previous work completed from the First Nations component of the CIS-2008 (FNCIS-2008) and other studies in Quebec (De La Sablonnière-Griffin, Sinha, Esposito, Chabot, & Trocmé, 2016). Missing information pertaining to race status was largest at the initial stages of the child protection process and gradually decreased across decision-points, suggesting that these cases represented children for whom involvement with the agency was brief and thus caseworkers did not feel the need to complete racial information. For this reason, data regarding these children was considered not to be missing at random, and we did not impute values to them. Information for these children is provided under the unidentified race category.

A service cohort (i.e. children for whom an investigation was screened in) was followed for a 36-month period after their child maltreatment report was screened for further evaluation. To ensure that all children could be tracked for the full 36-month period, the cohort was limited to children under the age of 15. A separate recurrence cohort of children under age 17 who received child protection services and had their child protection case closed was followed for 12 months to determine whether there was a subsequent re-report with a substantiation decision within that time frame. Between April 1, 2002 and March 31, 2013, a total of 4382 children had their case closed by this child protection agency. To calculate disparity indices, service and recurrence cohorts were matched to each of the three Census years: 2001, 2006, and 2011. Population counts from the 2001 Census were used for the 2002 child protection counts, given data collection from the child protection agency only began in 2002.

2.4   Variables

2.4.1   Characteristics of reported child protection allegations

In addition to racial background, information regarding each child protection report was also obtained. This included the source of the report and whether the individual was a professional or non-professional. Non-professional sources consisted of individuals who had personal knowledge of the allegations, such as family members and neighbours. Professionals were individuals who reported allegations in the context of their employment, including community health employees, child protection agency staff, school employees, police, hospital employees, and professionals in the private sector. Information on the age of children was grouped into three categories: 0–5 years old, 6–11 years old, and 12–17 years old. Information on the primary type of maltreatment (the nature of the reported allegations) was grouped into six broad categories: (a) neglect, including physical neglect, medical neglect, school neglect, and material deprivation; (b) physical abuse, including the risk of physical abuse; (c) sexual abuse, including the risk of sexual abuse; (d) psychological and emotional abuse, including rejection, denigration, exposure to

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intimate partner violence, and exploitation; (e) parents' high risk lifestyle —lifestyles expected to result in a failure to supervise or protect the child, including abandonment due to parental absence, refusal to assure child care, and risk of neglect; and (f) behavioural problems that are either internalizing or externalizing in nature that pose significant risks to the child's physical or psychological integrity.

2.4.2 Characteristics of service received within the child protection agency

From the service cohort, information was obtained at various decision points within the child protection system. "Screened-in cases" are reports determined to warrant further evaluation by a caseworker, given the intake workers' concerns about the veracity of the allegations and their inability to fully assess the situation. The presence of substantiation indicates children whose allegations of maltreatment were confirmed following investigation. This often confirmed that the child would receive on-going services from the child protection agency. When families are in disagreement with the decision and do not acknowledge the child protection concerns, court measures are sought. Judiciarization counts all children for whom final protective judicial measures were sought and issued within 36 months of the initial screened in report. Placement refers to situations where a child is placed in "out-of-home care". Out-of-home care is defined as any placement lasting longer than 72 hours following initial investigation. Placements are only considered if they last longer than 72 hours, to control for respite placements and emergency placements, which are not part of the long-term plan for a child. Placement also refers to children placed in accredited settings (foster and residential care) or kinship care within 36 months of the initial screened-in report. From the recurrence cohort, case closure refers to cases for which on-going services within the child protection system came to an end. Recurrence indicates the presence of a substantiated child protection report within a year following case closure.

2.4.3 Socioeconomic characteristics at the population level

Socioeconomic characteristics for Anglophones residing in Montreal corresponding to Black, White and other visible minority categories were obtained for each of the three Census cycles for adult primary respondents that identified having at least one child in their census family. These characteristics included: mother's age, parenting status, income, education, employment, and migration status. Mother's age was grouped into three categories: (a) between 18 and 25, (b) between 26 and 30, and (c) 31 and up. Parenting status was divided into two categories: married or common-law partners and lone parent families. The reported median income refers to the total census family income. Education was divided into four categories representing the highest level of education obtained by the primary respondent: (a) no high school diploma, (b) completed high school, (c) had attended college or trade school, and (d) had studied at the university level. Employment status referred to whether the primary respondent had been (a) unemployed, (b) held full-time employment, or (c) held part-time employment during the preceding census year. Lastly, migration status referred to whether the primary respondent was (a) first generation, (b) second generation, or (c) third generation Canadian or more.

2.5 Analysis

Rates per 1,000, population and decision-based disparities

Three types of measures of disparity were calculated: (a) a rate per 1,000; (b) a population-based disparity index score; and (c) a decision-based disparity score. For each racial group, a rate per 1,000 children was used to measure racial representation. The population-based disparity index was calculated using the representation of each racial group member experiencing the child protection event to their corresponding representation within the general population. This is known as an unconditional disparity because the denominator used across all service decision points is based on the entire population (Shaw et al., 2008). The respective rate per 1,000 was calculated for each racial category by dividing the instances of child protection involvement for each service

or decision point (screened in, substantiated, court-ordered, placed, and recurrence events) by the number of children in the population and multiplying the result by 1,000. The rate per 1,000 Black children involved in the child protection system is therefore calculated as:

$$\text{Rate per } 1000_{black} = \frac{\text{Child protection Population}_{black}}{\text{NHS Child Population}_{black}} \times 1000$$

to obtain their respective rate per 1,000, where the other racial categories (White and other visible minority) can be substituted for Black.

From here, to calculate the population-based disparity index (PDI) that measures the difference in rates of representation in child protection services between racial groups, the rate per 1,000 of Black children from the general population is compared to the rate per 1,000 of White children in the general population involved in the child protection system. The formula for PDI between Black and White children involved in the child protection system is therefore:

$$\text{Population Disparity Index (PDI)} = \frac{\text{Rate per } 1000_{black}}{\text{Rate per } 1000_{white}}$$

A similar PDI was calculated between other visible minority children and White children involved in the child protection system by replacing Black with other visible minority in the above-mentioned formula.

The decision-based disparity index (DDI) measured conditional disparity by specifying the denominator for each of the ratios as referring to a population experiencing a specific decision point within the child protection system. The DDI can be calculated at any stage or decision point of interest by obtaining the count of that stage and dividing it by the previous stage of child protection involvement for a specified racial group of interest and dividing that ratio by a similar ratio for another racial group. The formula for DDI comparing Black and White disparity is thus:

$$\text{Decision Based Index (DDI)} = \frac{\text{Child Protection Population}_{\text{B Black}}/\text{Child Protection Population}_{\text{A Black}}}{\text{Child Protection Population}_{\text{B white}}/\text{Child Protection Population}_{\text{A White}}}$$

where B represents the decision point of interest (e.g., screened-in protection report) and A represents the previous stage of child protection service (e.g., child protection report).

2.6 Results

2.6.1 Population-based disparities across the service trajectory

Table II provides descriptive statistics for White, Black, other visible minority, and unidentified children within the child protection agency across the various decision points. A rate per 1,000 and a PDI have been computed using respective general population data from the each of the census years, except for the unidentified category. Given that First Nations children were excluded from the study, totals for each of the "All" categories exclude the count for First Nations in both the general population and the child protection sample.

Generally, the Black population with children under 15 years old has increased by 15% between 2002 and 2011 (see Table II). For other visible minorities, a 36% increase was observed, while a decrease of 11% was observed for White children in the general population. When compared to their representation in the general child population, Black children were overrepresented within the child protection agency across all three years of data collection. In 2011, Black children represented 9% of children from the general population aged 15 and under, but made up 24% of screened-in child protection reports. A similar overrepresentation occurred in 2006 (9% of the general child population versus 20% of screened-in child protection reports) and in 2002 (8% of the general child population in 2001 versus 20% of screened-in child protection reports from 2002). Other visible minority children represented 16% of the general child population in 2001 and 21% of screened-in reports in 2002, signifying a slight overrepresentation.

However, for the subsequent census cycles, visible minority children were slightly underrepresented both in 2006 (18% of the general child population versus 17% of screened-in child protection reports) and in 2011 (22% of the general child population versus 18% of screened-in child protection reports). White children under 15 years of age were under-represented in the child protection system across all three points of data collection.

Table II. Representation by racial category and decision point for children receiving CPS in 2002, 2006 and 2011

	General Population < 15		Screened In				Substantiated					Court					Placement			
	N	%	N	%	Rate per 1000	PDI	N	%	Rate per 1000	PDI	% change	N	%	Rate per 1000	PDI	% change	N	%	Rate Per 1000	PDI
2002*																				
All**	113540	100	912	100	8.0	-	523	100	4.6	-	-43%	345	100	3.0	-	-33%	198	100	1.7	-
White	86395	76	316	35	3.7	-	195	37	2.3	-	-38%	145	42	1.7	-	-26%	73	37	0.8	-
Black	8860	8	180	20	20.3	5.5	118	23	13.3	5.8	-34%	75	22	8.5	5.0	-36%	53	27	6.0	7.5
Other VM	18285	16	188	21	10.3	2.8	106	20	5.8	2.5	-44%	66	19	3.6	2.1	-38%	30	15	1.6	2.0
Unidentified	-	-	228	25	-	-	104	20	-	-	-54%	59	17	-	-	-28%	42	21	-	-
2006																				
All**	114250	100	850	100	7.4	-	408	100	3.6	-	-52%	296	100	2.6	-	-26%	179	100	1.6	-
White	83520	73	247	29	3.0	-	132	32	1.6	-	-47%	120	41	1.4	-	-9%	85	47	1.0	-
Black	9955	9	170	20	17.1	5.7	106	26	10.6	6.6	-38%	81	27	8.1	5.8	-24%	51	28	5.1	5.1
Other VM	20775	18	145	17	7.0	2.3	89	22	4.3	2.7	-39%	62	21	3.0	2.1	-30%	28	16	1.3	1.3
Unidentified	-	-	288	34	-	-	81	20	-	-	-72%	33	11	-	-	-54%	15	8	-	-
2011																				
All**	111765	100	818	100	7.3	-	344	100	3.1	-	-58%	234	100	2.1	-	-30%	122	100	1.1	-
White	76655	69	272	33	3.5	-	124	36	1.6	-	-54%	92	39	1.2	-	-26%	57	47	0.7	-
Black	10195	9	200	24	19.6	5.6	88	26	8.6	5.4	-56%	69	29	6.8	5.7	-22%	35	29	3.4	4.9
Other VM	24915	22	147	18	5.9	1.7	59	17	2.4	1.5	-60%	35	15	1.4	1.2	-41%	15	12	0.6	0.9
Unidentified	-	-	199	24	-		73	21	-	-	-63%	38	16	-	-	-60%	15	12	--	-

*Population counts for this year were generated from the 2001 Census
** Does not include First Nations children

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The rate per 1,000 for each of our racial categories is displayed in Table II, showing the general child population for 2001 (corresponding to 2002 in the child protection sample), 2006, and 2011 along with the corresponding proportions for each decision point reported by the child protection agency. In 2011, 19.6 out of every 1,000 Black children in the general population received a screened-in report, while 5.9 out of every 1,000 other visible minority children received a screened-in report and 3.5 out of every 1,000 White children received a screened-in report. Figure 4 portrays the rate per 1,000 for each racial group for 2002, 2006, and 2011. The rate per 1,000 for Black and White children has remained relatively consistent over time, whereas rates for other visible minority children are decreasing.
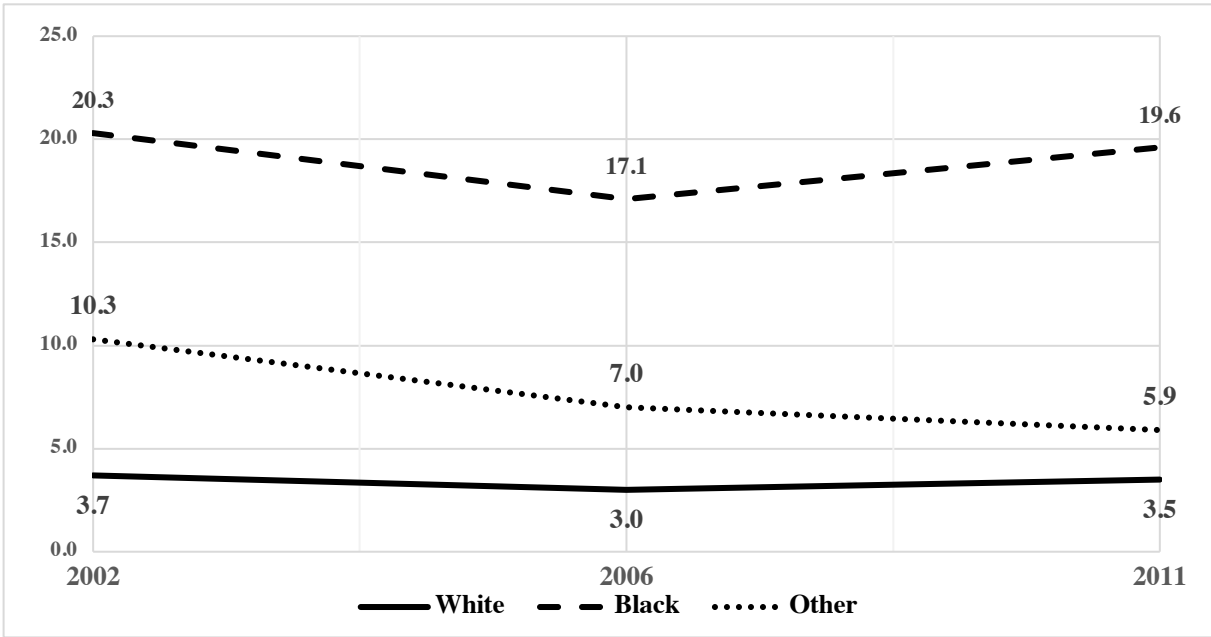
Figure 4.   Rate per 1,000 of screened in child protection reports by racial category 2002-2011

When comparing the average rate of disparity between the two visible minority categories and the White population across the three points of data collection (2002, 2006, and 2011), the degree of disparity for Black children was consistently above 5, from the time reports were screened in to when they were brought to court. Regarding placement, Black children's

disparity compared to White children was highest in 2002 (PDI=7.5) and lowest in 2011 (PDI=4.9). Meanwhile, the rate of disparity for other visible minority children compared to White children across all decision points ranged from 2.8 to 0.9 from 2002 to 2011. In addition, for each year of data collection, rates of disparity for other visible minority children compared to White children gradually decrease for later decision points. Also, in 2011 the disparity for placement of other visible minority children compared to White children fell below one (PDI=0.9), suggesting that other visible minority children were less likely than White children to enter out-of-home placement. A measure of percentage change, using the N from the child protection agency population to calculate change from one decision point to the next for each of the racial categories, is also provided in Table II. Unidentified children, followed by other visible minority children, are shown to exit the child protection system more rapidly than Black and White children.

To obtain the PDI for the recurrence cohort, new general child population data had to be collected for children between 0–17. Table III presents the proportion, for each racial category, of cases that were closed and re-reported with substantiated maltreatment within one year after the case had been closed by the child protection agency. Prior to 2011, the rates of disparity for Black children were 9.2 in 2002 and 6.3 in 2006, suggesting that Black children were approximately 9 and 6 times more likely than White children to have their child protection case closed following on-going services. However, an examination of rates of disparity at recurrence for each the corresponding years indicates that Black children were 12 times more likely than White children to have a subsequent maltreatment report substantiated within one year of case closure, in both 2002 and 2006. Meanwhile, in 2011, Black children's rates of disparity at closure and recurrence more closely resemble the findings reported in Table II, across all decision points. Rates of disparity between other visible minority children and White children ranged from 2.7 to 1.7 for case closure and from 3.5 to 1.0 for recurrence across the three cohorts from 2002 to 2011, with the disparity gradually diminishing from 2002 to 2011.

Table III. Case closure and recurrence by racial category

	General population < 17		Case Closure				Recurrence			
	N	%	N	%	Rate per 1000	PDI	N	%	Rate per 1000	PDI
2002*										
All**	128870	100	551	100	4.3	-	88	100	0.7	-
White	98400	76	109	29	1.1	-	21	24	0.2	-
Black	10015	8	101	18	10.1	9.2	24	27	2.4	12.0
Other VM	20455	16	54	10	2.6	2.4	15	17	0.7	3.5
Unidentified	-	-	287	52	-	-	28	32	-	-
2006										
All**	131380	100	499	100	3.8	-	65	100	0.5	-
White	97040	74	145	29	1.5	-	24	37	0.2	-
Black	11130	8	106	21	9.5	6.3	28	43	2.5	12.5
Other VM	23210	18	93	19	4.0	2.7	9	14	0.4	2.0
Unidentified	-	-	162	32	-	-	4	6	-	-
2011										
All**	129990	100	419	100	3.2	-	42	100	0.3	
White	89420	69	162	39	1.8	-	20	48	0.2	
Black	11655	9	110	26	9,4	5.2	12	29	1.0	5.0
Other VM	28910	22	86	21	3.0	1.7	7	17	0.2	1.0
Unidentified	-	-	61	15	1	-	3	7	-	-

*Population counts for this year were generated from the 2001 Census
** Does not include First Nations children.

Table IV provides the rate per 1,000 for various case characteristics of the child protection reported corresponding to each census year, by racial category. A population disparity index was calculated to compare each of the visible minority groups to White children. Black children, similarly to all other categories, were more likely to be reported to the child protection agency by a professional. Dividing the rate per 1,000 by referral source within each of the racial categories allows the determination that Black and other visible minority children were on average 7 times more likely to be reported by a professional than a non-professional, while White children were on average 4 times more likely to be reported by a professional. The age distribution for White children appeared relatively similar across the three reported points of data collection. Generally, for both Black and other visible minority children a higher proportion of children between 0–5 and 6–11 received services from the child protection agency. The disparity between Black and White children in the proportion of children aged 0–5 ranged from 6.6 to 7.9 across 2002–2011. Concern about possible neglect was the primary reason for investigation across all racial categories until 2011, where Black children had a higher rate of

children reported for physical abuse than neglect. When comparing disparity of maltreatment types between each visible minority category and those of White children, a higher than expected disparity was observed for allegations of physical abuse. The disparity between Black and White children in the proportion of children reported for physical abuse ranged from 8.2 to 11.0 from 2002–2011. The disparity between other visible minority and White children in the proportion of children reported for physical abuse went from 5.0 in 2002 and 2006 to 2.0 in 2011.

Table IV. Rates of screened in reports involving White, Black and other visible minority children by investigation characteristics for 2002, 2006 and 2011

	White	Black		Other VM	
	Rate per 1,000	Rate per 1,000	PDI	Rate per 1,000	PDI
2002					
Referral Source					
Professional	2.7	16.5	6.1	8.7	3.2
Non-Professional	0.7	2.7	3.9	1.4	2.0
Age of Child					
0–5	1.1	7.4	6.6	2.7	2.4
6–11	1.4	7.6	5.4	4.7	3.4
12-17	1.2	5.3	4.4	2.8	2.3
Primary Maltreatment Type					
Neglect	2.3	12.1	5.3	6.1	2.7
Physical Abuse	0.6	4.9	8.2	3.0	5.0
Sexual Abuse	0.1	0.6	6.0	0.5	5.0
Emotional Maltreatment	-	-	-	-	-
Behavioural Problems	0.5	1.8	3.6	0.6	1.2
2006					
Referral Source					
Professional	2.2	14.9	6.8	6.4	2.9
Non-Professional	0.7	1.8	2.6	0.3	0.4
Child Age					
0–5	0.7	5.5	7.9	1.5	2.1
6–11	1.2	6.8	5.7	3.0	2.5
12–17	1.0	4.7	4.7	2.4	2.4
Primary Maltreatment Type					
Neglect	2.0	10.9	5.4	4.4	2.2
Physical Abuse	0.3	3.3	11.0	1.5	5.0
Sexual Abuse	0.2	0.3	1.5	0.3	1.5
Emotional Maltreatment	-	-	-	-	-
Behavioural Problems	0.4	2.2	5.5	0.7	1.7
2011					
Referral Source					
Professional	2.9	16.8	5.8	5.1	1.8
Non-Professional	0.6	2.4	4.0	0.7	1.2
Age of Child					
0 – 5	1.0	6.7	6.7	2.2	2.2
6–11	1.4	7.2	5.1	2.0	1.4
12–17	1.1	5.8	5.3	1.7	1.5
Primary Maltreatment Type					
Neglect	1.6	6.0	3.7	1.4	0.9
Physical Abuse	0.7	7.6	10.9	1.4	2.0
Sexual Abuse	0.3	0.2	0.7	0.4	1.3
Emotional Maltreatment	0.7	4.4	6.3	2.3	3.3
Behavioural Problems	0.3	1.3	4.3	0.4	1.3

*General population counts for this year were generated from the 2001 Census

2.6.2. Decision-based disparities across the service trajectory

Through the use of a conditional denominator (N from the child protection population), the average DDI was compared across all three points of data collection based on each respective PDI (see Figure 5). The DDI for Black children at the substantiation stage was slightly above 1, whereas at placement it was slightly below 1, indicating that there was no real difference in decision-making between Black and White children within the child protection agency. For other visible minority children, the DDI at substantiation was 1, indicating no difference in decision-making between White and other visible minority children with respect to substantiating maltreatment reports. At placement, the decision-based disparity between White and other visible minority children was 0.6, suggesting that other visible minority children are 40% less likely than White children to enter out-of-home placement.
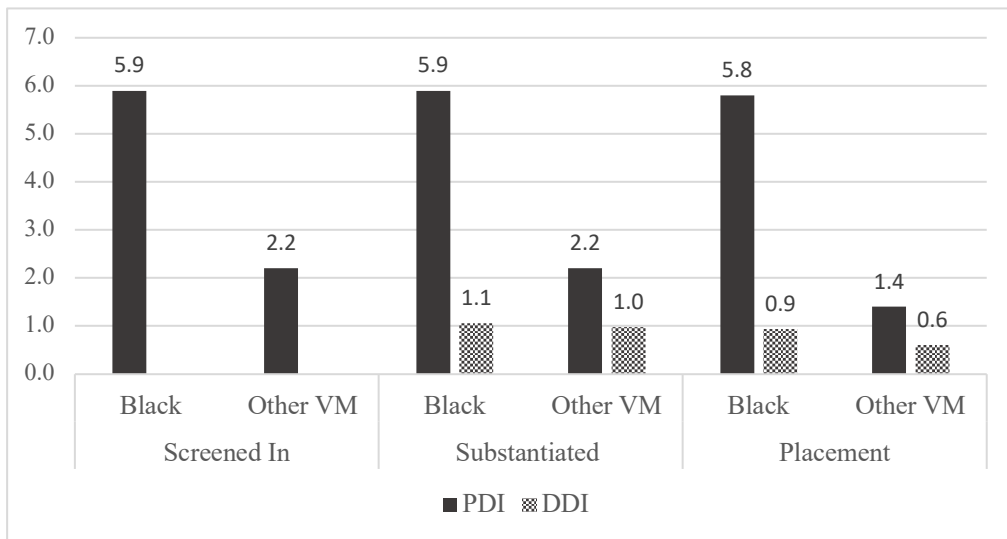
Figure 5.   Average Population (PDI)* and Decision-Based (DDI)* Disparities: 2002, 2006 and 2011

*Average disparity indices were calculated by summing the PDI and DDI for each point of data collection and dividing by three.

2.6.3 Socio-demographic characteristics at the population level

Table V presents various socio-demographic characteristics as a proportion of each racial category (excluding unidentified) across the three cycles of census data (2001, 2006, and the 2011 NHS) for the adult population, filtering for at least one child per census family. Generally, across all three census cycles Black children had younger mothers, with a larger proportion being between age 18 and 25 years old. Black children were approximately three times more likely than White and other visible minority children to reside in lone-parent families. Black children, similarly to other visible minority children, had a lower reported family income across all three Census cycles. In 2011, White families in this area with at least one child earned 66% more income than Black families. Other visible minority respondents were more highly educated than Black and White respondents. They also had a higher proportion of the population attending University studies, which was a consistent pattern across all three Census cycles. Black respondents were the least educated, with lower proportions of their population having attended University studies and higher proportions observed in college and trade programs. White families had higher proportions of their respondents holding full-time employment compared to both Black and other visible minority respondents. Lastly, migration patterns indicated that the majority of other visible minority and Black respondents were first-generation Canadians; however, this proportion was higher for other visible minority respondents (an average of 88% across the three census cycles) than for Black respondents (an average of 67% across the three census cycles).

Table V. Socioeconomic characteristics by racial category across Census cycles

	National Household Survey 2011			Census 2006			Census 2001		
	White N=207730 (67%)	Black N=18330 (6%)	Other VM N=83775 (27%)	White N=208305 (70%)	Black N=16505 (6%)	Other VM N=72555 (24%)	White N=201480 (73%)	Black N=15170 (6%)	Other VM N=56825 (21%)
Age of Mother									
18-25	16%	16%	12%	15%	16%	14%	14%	17%	14%
26-30	6%	11%	10%	7%	12%	11%	8%	10%	12%
31 and up	78%	73%	77%	78%	72%	74%	78%	73%	74%
Parenting Status									
Two parents	82%	53%	86%	82%	57%	86%	82%	61%	87%
Lone parent	18%	47%	14%	18%	43%	14%	18%	39%	13%
Median Income	$90,793.31	$54,651.05	$56,832.16	$80,272.88	$47,253.04	$46,191.14	$68,785.29	$41,573.75	$41,009.02
Education Level									
No diploma	9%	17%	12%	11%	17%	13%	20%	26%	24%
High School	24%	28%	24%	35%	29%	25%	27%	32%	25%
College/Trade	32%	36%	21%	32%	36%	20%	28%	31%	21%
University	34%	19%	43%	32%	18%	42%	25%	11%	29%
Employment Status									
Unemployed	20%	31%	30%	19%	29%	31%	22%	27%	32%
Full-time	63%	52%	56%	63%	54%	56%	63%	55%	57%
Part-time	17%	16%	13%	17%	17%	13%	16	17%	11%
Migration									
First generation	24%	63%	87%	25%	68%	88%	27%	70%	90%
Second generation	41%	30%	13%	39%	26%	12%	37%	23%	9%
Third generation	35%	7%	1%	36%	6%	1%	36%	7%	1%

2.7　Discussion

2.7.1　Summary of main findings

The findings of the current study indicate that our subsample of Black Canadian children was overrepresented in the child protection system, given their representation in the general population, throughout our three cohorts from 2002 to 2011. Furthermore, given their representation in the general population, Black children were more likely than White children to have their child protection report screened in by the child protection agency. This disparity remained consistent across the various points of service, through substantiation, court orders, and placement. By contrast, other visible minority children's representation in the child protection system is for the most part proportionate to the general population during this same period. While they face disparate outcomes compared to White children, the disparity is less pronounced than for Black children and gradually decreases across the various service decision points. At case closure and recurrence, another disparity was present: Black children were more likely than White children to have their case closed following on-going services and more likely to have a substantiated maltreatment report a year following case closure.

While population-based disparate representation of Black children remained consistent across service decision points, decision-based disparity calculations indicate that decision-making within the child protection system regarding substantiation and placement was similar for Black and other visible minority children compared to White children. Black children were slightly more likely than White children to have their investigation concerns substantiated while no racial differences were observed between White and other visible minority children. However, both Black and other visible minority children were less likely to be placed in out-of-home care than White children.

These findings are largely consistent with other studies conducted in both the United States and Canada. However, the PDIs calculated for this sample of Black children were higher than those previously reported in the United States and Ontario (King et al., 2017; Sedlak et al., 2010). This may reflect the use by other studies of aggregated data combining geographically dispersed areas where Black children are unevenly distributed (Ards et al., 2003). Disparity rates in the United States have been shown to vary by jurisdiction, and in some areas population-based indices have been reported as high as 8 (Hill, 2007). Meanwhile, the 2013 Ontario Incidence Study (King et al., 2017) used a sample representing all of Ontario, which combined urban and rural settings. This may contribute to their lower reported population-based indices. The findings from the present study more closely resemble those reported by the Toronto Children's Aid Society (Children's Aid Society of Toronto, 2015), which used data from an urban city with a high percentage of Black children. Finally, in comparing these findings to the study previously conducted in Quebec, our rates of overrepresentation are likely higher due to differences in methodology. While the prior Quebec study compared Black children to all children receiving services within the child protection system, the current study compared Black children to White children. The Quebec study also used a more heterogenous sample that included both Francophone and Anglophone populations. Furthermore, our use of longitudinal rather than cross-sectional data may be another reason for discrepancy (King et al., 2017; Lavergne et al., 2009).

Regarding exits from the child protection system, our findings about case closure are largely similar to what was found by Sarmiento and Lavergne (2017), who compared Black children with White children reported to the child protection system in Montreal, Quebec and found that Black children's cases were closed at a higher proportion than White and other visible minority children. Our study adds to these findings by demonstrating that following case closure, Black children had higher subsequent rates of recurrence when compared to White and other visible minority children (measured by subsequent maltreatment reports no more than one year following case closure).

2.7.2 Role of case characteristics and socio-demographic profiles

In attempting to understand how case characteristics may account for disparate outcomes for Black children, the findings from this study indicate that Black children are more likely to be reported by professionals, to be younger in age and to face concerns of physical abuse. The higher proportion of professionals reporting these cases can be explained by two phenomena: (1) Black children are more "visible" to authorities because of the vulnerability related to social problems, which brings them to the attention of professionally mandated reporters (Barth, 2005) and (2) professionally mandated reporters are biased and hold prejudicial standards against Black families, which influences their decision to report (Rubin, 1992). In both instances, Black children would be more likely to be reported to child protection compared to White children, resulting in overrepresentation at the "front end" of the child protection system.

Regarding age, younger compared to older children pose additional stressors on parenting, given their vulnerability and increased psychological dependence on their caregivers ; younger children are also more susceptible than older children to injury (Belsky, 1993). This becomes particularly relevant for Black families, among whom corporal punishment is more acceptable compared to other ethnic groups (Pinderhughes, Bates, Dodge, Pettit, & Zelli, 2000). Studies have correlated the use of corporal punishment with physical abuse, suggesting that corporal punishment increases the risk of child physical abuse (Fréchette, Zoratti, & Romano, 2015; Gonzalez, Durrant, Chabot, Trocmé, & Brown, 2008; Zolotor, Theodore, Chang, Berkoff, & Runyan, 2008). In addition, cross-cultural differences in parenting practices have also been shown to contribute to over-reporting by professionals of various cultural backgrounds (Ibanez, Borrego, Pemberton, & Terao, 2006). Findings from our case characteristics suggest that Black children receiving services within the child protection agency have a profile that helps contribute to disparate outcomes compared to White children.

Examination of socio-demographic characteristics at the population level corroborates exposure to risk conditions and economic hardship, as evidenced by higher proportions of lone-parent families, higher income disparity, lower levels of education, and higher rates of

unemployment when compared to the family environment of White children and to lesser extent other visible minority children. While Black children's level of disparity at the population level does not compare to their disparity within the child protection system, a cumulative risk framework suggests that individual risk factors at the population level function in relation to one another to increase the potential for negative outcomes (Appleyard, Egeland, van Dulmen, & Alan Sroufe, 2005). Furthermore, differences in rates of disparity for Black and other visible minority children within the child protection system may be explained in part by differences in their socio-demographic characteristics. For example, other visible minority children have lower proportions of lone-parent families than both Black and White children, in addition to having higher levels of parental education. These protective factors may help mitigate some of the potential risk for maltreatment. Also, other visible minority children mostly have parents who are first-generation Canadians. This may contribute to lower rates of representation within the child protection system, due to low disclosures of child maltreatment and language barriers to access for health and social services (Humphreys, Atkar & Baldwin, 1999; Kim & Keefe, 2010)

2.7.3 Argument for disproportionate need and its implications

The findings in this study suggest that our subsample of Black Canadian children were exposed to risk conditions at the population level that differentiated them from other racial categories. Their increased exposure to risk probably contributed to their overrepresentation within the child protection system. Once these children came to the attention of the child protection agency, their exposure to risk conditions continued across decision points. Their consistent overrepresentation throughout the service trajectory suggests that these families lack protective resources to help mitigate maltreatment concerns. Even after case closure, these families were more likely than other racial groups to be screened back in and have an investigation substantiated. While we were unable to determine whether Black children experienced reporting bias stemming from discriminatory practice by professionals, the evidence suggests that Black Canadians face systemic racism in the form of racial inequities that serves to maintain disparate outcomes within the child protection system.

In December 2017, the Ontario government released the Anti-Black Racism Strategy, which seeks to eliminate disparity outcomes for Black Ontarians by 2024. The strategy acknowledges that Black Ontarians are subject to systemic barriers that impact public policies, decision-making, and service provision. Its definition of systemic racism includes institutions and systems that create and maintain racial inequity as a result of hidden intuitional biases in policies, practices, and procedures that privilege some groups and disadvantage others. It recognizes the necessity to create sustainable change across systems, to increase system capacity, and competency within government and its institutions, and to increase engagement within the Black community and build capacity through fostering stronger community relationships. The findings of this study support the imperative for system change and for community strategies to provide support to Black families who face structural barriers affecting their ability to parent their children. Building social capital within marginalized communities and increasing the accessibility of family support services are two strategies that could reduce child maltreatment and the overrepresentation of minority communities.

2.8   Limitations

This study has several limitations. Despite our attempts to control for the heterogeneity of the Black population in this sample, it probably still contains many differences of culture, language, tradition, and socioeconomic status that warrant consideration. Racial identity was evaluated by the caseworker. We are therefore unable to control how caseworkers labeled children whose one parent was Black and the other parent White. Our racial groups are based solely on the ethnicity given to the child by the caseworker, without data concerning their parents' racial identity.

Lastly, a major limitation to this study is the amount of missing information on racial identity. This prevents us from having an accurate rate per 1,000 for each of the racial groups. By choosing not to impute values and by excluding these unidentified children from our calculations of rate per 1,000, we reported more conservative rates of PDI for the Black child

population. Annex 3 of this dissertation provides PDI's for children investigated by the child protection system with the imputation of unidentified children in either the White or Black child protection population counts. This allows us to compute a range of the PDI for Black children when all unidentified children are considered White and all unidentified children are considered Black. Black children's average rate of disparity across all three points of data collection was 3.0 when all unidentified children were considered White, and 12.9 when all unidentified children were considered Black. Identifying a range of PDI through inclusion of unidentified children in either Black or White racial category still prevents us from accounting for situations of maltreatment that were not reported to the child protection system. This limitation impacts the true representation for all racial groups.

2.9   Conclusion

In the United States, extensive knowledge has been established on the existence of racial disproportionality and disparity of Black children receiving child protection services. However, attempting to explain why these disparities exist has yielded mixed results. Being able to address the explanatory factors underlying service disparity is necessary to develop appropriate responses. The results from this study indicate that Black children are screened in at disparate rates and that these disparities are maintained throughout their involvement within the child protection system. From 2002-2011, these rates have remained consistent with little variation. Meanwhile, during this same period, the rates of disparity for other visible minority children have diminished over time. These findings mirror trends in sociodemographic data at the population level, suggesting that Black families face a disproportionate level of need in comparison to other racial populations. Collaborating with community organizations is one way for child protection agencies to improve the accessibility of support and prevention services for vulnerable children and families. By partnering with communities, child protection agencies help support the infrastructure needed to expand capacity and to improve coordination and streamlining of services. Such partnerships can more effectively address structural barriers and inequitable service access as well as systemic factors influencing child protection (Daro & Dodge, 2009). The results of this study suggest that community-based prevention services are

required to reduce the overrepresentation of Black children in the child protection system and to improve outcomes for these families.

CONNECTING TEXT

The first study provided rates of overrepresentation and disparity for a subsample of Black Canadian children receiving services from the child protection system. Across a ten year span from 2002-2011, Black children's protection reports when compared to White children were five times more likely to be screened in, substantiated, and brought to court. Black children were also five times more likely than White children to enter out-of-home placement. This second study will examine disparity in reunification outcomes from the point of initial out-of-home placement to identify whether Black children experience longer lengths of stay in out-of-home placement and whether they are less likely to experience family reunification. This knowledge will help in understanding whether overrepresentation of Black children may also be a product of their exits from the child protection system and what factors are associated with poorer reunification outcomes.

CHAPTER 3 : Time to reunification : Examining Black children's service outcomes in Quebec

Abstract

In the United States, Black children spend more time in out-of-home placement than other children and are less likely to experience family reunification following involvement with the child protection system. Within Canada, little is known about the influence of race on time spent in care or its influence on reunification outcomes. This study uses longitudinal clinical administrative data to compare the likelihood of reunification between Black children and all other racial groups. Clinical administrative child protection data was merged with the 2006 Canadian Census to create a dataset of children admitted to out-of-home placement for the first time between April 1, 2002 and March 31, 2011 by the child protection agency. After excluding First Nations children, the remaining cohort was divided into three categories: Black, White, and other visible minority children. The results of the study indicated that of the three groups, Black children spent the longest in out-of-home placement and had a lower proportion of children experiencing family reunification. This decreased likelihood of reunification was explained statistically by the impact of three variables: placement instability, age of the child and type of maltreatment (psychological maltreatment, physical, material and health neglect, and parents' high-risk lifestyle). The implications of these findings for child protection practice are discussed.

3.1 Introduction

In Canada, Black children are overrepresented within child protection systems (Dufour, Lavergne, & Ramos, 2016; King et al., 2017; Lavergne et al., 2009). Of the few studies that exist, Black children were found to be overrepresented at screening, substantiation, and placement and to face disparate service outcomes when compared to White children (King et al., 2017; Lavergne et al., 2009). As the mechanisms that influence how Black Canadian children enter the child protection system become better understood, little is known about the factors that influence their exit. In the United States, many studies have been conducted on exits from the child protection system. Their findings suggest that African-American children have longer stays within the child protection system and are less likely to reunify with parents, compared to White children and Hispanic children (Cheng, 2010; Connell et al., 2006; Courtney & Wong, 1996; Shaw, 2010; Wells & Guo, 1999). The causes of this disparity are complex and are attributed to child and parent case characteristics, organizational factors within the child protection system, and external factors including socioeconomic disadvantage (Hines et al., 2007). Variability across studies is largely due to the complexity of these characteristics and their interaction effects with racialization.

In Canada, as in the United States, studies observe that Black children are exposed to an increasing number of risk conditions that influence their likelihood of entering the "front door" of child protection services. Studies in the United States have attempted to understand additional steps of this process: whether these risk conditions continue to influence outcomes beyond the initial screening stage and whether certain protective factors (e.g. access to support services) help to mitigate negative outcomes. However, these findings may not apply in a Canadian context. Canada's universal healthcare system and social program may provide a more favourable landscape for Black families. These differences have been found to play an important role in improving access to care, particularly for marginalized groups (Pylypchuk & Sarpong, 2013). Within Canada, no longitudinal study has previously examined race and its influence on reunification. Of the studies addressing Black Canadian children's overrepresentation in the child

protection system and related disparities, most of these studies are cross-sectional in nature and rely on annual service statistics that may not be collected consistently over time (King et al., 2017; Lavergne, Dufour, Sarmiento, & Descôteaux, 2009; Sarmiento & Lavergne, 2017). Given that Black children have been found to experience longer stays in care and tend to receive services at a younger age, their representation may be overstated at any specific point in time.

The primary purpose of this study is to determine how long Black Canadian children receiving services from the child protection system spend in out-of-home placement and to determine whether reunification outcomes differ according to race.

3.2 Prior research on reunification

For children placed in out-of-home placement, reunification with their families is the primary goal of service providers. Most children in the child protection system are, in fact, reunified with their families, often following a short time in out-of-home placement (Biehal, 2007). In Canada, Esposito et al. (2014) found that of children placed in the Quebec child protection system between 2002 and 2011, 80.2% reunified with their family. Of this, the majority reunifed within the first year of out-of-home placement. Multivariate analyses found that the likelihood of reunification differed significantly based on the age of the child, the type of maltreatment investigated, involvement with youth criminal justice services, and socioeconomic disadvantage. However, the study was not able to account for differences in reunification based on a child's race.

In the United States, a number of studies found a child's race to be a significant predictor of reunification, even after controlling for various risk factors (Connell et al., 2006; Courtney & Wong, 1996; Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, 2010; Wells & Guo, 1999; Wittenstrom, Baumann, Fluke, Graham, & James, 2015). Proportional hazard models are often used to identify factors associated with reunification. In such studies, race is often introduced as a main effect to better understand its association with reunification while controlling for other

factors. The key explanatory variables for reunification outcomes can be grouped in three categories, pertaining to (1) child and family characteristics, (2) organizational characteristics within the child protection system, and (3) external factors within the socio-structural context surrounding both the child and the agency. One major critique of studies within this field is the lack of attention that has been given to understanding the variability of race effects through combinations of specific characteristics (Wittenstrom et al., 2015). However, in Canada the use of a main effect model remains relevant, given the limited knowledge available around reunification for Black Canadians.

3.2.1 Child and family characteristics associated with reunification

Previous research has demonstrated a significant association between child age and reunification. Generally, infants have been shown to have a lower probability of reunification compared to other age groups (Courtney & Wong, 1996). This is largely explained by worker concerns over safety of infants and also the greater interest in adopting younger children. Within Canada, Esposito et al. (2014) found that children aged 2 to 5 had the lowest likelihood of reunification, while those aged 14 to 17 had the highest likelihood of reunification. Child protection legislation was one reason offered to explain these findings, given the maximum placement durations and permanency plans required for younger children. Child emotional and behavioural concerns were associated with a 50% decrease in the likelihood of reunification. Children with physical and mental disabilities were also significantly less likely to be reunified (Courtney & Wong, 1996). For the most part, gender alone does not appear to hold significant effects associated with exit rates, although some studies have found mixed results for older adolescent boys and girls (Courtney & Wong, 1996).

Family structure is associated with reunification, with children from two-parent families reunifying more quickly than single parents (Courtney & Wong, 1996; Harris & Courtney, 2003; McDonald, Poertner, & Jennings, 2007; Wells & Guo, 1999). In examining how family structure interacts with race on the timing of reunification, African-American children from single-parent families were particularly unlikely to reunify, whereas two-parent Hispanic families had

significantly higher rates of reunification compared to two-parent White and African-American families (Harris & Courtney, 2003). Certain studies also used the type of maltreatment investigated as a proxy for family problems. Younger children reported for neglect have poorer reunification outcomes compared to younger children reported for physical and sexual abuse (Barber, Delfabbro, & Gilbertson, 2004). Removal because of child behavioural concerns or delinquency was also associated with faster exits to reunification when compared to neglect or abuse (Wells & Guo, 1999). In addition, numerous studies have found that parental lifestyle concerns, such as substance abuse, significantly decrease the likelihood of reunification (McDonald et al., 2007; Shaw, 2010).

3.2.2 Child protection system characteristics associated with reunification

The type of placement made for a particular child has been associated with the timing of reunification, with children in kinship care (cared for by a relative or someone with whom they have a close relationship) experiencing longer delays to reunification compared to placements in other settings (Goerge, 1990). This may be due to differences in the unobserved characteristics of children placed in kinship care, rather than kinship care itself (Wittenstrom et al., 2015). African-American children represent one group that is more likely than other categories to be placed with kin (Bartholet, 2009). While kinship care is considered a best-practice approach according to African-American cultural values, it is not in line with the permanency goals identified by a child protection system that strives for adoption. In addition to placement type, placement instability has also been negatively associated with reunification outcomes. African-American children experience more placement instability compared to other groups, which can result in more time spent in out-of-home placement and a decreased likelihood of reunification. Risk factors associated with placement instability are also more prevalent among African-American children. African-American children are more likely than White children to have medical conditions and disabilities, in addition to behavioural and emotional disorders, partly because of their increased exposure to poverty (Kohen et al., 2008; Newacheck et al., 2003). Their exposure to risk conditions results in placement breakdown, which in turn yields detrimental effects for the child; child functioning concerns have been shown to be both the cause and consequence of placement instability(Newton, Litrownik, & Landsverk, 2000).

Institutional racism, in the form of systemic discrimination, has been invoked to explain poorer outcomes for Black children within the child protection system. Systemic discrimination is present from their point of entry into the system and extends to placement and likelihood of reunification. While difficult to measure and analyze, a number of studies have demonstrated that decision-making, agency infrastructure, organizational culture, and quality of services produce disparate outcomes across decision-points for African American children compared to others (Harris & Hackett, 2008; Hill, 2005). With regards to measurable effects on reunification, African-American children were found to be less likely to receive support services compared to White families (Courtney et al., 1996). Given that lower reunification rates have been found among families that receive fewer services (Hill, 2005), the failure to ensure adequate services for African-American children has implications in their ability to reunify with their families.

3.2.3 External socioeconomic factors

Socioeconomic hardship is negatively associated with the likelihood of reunification. This variable has been measured in many ways, using factors such as poverty and its associated risk factors. In all instances, such factors have been shown to decrease the likelihood of reunification. Researchers have been cautious, insisting that being poor is not the sole determinant of poor service outcomes in the child protection system. Furthermore, different thresholds have been shown to exist across demographic groups, with thresholds being higher for African Americans and Hispanics than for Whites and other racialized groups. More recently, attention has been given to the social-structural context in which children and their families reside, and their influence on the likelihood of timely reunification. Wulczyn et al., (2011) found that such factors as the proportion of female-headed households, the families poverty rate, urbanicity, racial composition, and the placement rate of children all influence reunification and are most important during the first 6 months of out-of-home placement.

Meanwhile, the accessibility of social and community-based services in the form of services to help families address maltreatment behaviours have been shown to effect exits from placement (Cheng, 2010; Choi & Ryan, 2007; D'Andrade & Nguyen, 2014; Murphy et al., 2017)

Furthermore, retention and completion of treatment have been shown to be strong predictors of reunification for parents who have issues with substance abuse(Marsh, Smith, & Bruni, 2011). Cheng (2010) found that likelihood of reunification increased when parenting problems were addressed through well-matched and appropriately delivered services. In a systematic review examining interventions by child protection agencies between 2006 and 2016, successful reunification was critically influenced by whether parents received comprehensive services that specifically matched their needs, regardless of the chosen intervention model (Murphy et al., 2017).

3.3 Methods

The present study involved secondary clinical-administrative data from a child protection agency in Montreal, Quebec mandated to provide services to the subsample of children selected. The dataset provided anonymized longitudinal information on each child's experience with protection services, in addition to a number of covariates associated with their service involvement. The second data source was extracted from the 2006 Canadian Census and was used to develop a composite index of socioeconomic disadvantage (see Esposito et al., 2017). The index was linked to the child protection clinical administrative data based on the child's postal code. The index registered a minimum score of -3.37 representing the lowest socioeconomic risk, and a maximum score of 3.51 representing the highest socioeconomic risk.

The longitudinal cohort consisted of 1395 children placed for the first time within a single child protection agency in Montreal, Quebec between April 1, 2002 and March 31, 2011. Categories based on visible minority definitions from Statistics Canada were used to create similar categories within the agency dataset. Of this sample, the race variable was available for 86% of cases: White (N=566), Black (N=342), other visible minority (N=218) and First Nations (N=77).

Data on First Nations children was removed from the sample given the First Nations Principles of OCAP that require research to be done in conjunction with First Nations communities. Thus, with First Nations children removed, the total sample of children placed in initial out-of-placement was N=1318. Children for whom no racial information was provided (N=192) were kept in the study as an "unidentified" category. Descriptive information for these children is provided in Table VII.

Family reunification was defined as a return to one or both biological parents, or to extended family. Whereas studies in the United States have tended to view reunification more narrowly, this study included "kinship" care in our definition of reunification. The dataset documented five types of ends to placement: reunification with family (including extended family members), running away, adoption, death, or unknown. For the purposes of this study, children who were adopted, who died, or for whom no placement status was identified were excluded from this study. Of the remaining children in the sample, N=1318, 85.7% (N=1130) were reunified with their families and 14.3% (N=188) were still in out-of-home placement within the follow-up period. The follow-up period continued from the date of initial out-of-home placement to the date of reunification. For children who did not reunify, the follow-up period extended to September 31, 2011 or the age of majority (i.e. 18 years old), whichever came first.

3.3.1 Covariates

The covariates included age, gender, race, type of maltreatment, source of referral, placement type, number of out-of-home placement changes, and a socioeconomic disadvantage index. These variables were all taken at initial placement and were used to present difference in case characteristics for White, Black, other visible minority, and unidentified children. Age at initial placement was described using three age categories: 0–5 years old, 6–9 years old and 10–17 years old. Within the regression model, age was entered as a continuous variable. Gender was described, but not included in the statistical model. The racial variable consisted of the following categories: (a) White, (b) Black, (c) other visible minority, and d) unidentified. Descriptive information is available for all four categories.

The reason for investigation variable included the following values: (a) psychological & emotional abuse including rejection, denigration, exposure to intimate partner violence, and exploitation; (b) physical, material, and health neglect including physical neglect, medical neglect, and material deprivation; (c) parents' high-risk lifestyle resulting in a failure to supervise or protect the child, including abandonment due to parental absence and refusal to assure child care and risk of neglect; (d) school truancy & school neglect including failure to attend school or failure to ensure that the child attends school; (e) risk of physical abuse, (f) physical abuse, (g) risk of sexual abuse, (i) sexual abuse, (h) behavioural problems that were either internalizing or externalizing in nature that posed significant risks to the child's physical or psychological integrity.

. Within the regression model, the abuse categories (physical and sexual abuse) and behavioural problems were grouped together and used as a reference category. Declarants included professionals and other citizens (the latter being the reference category). Citizen sources of reports consisted of individuals who had personal knowledge of the allegations, such as family members and neighbours. Professional sources were individuals who reported allegations in the context of their employment, including employees of community health and social services clinics, child protection agency staff, school staff, police, hospital employees, and professionals in the private sector. Lastly, a socioeconomic disadvantage composite index was also used, computed from the 2006 Canadian census with lower scores representing high risk socioeconomic disadvantage. The index included six socioeconomic indicators, including unemployment, total persons in the household, marital status, individual median income, family median income, and household median income (see Esposito et al., 2014, for further details on how the index was computed).

3.3.2 Analytic method

Descriptive analyses comparing White (N=566), Black (N=342), other visible minority (N=218), and unidentified children (N=192) were performed including all independent covariates. A one-way between-subject analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to compare the effect of the racial category on the length of time in out-of-home placement at initial entry. Survival analysis using a Kaplan Meier and Cox proportional hazard regression examined the trajectory and chances of family reunification from the point of a child's initial placement. The Cox proportional

regression model was conducted using a subset of the covariates to obtain their independent effect with race on the probability of family reunification. Given the correlation between age and placement type, the latter was not included in the model. Values for the "unidentified" category were imputed in our Cox regression model that then compared Black children to all other racial categories (White and other visible minority). In order to assess for multicollinearity, variance inflation factor (VIF) estimates were measured from an ordinary least square linear regression model containing all of the covariates used in the Cox proportional hazard regression model. VIF estimates for the model ranged from 1.012 to 2.744 indicative that multicollinearity was not an issue (Frees, 2004). A baseline -2 Log likelihood statistic compared the goodness of fit after entering covariates into the model. Three blocks of covariates were added to the model in a sequential and cumulative manner starting with: (1) race; (2) age, reason for investigation at initial placement, declarant, and socioeconomic disadvantages (SED); and (3) the number of out-of-home placements. The decreasing Log probability estimates between blocks reported in Table VI suggest the final model was a better fit. Multivariate Cox proportional hazard regression analyses were used to examine the chances of family reunification within an unspecified period. Table IX reports the results of the Cox proportional hazard regression analysis. Hazard estimates along with the Wald statistic determine whether the null hypothesis equals zero.

Table VI. Model goodness-of-fit test

	-2 Log probability statistic	df	P
Identified children only			
Race only model	14,578	1	.001
All except number of moves	14,495	7	<0.0001
Full model	14,492	8	<0.0001

Survival analysis methods account for censoring (the time at which no more information is available on a subject). Our model included children who remained in out-of-home care as the reference category and estimated the likelihood of family reunification. The Cox proportional hazard regression equation is specified as:

$$H(t) = H_0(t) \, X \, exp(b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + b_3X_3 + \ldots\ldots + b_kX_k)$$

where, $X_1......X_k$ represents the individual covariates, and $H_0(t)$ is the baseline likelihood of reunifying at time t. By dividing both sides of the equations above by $H_0(t)$, is obtained:

$$[H(t) / H_0(t)] = b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + b_3X_3 + ... + b_kX_k$$

$H(t) / H_0(t)$ represents the likelihood of reunifying. The coefficient $b_1.....b_k$ is estimated by a Cox proportional hazard regression function, and the exp^{b1} represents the likelihood of reunifying for the independent variable X_1, at any time, holding all other covariates constant. It provides an estimate by which the chances of family reunification increases or decreased based on a unit change of the independent variable. Statistical tests were conducted at 95% level of confidence; SPSS version 24 was used to analyze the data.

3.3.3 Treatment of missing racial information in the hazard model

The reason for missing data pertaining to a child's racial identity was initially hypothesized as resulting from out-of-home placement conditions more suggestive of emergency measures or a family crisis. Caseworkers would thus be less concerned with documenting racial status if involvement with the child protection agency was expected to be of short duration. Including these children in our hazard model would potentially confound two very distinct profiles of children brought to the attention of child protection services: those requiring services of urgent protection versus those requiring services for more pervasive developmental well-being concerns. To make a more informed decision, the pattern of the missing data was evaluated to determine whether the missing data was random or not random. Figure 6 illustrates the pattern of missing data for all of the variables included in our hazard model and suggests that the missing information was not random. Monotonicity can be observed, with the missing information clustering on the right side of the graph between racial category, number of placement moves, and declarant. For these reasons, it was decided to impute values for the unidentified children so as not to bias our model.
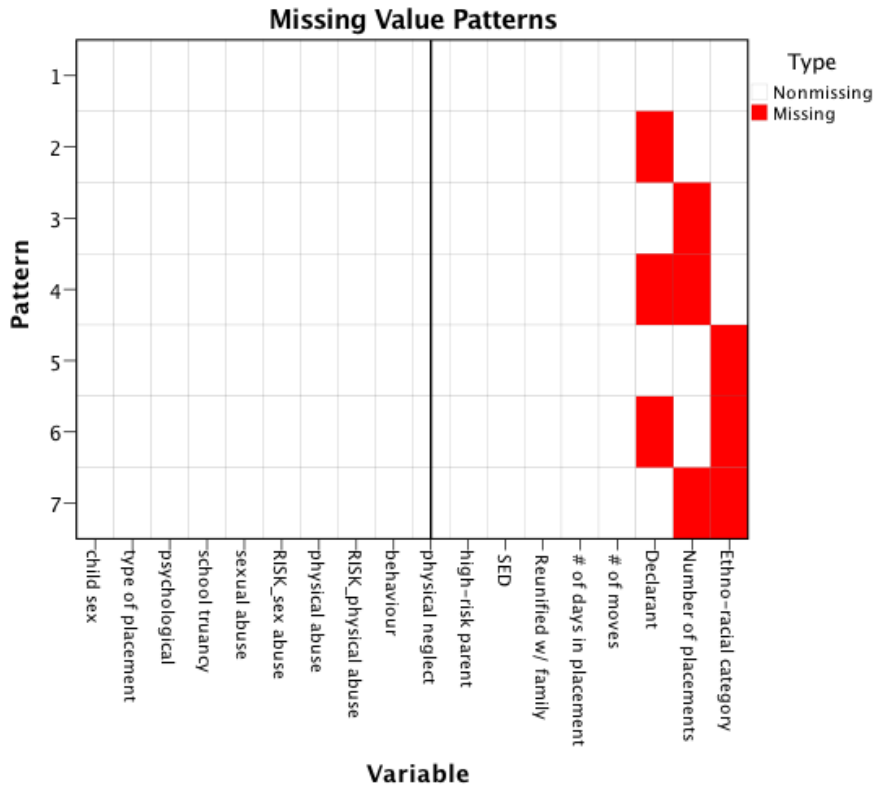
Figure 6.   Analysis of the pattern of missing racial data

All of the variables in the hazard model were included in multiple imputation to provide more accuracy of the imputed values. SPSS created five datasets containing imputed values. It ran the Cox regression using all five datasets and compared the results from our original model to the pooled model that averaged the findings from each of the five imputed models. There was little variation between the imputed pooled model and our original data (which included the unidentified children as a reference category). A version of the non-imputed model is available in Annex 4 of this dissertation. Table IX presents the hazard model findings from the fourth iteration of imputed datasets. This iteration was chosen given it was the model offering a better fit than the other imputed datasets (although the original data, prior to data imputation, recorded the best fit).

3.4 Results

The majority of children studied (85.7%), irrespective of racial category, were reunified with their families. Table VII provides family, case, and socioeconomic characteristics of children in out-of-home placement by racial category. It compares the total number of children placed with those that reunified respective of the race variable. Information for unidentified children is also provided. Table VII indicates that both the Black and the unidentified categories have higher proportions of younger children in out-of-home placement compared to White and other visible minority children. Only 44.4% of Black children placed are between the ages of 11 and 17 years old, whereas this proportion is higher for White (59.0%), other visible minority (61.0%), and unidentified children (61.5%).

The unidentified category has a majority of females in out-of-home placement (53.6%), in contrast to the other racial categories where the majority are males. Black children have the highest proportion of children placed for physical abuse investigations (19.1%) compared to White (9.2%), other visible minority (19.9%) and unidentified (13.5%) children. Black children also have the lowest proportion of children investigated for behavioural concerns (28.9%) versus White (42.8%), other visible minority (33.0%), and unidentified children (39.1%). Children being investigated for physical, material, and health neglect are less prevalent in the unidentified category (2.6%) compared to the other groups, whereas it is most prevalent for Black children (7.3%). Parents' high-risk lifestyle represented the second highest proportion of children being placed in out-of-home placement following behavioural problems, with the exception of Black children where it was the highest. An examination of placed and reunified children by racial

Table VII. Child descriptive factors by racial category

	White		Black		Other Visible Minority		Unidentified	
	Placed (N=566)	Placed & Reunified (N=483)	Placed (N=342)	Placed & Reunified (N=283)	Placed (N=218)	Placed & Reunified (N= 191)	Placed (N=192)	Placed & Reunified (N=173)
Child age at placement:								
0-5	26.0%	21.1%	34.5%	30.0%	25.7%	25.7%	30.7%	29.5%
6-10	15.0%	13.7%	21.1%	22.6%	13.3%	13.6%	7.8%	8.1%
11-17	59.0%	65.2%	44.4%	47.3%	61.0%	60.7%	61.5%	62.4%
Child sex:								
Male	54.9%	54.5%	56.1%	58.0%	57.8%	59.7%	46.4%	46.8%
Female	45.1%	45.5%	43.9%	42.0%	42.2%	40.3%	53.6%	53.2%
Reason for investigation:								
Psychological & emotional abuse	4.2%	3.3%	5.8%	4.2%	2.3%	2.6%	5.7%	6.4%
Physical, material & health neglect	5.1%	5.0%	7.3%	7.1%	4.1%	2.1%	2.6%	2.9%
School truancy & neglect	4.1%	4.3%	5.3%	4.6%	4.1%	3.1%	4.2%	4.0%
Parents' high-risk lifestyle	31.4%	27.3%	33.3%	30.4%	30.7%	30.4%	29.2%	28.3%
Risk of sexual abuse	0.5%	0.2%	0.3%	0.4%	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%	0.6%
Sexual abuse	1.8%	1.2%	0.6%	0.4%	3.2%	3.1%	2.6%	2.3%
Behavioural problems	42.8%	48.2%	28.9%	33.2%	33.0%	37.7%	39.1%	41.0%
Risk of physical abuse	0.9%	0.6%	0.6%	0.7%	0.5%	0.5%	2.6%	2.9%
Physical abuse	9.2%	9.7%	17.8%	19.1%	21.6%	19.9%	13.5%	11.6%
Declarant:								
Citizen	25.7%	25.7%	15.1%	15.5%	13.7%	13.5%	26.3%	27.5%
Professional	74.3%	74.3%	84.9%	84.5%	86.3%	86.5%	73.7%	72.5%
Initial placement type:								
Residential or group home	56.7%	63.1%	37.7%	43.8%	46.3%	49.7%	45.3%	46.8%
Foster home	43.3%	36.9%	62.3%	56.2%	53.7%	50.3%	54.7%	53.2%
	Mean (S.D)		Mean (S.D)		Mean (S.D)			
Number of out-of-home placements	1.99(1.37)	1.87(1.31)	2.15(1.84)	1.90(1.59)	1.89(2.05)	1.68(1.13)	1.80(1.66)	1.71(1.33)
Socioeconomic disadvantage	0.28(.97)	.23(1.01)	0.68(.81)	0.65(0.82)	0.26(.97)	0.30(1.04)	0.41(1.08)	0.42(1.11)
Number of days in placement	308.29(501.21)	179.11(292.50)	442.92(724.24)	220.95(382.37)	242.20(447.30)	120.58(165.17)	172.96(302.00)	124.88(200.33)

Percentages are column percentages for each category.

categories reveals that contrary to those placed for behavioural problems, children placed for parental-high risk lifestyle are less likely to reunify, given that their proportions are lower than the full sample of children placed. A similar result was observed for children between the ages of 0 and 5 years old.

For all children in out-of-home placement, a maltreatment report was more likely to issue from a professional than a citizen. Higher proportions of professional reports were observed for Black (84.9%) and other visible minority children (86.3%) compared to White (74.3%) and unidentified children (73.7%). The majority of White children (56.7%) were placed in residential or group home settings, compared to Black (37.7%), other visible minority (46.3%) and unidentified children (45.3%) where the majority of their children were in foster homes. Black children (62.3%) had the highest proportion of children placed in foster homes, among the groups studied. An examination of placed and reunified racial categories reveals that children placed in foster homes are less likely, to reunify given their proportions are lower than the full sample of children placed. Black children experienced the highest number of subsequent placements ($M=2.15$, $SD=1.59$), compared to White ($M=1.99$, $SD=1.37$), other visible minority ($M=1.89$, $SD=2.05$) and unidentified children ($M=1.71$, $SD=1.33$). For all children, we observe that children who reunify experience on average less placement moves than their total group average.

The composite estimate of socioeconomic disadvantages was highest for Black children ($M=0.68$, $SD=0.81$) compared to White ($M=0.27$, $SD=0.97$), other visible minority ($M=0.26$, $SD=0.97$), and unidentified children ($M=0.41$ $SD=1.08$). This finding suggests that Black children are exposed to more socioeconomic disadvantage prior to entering out-of-home placement. Black children spend an average of 443 days ($SD=724$) in placement, compared to White children who spend an average of 308 days ($SD=501$), other visible minority children who spend an average 242 days ($SD=447$), and unidentified children who spend an average 173 days ($SD=302$). The large standard deviations for each of these categories suggests a high degree of variability within the sample, also implying that a subset of each population spend an extensive time in care. Of children who are placed and subsequently reunified, other visible

minority children spend an average of 121 days in placement (*SD*=165), unidentified children spend an average of 125 days in placement (*SD*=200), White children spend an average of 179 days in placement (*SD*=292), and Black children spend an average of 221 days in placement (*SD*=382).

3.4.1 Time to family reunification by racial category at initial placement

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of the race variable on the average days spent in out-of-home placement (see Table VIII). The results demonstrate that days spent in out-of-home placement varied significantly by racial category (*F* (3, 1318)=12.215, p=.000, ω=0.16). Post hoc analyses were conducted given this statistically significant result. Specifically, Tukey HSD tests were conducted to compare pairwise contrasts between Black children and all other racial categories. Black children (*M*=443, *SD*=724) spend statistically longer time in out-of-home placement compared to White (*M*=308, *SD*=501), other visible minority (*M*= 42, *SD*=447), and unidentified children (*M*=174, *SD*=302)

Table VIII. Analysis of Variance between racial category and time spent in out-of-home care

	df	*SS*	*MS*	*F*	*p*	*ω*
Between groups	3	10642705.2	3547568.41	12.215	.000	0.16
Within groups	1314	381633140	290436.180			
Total	1317	392275845				

The observed hazard rate in Figure 7 shows that for all children, irrelevant of racial category, reunification occurs almost immediately after entering placement. Figure 7 also illustrates that the unidentified category of children have the highest probability of family reunification, followed by other visible minority children, White children, and Black children. While the unidentified children reunify at a faster rate compared to the other children, some children still spend a significant amount of time in out-of-home placement.
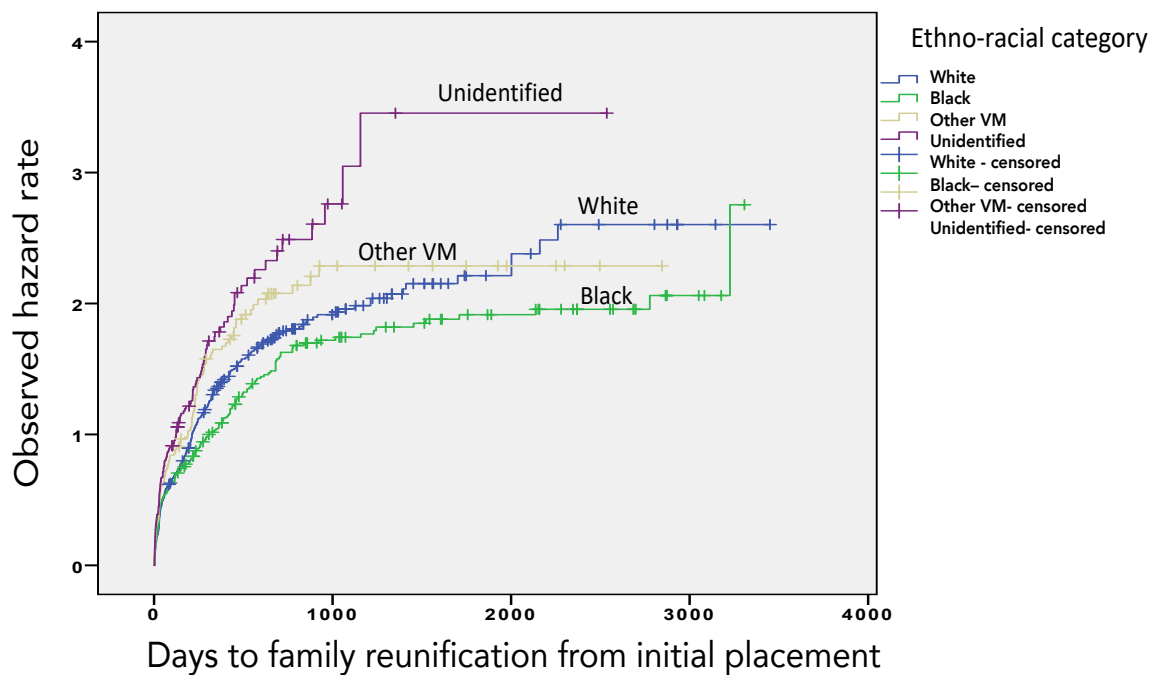
Figure 7.   The observed hazard rate of family reunification from the point of initial placement

3.4.3 Hazard model of family reunification

From the sample of N=1318, 14.3% of children (N=188) remained in out-of-home placement throughout the follow-up period (see Table IX). Block 1, which included only the race variable, statistically influenced the chances of reunification, with Black children being less likely to reunify compared to other racial categories (White and other-visible minority children). When child protection case characteristics were added in Block 2, the race variable remained significant with age and reason for investigation also being factors influential to reunification. As a child ages, their likelihood of reunification increases. As far as reasons for investigation were concerned, children investigated for psychological and emotional maltreatment; physical, material and health neglect; and parents' high-risk lifestyle were statistically less likely to reunify than children investigated for other maltreatment concerns (i.e. physical abuse, sexual

abuse, and behavioural concerns). With the addition of a variable for the number of placement moves, in Block 3, the previously mentioned child and case characteristics remained significantly associated with reunification, although the child's racial identity was no longer statistically found to influence reunification.

Table IX. Cox proportional hazard model for family reunification

	Number of events and censored values					
	Total 1318	Events 1130	Censored 188	% Censored 14.3		
	Block 3 (final model)				Block 2	Block 1
	Beta	SE	Wald	Adj. HR (95% CI)	Adj. HR (95% CI)	Adj. HR (95% CI)
Race:						
Black	-.108	.072	2.263	.899(.781, 1.033)	.823**(.716, .947)	.804**(.702, .921)
Age (0 – 17)	.027	.007	14.693	1.027***(1.013, 1.041)	1.025***(1.012, 1.039)	
Reasons for investigation						
Psychological & emotional abuse	-.335	.162	4.262	.715*(.520, .983)	.713*(.519, .979)	
Physical, material & health neglect	-.333	.147	5.114	.717*(.619, .830)	.739*(.553, .988)	
School truancy & neglect	-.224	.156	2.072	.799(.589, 1.084)	.865(.639, 1.171)	
Parents' high-risk lifestyle	-.300	.085	12.326	.741***(.627, .876)	.724***(.614, .854)	
Declarant:						
Professional	.110	.074	2.201	1.116 (.965, 1.290)	1.153(.998, 1.332)	
Socioeconomic disadvantage	.054	.031	3.106	1.056(.994, 1.121)	1.055(.993, 1.121)	
Number of placement moves	-.452	.031	211.457	.636***(.599, .676)		

*p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; and ***p < 0.001

3.5 Discussion

As previous studies have established in the United States, this study found that Black children in Canada experience longer lengths of stay in out-of-home placement, and are less likely to reunify, compared to White and other visible minority children (Cheng, 2010; Connell et al., 2006; Shaw, 2010). Our study did not include First Nations children, whom research has already determined are less likely to reunify and face higher rates of neglect compared to children within the child protection system as a whole (De La Sablonnière-Griffin et al., 2016)

These differences in reunification outcomes may be explained by several characteristics that differentiate Black from other children. Black children are placed in care at a younger age and as a result reflect different reasons for investigations from the other categories of children. They have the highest proportions of children being investigated for neglect and parental high-risk lifestyle concerns, both of which have been shown to significantly decrease the likelihood of reunification compared to other forms of maltreatment (McDonald et al., 2007; Shaw, 2010). While a higher proportion of Black children are investigated for physical abuse (Lavergne et al., 2008), our findings suggest that concerns for neglect rather than physical abuse negatively impact their odds for reunification. Compared to the other racial categories, Black children had the highest proportion of children placed in foster homes and on average experienced more placement instability. Research has previously demonstrated how these factors influence the likelihood of reunification considerably. While Black children experienced a higher number of socioeconomic disadvantages when compared to the other racial categories, they were not found to have a statistically-significant influence on reunification outcomes.

Research on reunification and race is in a state of flux, offering varying findings in different studies and making different variables available for study. However, there appears to be a general recognition that analyzing race effects and identifying bias are made complex through a combination of factors, which may result in greater impacts in certain types of cases

more than others. As a result, racial disparity in reunification outcomes may vary greatly depending on a particular combination of characteristics of the child and family or of the child protection system, as well as external factors presented by the family. For example, being Black may only significantly decrease likelihood of reunification in the presence of younger children reported for parental risk concerns. Thus, being Black only leads to disparity when other factors are present. Given the absence of theoretical models explaining how race interacts with other factors, making sense of findings across studies, and deciding how to best address disparity, present continuing challenges.

The social-structural context where children and families reside is increasingly seen as a factor relevant to studying the child protection system. This study included a socioeconomic disadvantage index to better understand the role of poverty in family reunification outcomes. While we found that Black children tend to reside in more disadvantaged communities, surprisingly, this did not impact significantly on the likelihood of reunification. This could stem from the urban setting of the study, where poverty is more concentrated and less dispersed. Second, as the sample of children in out-of-home placement have been engaged in the child protection system for an extended period, they may share comparable exposure to risk conditions regardless of neighborhood socioeconomic characteristics.

3.6 Limitations

This study uses clinical administrative data that provides a limited understanding of the relationship between the chosen variables and reunification. Administrative data prevents us from fully describing the environment in which children are parented and from documenting the experience of parents as users within the child protection system. The study did not adjust for sibling pairs, because the dataset is anonymized and does not allow us to identify siblings. This may have caused a sampling bias given that each child belonging to the same family was treated independently. In the current sample, approximately 15% of children were unidentified by racial categories. The decision to include these children in the study may be questioned given that their

profile may arguably differ from the other racial categories. Given their typically shorter stays in out-of-home placement, the unidentified category may represent children for whom emergency measures were required, as opposed to cases where out-of-home placement was part of a long-term plan to ensure the safety of the child, but this assumption is open to discussion. While values for these children were imputed, the limitations of this method should be recognized.

Finally, our use of a main effect model assumes that the race variable operates similarly across all covariates; it does not address multi-factor interaction effects. Thus, while we found that race was significantly associated with reunification outcomes, we are unable to say whether its significance resulted from a certain constellation of risk factors not captured in the model. Data improvements may be needed to better understand service trajectories. The use of an urban sample also limits the generalizability of these findings to more rural settings.

This study is one of few in Canada to explore reunification outcomes for Black children using longitudinal data. Its findings suggest that the overrepresentation of certain Black children is both a product of their entry and exit from the child protection system. While we tend to prioritize prevention services for marginalized communities, this study indicates that attention must be given to services all throughout Black children's service trajectory beyond the front-end to ensure that these children are able to exit the child protection system in a timely manner.

CONNECTING TEXT

The previous two chapters described the disparity faced by Black Canadian children regarding entry and exit from the child protection system and offered Black children's disproportionate need as a possible explanation for differences in service trajectories between Black and other racial categories. The next chapter provides an example of a cross-system collaboration between a child protection agency and community organization that sought to reduce overrepresentation through joint development of a parenting support program. This chapter provides important considerations regarding the development of the collaboration and the challenges faced by both organizations from the perspective of stakeholders involved in the implementation of the cross-system collaboration.

Chapter 4 : Child protection agencies collaborating with grass-root community organizations : Partnership or tokenism?

Abstract

Cross-system collaborations are increasingly being relied upon to improve accessibility of prevention and support services for marginalized communities reported to the child protection system. However, little is known about the feasibility, implementation, and impact of such collaborations. This study begins to address this gap by describing the challenges faced by a child protection agency and its grass-roots community partner in reducing the overrepresentation of Black children reported to the child protection agency through implementation of a parenting support program. Six semi-structured interviews were conducted with members of a stakeholder committee, representing both the child protection agency and a community organization. The results indicate that the child protection agency's organizational context, its level of socio-political support and its organizational culture each posed significant challenges to the partnership. These findings raise important considerations to take into account in other cross-system collaborations seeking to address the overrepresentation of Black children in child protection systems.

KEYWORDS:

Collaboration, child protection, community, overrepresentation, Black families, community-based child welfare

4.1 Introduction

Cross-system collaborations involve the sharing of information, resources, activities, and capabilities by organizations in two or more domains of social services to pursue objectives that each of the organizations on their own might be unable to reach (Crosby & Bryson, 2010). The framework for collaboration is best conceptualized as occurring on a continuum of interconnectedness, representing different modes for organizations to work together on public issues (Bryson, Crosby, & Stone, 2015; Savard, Bourque, & Lachapelle, 2015). Existing research on participation by child protection organizations in cross-system collaborations has largely focused on specific problem areas, such as mental health, substance abuse, domestic violence, and juvenile justice. These cross-system collaborations usually involve organizations with comparable infrastructure and resources required, each of which therefore has genuine influence over the outcome of the partnership. By contrast, cross-system collaborations between social service organizations and grass-roots community partners providing support services to disadvantaged communities have been less-often explored. Such organizations are often essential to helping reduce the social vulnerability of marginalized communities. Collaborating with community organizations is a way for child protection agencies to improve the accessibility of the support and prevention services they offer to vulnerable children and families. By partnering with communities, child protection agencies help support the infrastructure needed to expand capacity, improve coordination, and streamline services to better address structural barriers, inequitable service access, and systemic factors that influence the child protection response (Daro & Dodge, 2009). This is particularly relevant for Black families, whose increased exposure to risk conditions is believed to influence their overrepresentation within the child protection system (Barth, 2005; Dettlaff, 2014; Fluke et al., 2003).

This article describes the development of a cross-system collaboration between a child protection agency and a community organization, aiming to address the overrepresentation of Black children reported to the child protection agency. The study seeks to document the challenges faced by the partnership during the implementation of a parenting support program aimed at redirecting Black families to services within their community.

4.2 Literature review

4.2.1 Overrepresentation of Black families

Within Montreal, where the current study was conducted, findings from the 2011 National Household Survey (NHS) indicated that English-speaking Black children represented 9% of the general child population and represented 24% of children screened in for investigation by the child protection agency (Kyte, Esposito, & Trocmé, 2018). The causes for this overrepresentation are complex; it can be attributed to a myriad of factors including individual, family, societal, and economic characteristics as well as features of the child protection system (Anyon, 2011; Cheng & Lo, 2013; A. J. Dettlaff et al., 2011; Brett Drake et al., 2009; Kim, Chenot, & Ji, 2011; Miller, Cahn, & Orellana, 2012; Tilbury & Thoburn, 2009)

Over the last decade, researchers have attempted to understand the causes of this overrepresentation in greater depth, with significant tension between those emphasizing the role of poverty-related risk factors versus the presence of racial bias within the child protection system. With regards to the former explanation, studies have demonstrated how exposure to risk conditions (including substance abuse, depression, isolation, unemployment, teenage pregnancy, and domestic violence) lead to greater rates of child maltreatment(Gillham et al., 1998; Stith et al., 2009; Walsh et al., 2003). Low-income parents are often faced with multiple systemic stressors that may weaken their ability to parent appropriately, which can result in child maltreatment (Coulton et al., 1995; Garbarino & Sherman, 1980). It is thus widely accepted by researchers that child poverty is intrinsically connected to involvement in child protection institutions and that conditions of poverty lead to greater rates of child maltreatment (Drake & Jonson-Reid, 2014; Pelton, 2015). However, several authors have taken a more anti-racist stance, claiming that regardless of the level of poverty, racial bias plays a significant role in the overrepresentation of Black children within the child protection system, whether in the form of biased decision-making, service provision, or policy formation (Harris & Hackett, 2008; Hill, 2004; Roberts, 2009; Rodenborg, 2004)). Such racial bias may be internal or external to the child protection system resulting in differential treatment of Black families and a greater number of Black children entering the system. Several studies have attempted to understand the causes

of overrepresentation by controlling for various risk factors to isolate the effects of race. The conclusions of these studies are difficult to interpret given the high correlation between race and poverty and the limitation of administrative datasets. Furthermore, equitable access to appropriates services, bias, and racism are complex phenomena to measure and analyze.

Several theoretical models have been proposed to explain the overrepresentation of Black children in child protective services (Barth, 2005; Boyd, 2014; Drake et al., 2011; Fluke et al., 2010). These models highlight the disproportionate level of needs that Black families face, arising from their exposure to multiple risk factors, while acknowledging that factors related to the child protection system, such as agency infrastructure, organizational culture, staffing, and resources, contribute to the observed disparities. The preponderant view emerging from this scholarship is that addressing overrepresentation requires a multi-faceted approach aiming to improve the socio-structural conditions of Black families while simultaneously addressing potential biases within child protection systems.

It has increasingly been acknowledged that failures by institutions to consider how their policies, practices, and processes impact marginalized groups differently can constitute a form of systemic racism. Within Canada and the United States, a call for "transformative change" has been launched within child protection systems to address the inequities faced by Black children. Engaging in cross-system collaboration with community organizations improves the ability of child protection agencies to address systemic racism by identifying, developing, and delivering culturally appropriate services adapted to the needs of Black families. Through a process of collaboration, culturally competent practice and cross-system cooperation can help facilitate access to services, reduce barriers to service provision, strengthen the cultural appropriateness of service delivery, and empower communities.

4.2.2 Engaging in community partnerships

Historically, child protection interventions have focused on targeting individual parental characteristics and behaviours. More recently, the effect of structural factors on child maltreatment and the underlying social conditions where children reside have gained attention (Coulton et al., 2007; Dufour et al., 2016; Freisthler & Maguire-Jack, 2015; Molnar et al., 2016) It is increasingly being acknowledged that communities can support parents in their roles and that public expenditures directed toward community strategies might provide the greatest benefit for the expenditure (Daro & Dodge, 2009). As a result, child protection systems have been encouraged to engage with community groups to develop interventions that provide support to families struggling to meet their children's needs. Building social capital within impoverished or marginalized neighborhoods and increasing the accessibility of family support services to parents represent one approach to reduce child maltreatment. However, despite rhetoric of "partnership" and "community," child protection agencies are often large bureaucracies that are separate from rather than embedded in the communities they serve (Lonne, Parton, Thomson, & Harries, 2008). There is little evidence of practices by which collaboration between child protection and community could be developed into meaningful participation by community actors. Given the specific characteristics of child protection mandates, participatory processes may not fit the expectations promoted in child protection work (Bilodeau, Chamberland, & White, 2002; Healy, 1998). The forensic nature of interventions coupled with the child protection agency's responsibility for managing the ensuing risks lends itself to cross-system collaborations more closely resembling service-coordination and cooperation than partnership. This becomes a continuation of the status quo with little possibility for transformative change in the systems implicated. Coupled with the burden of their heavy mandate, collaboration with child protection organizations can encounter obstacles, particularly given the attitudes, beliefs, knowledge, and perceptions of caseworkers, and organizational factors such as standards of practice, policies, and aspects of the organizational climate(Smith & Mogro-Wilson, 2007).

In her comparison of various federal community program in poor US neighbourhoods in the late 1960s, Arnstein (1969) distinguished between participation as an empty ritual and

participation from a position of power. She emphasized that, without a redistribution of power, participation is an empty and frustrating process for the powerless, allowing the powerholders to claim to have considered all perspectives while really maintaining the status quo. While her article referred to the participation of service users, her findings can also be applied to the context of the present study, given that community organizations often represent the voice of users. Her article proposed a typology of eight levels of participation (or collaboration) in the form of a ladder. The lowest two rungs, *manipulation* and *therapy*, represent forms of non-participation in which collaboration is symbolized without allowance for protest or opposition. The next three steps, *information, consultation,* and *placation,* indicate levels of tokenism that allow possibilities to hear and to be heard, while leaving the total extent of participation at the level of information. Under these conditions, participation lacks the power to ensure that views and opinions will be effectively considered in decision-making. She further explained that collaborations of this nature lack the necessary follow-through or "muscle" to affect change, as the powerholders retain the exclusive right to make decisions. The top three rungs of the ladder, *partnership, delegated power,* and *citizen control,* are true examples of participation because each of these steps allows for the codetermination of decision-making and of policies among the various participants.

Partnership thus involves the redistribution of power among collaborating organizations to allow for shared responsibility for planning and decision making through formalized structures. Quick and Feldman (2011) refer to these opportunities for shared planning as "inclusion" and draw attention to the pitfalls of equating inclusion with participation. According to these authors, inclusion requires a distinctive set of practices that are essential to promoting engagement (Quick & Feldman, 2011). Whereas participation is oriented to increasing input for decisions, inclusive practices build the community capacity needed to implement decisions and to tackle related issues (Quick & Feldman, 2011). Inclusive practices are those that entail the continuous coproduction of processes, policies, and programs to define and to address public issues. They involve the collaborative design of content and process by means of iterative discussions, rather than approaches based on narrowly defined issues or single meetings. Inclusive processes are considered necessary to help bridge differences among stakeholders,

develop a shared vision, help partners establish inclusive infrastructures, and manage power imbalances (Bryson, Crosby, & Stone, 2015).

4.2.3 Partnering with the community to reduce the overrepresentation of Black families

Several forms of cross-system collaboration have been implemented by child protection agencies across North America to address marginalized communities, including the use of cultural brokers, the establishment of ethnic-specific services, the out-stationing of caseworkers in communities, and the creation of differential response systems. The variability of these models, coupled with the specificity of each jurisdiction and its key actors, make it very difficult to draw conclusions about whether or not these collaborations are effective in reducing overrepresentation and to link efficiency to the collaborative model. Attempting to ascertain why certain collaborations are successful, and the role community engagement plays in this process, is a difficult task. Knowing how partnerships are formed, implemented, and function becomes imperative to understanding how collaboration influences outcomes.

Research on successful reduction of overrepresentation of Black families in child protection systems through community engagement has focused on legislated statewide partnerships between child protection systems and community-based organizations. The Texas Community Engagement Model developed by the Center for Elimination of Disproportionality and Disparities aimed to reduce disproportionality and disparities through a four-stage process. The model called for: (1) building community awareness and engagement, (2) creating leadership amongst organizations and institutions, (3) legitimizing the importance of community members, and (4) ensuring mutual and reciprocal accountability and investment. Following its implementation, Texas experienced a statewide reduction of foster care placements for all children. Meanwhile, the Point of Engagement collaborative partnership model, developed in Compton, California, enlisted the support of community providers to prevent and address child abuse (Marts, Lee, McRoy, & McCroskey, 2008). Its multi-faceted approach emphasized shared decision making amongst community partners and included such components as multi-

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disciplinary assessments, differential and alternative responses (including community-based formal and informal support services for families with inconclusive child protection referrals), and child safety conferences attended by community service providers. Following its implementation, the number of children removed from their families was reduced, along with an increase in the number returned to their families and a decrease in the number of case substantiations (Marts et al., 2008). Lastly, Fresno County, California implemented the Family to Family initiative, developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation for adoption anywhere in the United States; the county saw a decrease in Black children entering foster care and an increase in their reunification rates. This shift was attributed to: (1) strong leadership and commitment to ending disparity within the child protection system, (2) meaningful, robust, and consistent community partnerships, (3) being in touch with the experiences of youth and families of colour being served by the child protection system, and (4) taking advantage of new funding and reform opportunities (Weber, 2015). The child protection system engaged in collaboration with the community, which provided opportunities for reflection and ongoing collective development that yielded the conditions necessary for effective partnership (Horwath & Morrison, 2011).

These three jurisdictions all experienced positive outcomes for children outcomes hat they attribute to collaborations with the community, which went beyond reducing the overrepresentation of Black Americans in child protection. The nature of these collaborations is crucial to these outcomes; in all three jurisdictions, participation from communities went beyond tokenism through a clearly identified government strategy including appropriate mechanisms of accountability. Collaboration included the sharing of information and consultation with community members as well as processes for ensuring co-determination of decision making and policies. Their approach was multi-faceted, suggesting a collaboration further along the continuum of interconnectedness, including several linkages between the child protection agency and the community. These inclusive practices yielded a partnership where child protection agencies were held accountable through formalized structures. Effective partnerships need systems and structures to be put in place to the ensure achievement of goals (Percy-Smith, 2006). These are typically prescribed in regulations and standards that ensure desirable behaviour and provide for resources to minimize impacts of adverse economic or policy impacts(Das & Teng, 1998). In all three cases, each jurisdiction had a governing strategy and

policy framework necessary to support collaboration, along with the funding needed to implement effective partnerships.

The present study will describe the development of and the challenges facing a cross-system collaboration between a child protection agency and a grass-root community organization, from the perspective of its stakeholders. Both organizations partnered to implement a parenting program whose aim was to reduce the overrepresentation of Black children reported to the child protection agency. Understanding how the partnership emerged and the challenges faced, will contribute to a broader understanding of cross-system collaboration specific to reducing the overrepresentation of Black children, allowing for transferable learning in both theory and practice. In comparison to the cross-system collaborations reviewed above, the current study represents a smaller-scale initiative stemming from the child protection agency mandated to provide services to Anglophone families in Montreal, Quebec. The cross-system collaboration was referred to as a partnership by representatives of both the child protection agency and the community organization. The two bodies appointed a committee of stakeholders that was responsible for the design and implementation of the collaboration. The partners aimed to reduce overrepresentation by (1) providing a parenting support program for Black families reported for maltreatment concerns, (2) informing at-risk Black families of services and program available within their community, and (3) building awareness among professionals in contact with Black families (including police, schools, and public health agencies) of services available through the community organization.

4.3 Research methods

This study was nested within a program evaluation of the parenting support program implemented by the child protection agency and community organization. The program evaluation sought to describe the program model and implementation process, as well as to evaluate the program with respect to the partnership between the two organizations.

4.3.1 Study Context

In 2013, a stakeholder committee with members from the community organization, the African Canadian Development and Prevention Network (ACDPN) and the child protection agency, Batshaw Youth and Family Centres (BYFC), was formed and began meeting to discuss how to reduce the number of Black children being reported for child maltreatment. A formalized partnership stemmed from funding being made available for policy initiatives targeting service adaptation for ethno-cultural[7] minorities. The partnership's primary purpose was to design and implement an intervention addressing the overrepresentation of Black children reported to the child protection agency. The *Empowering Parents and their Families Program* (EPF) began running in February 2015 following funding being granted by the Health and Social Services Agency of Montreal in November 2014. EPF uses a collaborative community approach that promotes a global and holistic understanding of family functioning and believes that child protection systems can keep children safer by developing partnerships with community organizations and neighborhood resources. Through EPF, ACDPN and BYFC sought to deliver a parenting program to families reported to the child protection agency that would enable parents to be well informed about alternative means of discipline and would improve the engagement of parents with institutional and community services. A 6-week program was developed for Black families reported to the child protection agency, where each week was devoted to a specific theme meant to build trust between participants and public services, further develop parenting skills, and familiarize participants with services available to them in their community. The intervention was community-based and delivered jointly by staff from the child protection agency and the community organization. The program was voluntary; parents were offered the intervention by the child protection agency as an alternative to traditional child protection services. Following participation in the program, cases would either be closed, or would remain open, depending on the current risk perception determined by the child protection agency. The target clientele included Black English speaking families with children between the ages of 6 –

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[7] This chapter will use the term "ethno-cultural" in reference to race given this terminology was used by study participants within the child protection system.

12 years old who had been reported or were at-risk of being reported to the child protection agency for an allegation of physical abuse. From February 2015 to December 2016, a total of eight sessions were implemented by the collaboration. It was expected that each session would yield approximately six to ten families, however the collaboration only managed to secure an average of five families per session. During this period, the program served a total of 97 children and 49 parents. Of this, only 54% of them were referred by the child protection agency.

4.3.2 Participants

Study participants were recruited based on their membership in the stakeholder committee, which consisted of 6 members representing both the child protection agency and the community organization. A member from the research team also attended and observed committee meetings. The six members interviewed represented the entire committee and were all active members at the time of the study; however, not all of them were involved at the onset of collaboration. The two organizations were equally represented, with the majority of participants employed as directors or managers in their respective organization. Participants from the community organization, except for the director, held consultant positions and were contracted by the community organization. Of the members involved in the committee, only the community organization had Black representatives. Interviews were conducted between September and December 2016, in locations chosen by the participants to offer convenience and privacy (see Annex 6 for a copy of the study consent form).

4.3.3 Data Collection

A semi-structured interview protocol centred on participants' knowledge of the development of the collaboration, the ways in which the organizations were collaborating, and their experiences and perceptions of benefits and challenges of the collaboration as well as activities stemming from their partnership (see Annex 7 for the interview guide used). The questions were broad in scope, and participants were asked as much as possible to provide

concrete examples and descriptions for each observation. All interviews were conducted in person and ranged from 48 to 98 minutes in length (*M=70*); audio recordings were made with the knowledge and consent of the participants. The study received approval from university ethics committees and the child protection agency (REB: IUSMD-16-20).

4.3.4 Data Analysis

Transcripts were transcribed by the researcher and thematic analysis was used to generate themes from the interview data. The transcripts made from the recordings were read several times to allow for familiarization with the data; initial impressions and memos were noted (Patton, 2005). Themes were identified using an inductive approach, with the specific research question evolving throughout the coding process (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Semantic themes were identified, summarized, and then interpreted to theorize the significance of their patterns and their broader meaning and implications in relation to previous literature (Patton, 1990). Two cycles of coding were conducted using NVivo 10 (QSR International), a computer-based data analysis package designed for qualitative research. In vivo coding was used in the first cycle of coding to provide a descriptive account of the nature of the collaborative relationship. More focused coding was employed in the second cycle, using the predominant themes identified from the first cycle to recode the data. Achieving data saturation was made complex by the purposive nature of our sample. However, despite the small sample size, our desire to capture explicit and concrete issues allowed for code saturation within the data (Hennink, Kaiser, & Marconi, 2017).

4.4 Results

This first section begins by outlining how the cross-system collaboration developed. The second section will address the challenges faced by the partnership activities throughout implementation of the parenting support program developed by the cross-system collaboration.

4.4.1 Development of the cross-system collaboration

The collaboration between the child protection agency and community organization originated from: (1) the child protection agency's commitment to address the overrepresentation of Black children within their agency and (2) the availability of public funding for initiatives targeting minority populations.

1. Agency commitment

Study participants described the child protection agency's commitment to reducing overrepresentation of Black children as driven by decision by agency leadership to prioritize this issue of overrepresentation, as well as recent public policy guidelines on improving service adaptation and accessibility for ethno-cultural minorities. One participant from the community organization reported the following:

> _____, who was the previous [Director], has always been very open to- you know trying different things. So, I remember we met on the street here and she said "I really want to push this, you know I'm talking to [the community organization] and you know we're working on it—can you please become involved in it? (Participant 5).

This director was also mentioned by other study participants across both the community organization and child protection agency as adopting a strong leadership role in moving the collaboration forward. The child protection agency had a documented history of

overrepresentation of Black children and families, and over the years had attempted to address the issue through various efforts to promote diversity. It is not clear what motivated this director's call for action at this instance. She possessed over twenty years of experience within the agency and had formed close ties with the community organization. Through her discussions with the community organization, a stakeholder committee was formed that included the director of the community organization, a contracted consultant hired by the community organization, and two senior managers from the child protection agency. The stakeholder committee's objective at this time was to brainstorm how the child protection agency could address the overrepresentation of Black children in partnership with the community organization. Partnering with community organizations to adapt child services to ethno-cultural minorities was a policy directive that had recently surfaced within the health and social service mandates. A participant from the community organization reported:

> At the end of this document there's a part that talks about adapting these services to First Nation Communities and ethno-cultural minorities… The Ministry has issued an expectation but not everybody is born knowing exactly what to do about this, in fact most people are not. It has to be figured out- there's a combination of leadership and experimentation that leads to figuring out how to do this. (Participant 3)

While the policy directive stated the desirability of service adaptation, it did not specify how. Participants viewed their partnership as an example of how to go about achieving service adaptation. Over the span of two years, the stakeholder committee met to develop a proposal that they later submitted for funding.

2. The availability of funding

The child protection agency and the community organization had a longstanding history of service coordination. The community organization had conducted workshops for agency staff on intervening with Black families and had received referrals from various caseworkers seeking to refer families to services within their community. It was the availability of funding that increased collaboration and promoted the ensuing partnership. Participants described the

availability of funding increasing the inter-connectedness between the two organizations. One participant from the child protection agency reported:

Before there was really no connectedness—there was no engagement, if you needed a referral you made a referral. You know, if you encountered a situation who did you speak to? Now, on both ends we have the go-to people we have a number of people that we can speak to, we know what the challenges are and you have their cell numbers and you can pick it up anytime and we trust one another. And that I think is the big thing, I'm not saying there was a lack of trust before—because I can't speak to that, but there's certainly more enhanced collaboration and trust that goes along with what we've developed over time and the trusting of one another's roles and the roles we serve within the community (Participant 4).

A participant from the community organization reported:

I had never spoken to a social worker before [the partnership]. And I think another great thing about it is that it's allowed us to understand the system. Before we were getting families who show up, they have a social worker, XYZ happened and we're getting their side of it. Everything they say to us sounds crazy because their perception of it is—you know one way. Because we have a partner now within the [child protection agency] we kind of understand—they can lead us through the steps (Participant 2).

The availability of funding provided an opportunity for the two organizations to sit beside each other and work on a common issue. This resulted in the creation of ties between the organizations that had previously been non-existent. For the past ten years, the community organization provided an evidence-based family skills training program adapted for Black families. This program was accessible to families receiving services from the child protection agency; however, ownership and responsibility of the program remained with the community organization. Under partnership circumstances, funding was provided based on an expressed need articulated by the child protection agency and required both organizations collectively plan and design an intervention. A participant from the community organization reported:

In the current context, the rules of the funding were that the child protection agency itself had to request the funding, so nominally they're kind of responsible for the project. However, in practical terms they hand off that responsibility to the community organization who is quite willing to have it (Participant 3).

Participants viewed this funding as indicative of the child protection agency's stake in the partnership, given that they were ultimately accountable for how the funds were used throughout implementation of the parenting support program. However, while "responsible for the project," the child protection agency delegated implementation of the program to the community organization. The community organization chose the site locations, hired staff (with the exception of one staff member loaned by the child protection agency), purchased program materials, and transported the clientele, among other tasks. There was recognition on the part of the child protection agency that the community organization held a certain expertise in program implementation. Participants from the child protection agency stated the following:

> This community organization is the expert and we need to leave them to do what they need to do. The only area that I would feel I would need to intervene is if [the community organization] communicated to me that my own staff was inappropriate, then certainly then I would be dealing with that. (Participant 1)

> They've [the community organization] taken a big lead in this even though we've provided our support with a child care worker. In terms of the pamphlets, organizing, getting the word out, dealing with the logistics it's really been all them. But we share [tasks] in terms of the financial logistics. (Participant 4)

The decision to delegate implementation of logistics to the community organization placed the child protection agency in the position of having to authorize funds used by the community organization.

4.4.2 Challenges to the cross-system collaboration

Although it was anticipated that referrals from the child protection agency would exceed the capacity of the parenting support program, of the 93 children referred, a bare 54% were referred by the child protection agency. The remaining referrals came from school boards and other non-profit organizations with whom the community organization had pre-existing ties.

While these children were considered at-risk of maltreatment, the child protection agency was not currently involved in these cases. Additionally, it was expected that each program session would help six to ten families, but even with referrals from outside the child protection agency, the program was only attended by an average of five families per session. Participants from the study mentioned the child protection agency's organizational context, its level of socio-political support, and its organizational culture as the principal reasons for the partnership's poor recruitment of Black families from *within* the child protection agency.

1. Organizational context

Prior to the start of program implementation, the child protection agency had been merged with several other public service institutions. This merger resulted in significant cuts to senior personnel and the transfer of managers into new positions carrying larger responsibilities. This challenging organizational context was a recurrent theme among participants and was described as a major challenge to implementation efforts. A participant from the community organization reported the following:

> [The child protection agency] got merged into an organization that was probably roughly ten times their size, approximately. So instead of being one fairly big organization it goes inside something that is ten times the size of what it was, and it is the only organization with their particular mandate. All the rest of this new organization has got other mandates in health, intellectual handicap, mental health, the elderly and so on. So, it goes from being a fairly big fish to being a small fish in a much bigger pond. (Participant 3)

The merger meant that the child protection agency had to learn how to navigate their services under a new administrative infrastructure. Because the funding had been granted to the child protection agency, the community organization was dependent on the release of funds by the agency to implement program. After having fronted the costs for the first session of program, the community organization only received their reimbursement for the associated costs nine months later. This posed a major problem for the community organization, which did not have the ability to self-finance over such an extended period of time. Probing into the reasons for the delay in funding, significant time and effort were required on the part of the child protection

agency to locate the funds within their now larger organization. In the end, the delayed funding was not a result of a lack of funds; rather, according to a participant from the child protection agency:

> The money was there, we just couldn't access it. So, we needed to find out where that money was—and it was just sitting there (Participant 4).

Another participant from the child protection agency added:

> Now that we're a bigger organization, the accessibility of getting the funding, once we get the funding and deposit it within our organization, seems to be—there seems to be a bit more of umm—structure you have to go through. More red tape, more people, more explanations. (Participant 1)

The delays in funding resulted in the community organization halting program until they could guarantee that the child protection agency would provide funds prior to the start of each program session. All of the initial excitement and promotion surrounding the parenting support program had dissipated when it relaunched several months later. A participant from the community organization stated:

> We had to start over—under different conditions that were made more difficult because of the merger (Participant 2).

In addition to challenges because of funding delays and stunted momentum, participants from the community organization described the organizational context as significantly impacting the child protection agency's ability to effectively promote the program, within their services, to allow for effective participation of the target clientele. A participant from the child protection agency reported:

> Ironically, we're getting more referrals from the community than we are from our own internal [agency] which for me, is very disturbing (Participant 1).

The community organization believed that this lack of response from the child protection agency was because they were "distracted" by the merger. One participant reported:

It seems to me that they just kind of stopped paying attention to [the community organization] not because they decided it's not important anymore but because the demands of the re-organization just swamped many things—including that (Participant 3).

The demands of restructuring resulted in the parenting support program not receiving the attention and promotion required to obtain referrals from caseworkers. In fact, the program appeared to lack visibility within the agency. One participant from the community organization believed that some caseworkers could be completely unaware of the programme's existence:

You know, it wouldn't surprise me if there are managers inside of the child protection agency responsible for staff who have caseloads for which there are Black families who would either say: "I've never heard of it [the program]" or "I didn't think that we could use it" or "I don't know how to use it" or "It didn't occur to me" (Participant 3).

According to participants from the child protection agency, it wasn't enough simply to send a mass email advertising the program or to hang a poster in the building. Caseworkers are bombarded by heavy caseloads and information, so outreach for these types of initiatives must be personalized, regular, consistent and routine. Agency members from the stakeholder committee were expected to disseminate program information within their respective divisions. These members held positions in upper management and were tasked with ensuring that lower level management and caseworkers were able to access program information and make referrals. However, not every division within the child protection agency was represented at the stakeholder committee, and several participants commented that the committee was missing members and adequate representation. To compensate, the community organization was granted access to management in various key divisions outside those represented within the stakeholder committee, to boost referrals from the agency. While the community organization willingly accepted this task, they expressed concerns about why the information could not be relayed

directly by agency committee members, given their equal stake in the collaboration. One participant from the community organization reported the following:

So, they'll tell me who I'm supposed to talk to and then I do it. So, I don't know if it's because they can't do it? I feel like there are these barriers— these silos that they work within (Participant 2).

This participant described being given contact information from an agency member of the stakeholder committee on how to reach a manager from another department. It was unclear why the stakeholder agency member was unable to give the information directly to the other department and why the community organization had to act as a go-between. From the perspective of the community organization, it was unclear why everybody within the child protection agency was not already aware of the collaboration and program. A participant from the community organization reported the following:

If it's a [child protection agency] project why doesn't everybody in the agency know about it? It seems that it's not as simple as telling everybody in the agency. It's like there's a process. To me, if you're partnering in a project with someone and this is your project everyone in your ranks should know about it and everybody should be using it (Participant 2).

Poor recruitment from the child protection agency meant that referrals from outside sources were necessary. Funds that were unused by the partnership risked being returned to the funder by the end of the fiscal year. The recruitment of families beyond the child protection agency was delegated to the community organization. These outreach efforts were not funded and required a significant amount of investment on the part of the community organization. A participant from the community organization reported:

There've been periods where [the community organization] didn't have any child protection referrals and had to go out and beat the bushes. [We] had to go to sister organizations, [we] had to look among the people that come to [us] for help about different things, and [we] had to go to school partners. So [we] had some sessions where there were

zero child protection cases involved, but if [we] didn't do that [we] were at risk of not using the funding. (Participant 3)

The lack of referrals from the child protection agency and significant deviation from the target population raised significant concerns from the community organization about the sustainability of the partnership and whether future funding could be secured, given the relatively low involvement of families from the child protection agency.

2. Socio-political support

While the lack of visibility and promotion of the program may have been the primary reason for poor agency recruitment and referrals, the phenomenon also indicated that the partnership seemed to lack support within the agency. A participant from the community organization reported the following:

Look how hard it is to just have a meeting with [the child protection agency]. We were supposed to meet like two months ago or something and it's always postponed. Now it's again postponed so that's too bad because of the re-organization and other priorities (Participant 5).

The stakeholder committee was expected to meet at the beginning and end of each of the six-week program sessions. Following the restructuring, four or five months went by between meetings. All participants described the stakeholder committee meetings as a necessity of the collaboration. These meetings provided a space for communication, negotiation, brainstorming, and strategic planning. A manager from the child protection agency described the committee as the "over-seer of the partnership," while a participant from the community organization stated:

I think that the stakeholder committee is essential; if you're going to be in a partnership this is a huge demonstration of what a partnership is, when everyone gets together and discusses where we are, where we want to go. (Participant 2).

Activities stemming from the collaboration were dependent on the child protection agency's capacity to partner with the community organization and to participate in these meetings. While the child protection agency continued to express desire and commitment to the partnership and its activities, their actions did not always fit with this rhetoric. A participant from the community organization stated the following:

> I believe that if you were to go and ask any of those people [child protection agency staff] "is this important?" they would tell you categorically that it's important. Nobody in their right mind would say it's not. So the problem is the behaviour that flows from that (Participant 3).

The restructuring revealed that the partnership and its program were not prioritized within the restructured organization. This was demonstrated by the lack of meetings for several months and poor referral response from agency staff. For an extended period of time, the community organization had no real access to the agency. When committee meetings resumed, they were task-focused, given the outstanding demands related to implementation of the parenting support program. The stakeholder committee was consumed with troubleshooting the fallout from the restructuring that they were unable to plan, evaluate, and reflect on their partnership effectively. A participant from the community organization reported:

> There are several objectives [in the partnership] that we try to get back to, but like I said before, I feel the day-to-day challenges are kind of taking over. I feel that we have to kind of keep them in mind and continue to work on that (Participant 5).

At the onset of the partnership, collaboration between both organizations was also meant to address larger concerns beyond the implementation of the parenting support program, such as how to increase the accessibility of services to the Black community and how to build awareness among professionals of services available to Black families within their community. A participant from the child protection agency reported:

> My hope is that as we move forward that we'll be able to develop other partnerships or other projects with this group [the community organization]. There's a number of groups or communities or projects that can be had [that] either they've identified or we can play

a role or help support or whatever the case may be. You know and I hope that this type of orientation that we've taken opens it up for other communities that we can be involved with (Participant 4).

Despite the reference by this participant from the child protection agency to wanting to move beyond this parenting support program and into partnerships with other ethno-cultural communities, corresponding action on the part of the agency to attain these objectives was missing. The child protection agency's inability to fully attend to the implementation of the parenting support program made additional time for strategic planning difficult. There was a sense that activities stemming from the partnership would not be possible without clear policy directives to enforce agreements and hold the child protection agency accountable. According to one participant from the community organization it is not enough to simply produce policy guidelines on improving service adaptation and accessibility for ethno-cultural minorities, actions and mechanisms must be specified and followed-through to support these initiatives. Child protection agencies then need to demonstrate how they are going to achieve their directives. A participant from the child protection agency highlighted:

If [policy document] doesn't say, describe examples of adaptation of services to ethno-cultural minorities and if it doesn't say, describe examples of collaborations with community organizations that come from ethno-cultural minorities. It might get done but if it's not called for, it won't— it's certainly not guaranteed to get done because there are so many other things to attend to (Participant 1).

The reality is that child protection agencies are faced with many demands concerning a variety of vulnerable groups and social issues. For a particular cause to become prioritized, simple good intentions are not enough.

The socio-political challenges faced by the partnership were also attributed to personnel drift within the child protection agency. The presence of "champions" or "leaders" is frequently referenced in collaboration literature. These individuals are often responsible for motivating change within their organization and possess personal characteristics that support mobilization activities. Within the child protection agency, two senior managers who played significant roles

during the start of the partnership retired from the agency prior to the implementation of the parenting support program. These managers had approached the community organization and had requested their help in reducing overrepresentation. They invested two years of networking with the community organization to plan and develop the program project proposal. While not all of the participants from the community organization suggested that their departure negatively impacted the partnership, one participant reported the following:

> Different people change and a significant person left. [Previous stakeholder member] seemed to have quite a strong leadership role and she wasn't really replaced. (Participant 6).

Additionally, a participant from the child protection agency used telling words to describe their involvement in the collaboration:

> I'm a member of the stakeholder committee and inherited the membership from [name of senior manager] who was one of the individuals who initiated the project for the agency with the community and this was a dossier that I inherited from her after she retired (Participant 1).

The use of the word "inherited" and "dossier" places the participant's involvement in the collaboration at the same level as other day-to-day tasks and responsibilities. In a context void of mechanisms to enforce collaboration activities, a "dossier" becomes one competing priority among many. Under such circumstances, the personal investment necessary to motivate others and champion a partnership is questionable. This lack of investment was also demonstrated when another participant from the child protection agency confused the given acronym of the parenting support program with that of a completely different program. When asked to further describe their knowledge of the community organization, they stated:

> We've partnered with, and I never get the acronym right. They do good work with regard to community program. I don't know detailed knowledge about them. I haven't done a big homework with it because I've really mostly tried to focus on [the parenting support program]. (Participant 1).

This particular participant struggled with articulating the general mandate and mission of the community organization outside of their involvement in the parenting support program. Entering in a partnership with an organization requires knowledge of their mission and mandate. While knowledge transfer occurred from the child protection agency to the community organization with regards to the child protection process and policies, similar transfer of knowledge from the community organization to the child protection agency was not reciprocated. The ability to promote a partnership is questionable if an organization is unable to market their partner.

The departure of the previous "champions" within the child protection agency seemed to shift the balance in ownership of the partnership. While not directly stated by those interviewed, it seemed that in spite of each organization claiming to have an equal stake in the collaboration, it was the child protection agency that dictated the "partnership". The child protection agency did a lot of delegating to the community organization under the pretense that they were the "experts." The term "experts" was used several times by participants from the child protection agency:

> My sense with regards to this is that they're the experts—this community organization is the expert and we need to leave them to do what they need to do (Participant 4).

This statement alludes to the child protection agency "auto-piloting" the partnership. They determined the terms of their involvement and what they were willing or not willing to contribute, while the community organization attempted to adjust and accommodate the agency. The community organization's frustration with the child protection agency also went unspoken. They gave the agency the benefit of the doubt because of the restructuring and never held them accountable for their lack of participation. This organizational etiquette may have been required, given the "honeymoon phase" of the collaboration, or could be the symptom of something more pervasive that would continue to hinder communication moving forward. The claim that each partner had an "equal stake" in the collaboration was inaccurate, given that the community organization had more to lose. A participant from the community organization stated:

There's a lot of weight that comes with being in a partnership with such an agency. I wasn't aware that it was important, but I sit on a couple of tables and committees in different neighborhoods and "Ooh you're in a partnership with [child protection agency name]?" it lends some type of credibility to our little organization that we wouldn't ordinarily have had (Participant 2).

The partnership with the child protection agency allowed the community organization to garner credibility with other public institutions, increasing the likelihood of future initiatives or collaborations with other public institutions.

3. Organizational culture

The challenging organizational culture of the child protection agency was acknowledged by participants from both the community organization and the agency as being partly responsible for the lack of referrals. A participant from the child protection agency reported the following:

[Child protection agency] thinks we have the final say and we're God and we're going to do everything—we don't go enough towards community partners and we don't think about it. And yet, at the same time we complain. We complain that the work is too much but then we don't reach out to the very people that want to help and connect our families to them(Participant 6).

The suggestion that working in partnership with the communities is not intuitive to caseworkers was one reason expressed for the lack of referrals from the agency. This participant suggested that even if adequate promotion of the partnership and the parenting support program had occurred, caseworkers would still be reluctant to refer families. Another participant from the child protection agency added:

We have workers that say they are exhausted about being the sole keeper of a lot of these dossiers. Yet on the other hand if you've asked them if they've referred to any of these community resources, there seems to be a reluctance to partner with community resources—because there seems to be a sense of "I'm going to lose control of my case," and there's a sense of "I'm not sure if I want to share the work." I'm not sure what that's about—so it's really around changing the culture in people to say that this is a program that can complement already what you're doing. And so that's what we're trying to do. Recruitment is hard when you have a culture that is not conducive to working with partnerships external to their agency (Participant 1).

Beyond an agency culture that appeared to struggle with partnering with community organizations, questions also arose whether the agency's organizational culture valued efforts to support diversity. One participant from the community organization described the agency's organizational culture not being conducive to supporting diversity efforts:

Instilling in an organization behaviour that is completely commensurate with respect of diversity and collaboration with partners in the community is really a long-haul job. The fact that you've been talking about it or doing some of it for 5-10 years, it might sound like a long time, but it's simply not enough to guarantee that now you can breathe easy and it's going to happen on its own. It's always got to be tended to— and maybe it will always be like that (Participant 3).

The notion of "tending" to diversity or having to invest effort in sensitizing staff being a "long haul job" insinuates a certain resistance within the child protection agency. The causes of this may stem from ethnocentric values held by caseworkers. One participant from the child protection agency described how historically, within the agency, "White" caseworker values were not compatible with Black families:

I used to witness some of the exchanges [between staff] — people were clueless. They had no idea whatsoever—their values were White middle-class values, they weren't resonating with Black families. For me—you know it's not so much the cultures it's the— you're missing the boat with your client. The accountability that I have as a social service delivery person is to my client (Participant 6).

To correct some of this racial bias, the child protection agency had taken steps to create "Black staff positions" within their agency. A participant from the child protection agency reported:

> We have [agency] positions which are designated Black positions. Now I'll admit that they're not all held by Black staff. We have some Caucasian staff that are holding those positions, but they're to have knowledge on the Black community and Black community resources. That is a pre-requisite for them getting the job (Participant 1).

Despite the presence of these staff members within the agency, none of these specially-qualified staff were asked to sit on the stakeholder committee, so the Black community was represented on the committee only by the community organization representatives. In addition, there was mention that a Black Resource Committee had been implemented within the child protection agency, but the community representatives struggled to obtain contact information for members of this committee. A participant from the community organization reported:

> To my surprise this [Black Resource Committee] apparently exists but when I asked additional questions it's very sketchy. Who's on it? Whose running it? It used to exist? "Someone went on mat leave so we're not very sure ..." These people [members of the Black Resource Committee] are apparently trained, and when I said what type of training would that be? They couldn't—the answers were not clear. So, I'm trying to get with her [child protection agency staff] to figure out who's on the committee, what does it really mean? That's also been difficult. That information—It seems like nobody's sure and with all the changes—my sense is either it should exist and doesn't. Or, it did exist and no longer does (Participant 2).

While the child protection agency was making efforts to deal with diversity issues, the efficiency of these mechanisms was questionable. This situation suggested that anti-oppressive practices might not reflect actual organizational values within traditional government service agencies. One participant from the child protection agency highlighted this:

> I think there's a gap between the traditional government services or the institutional services and the community-based services. Community-based organizations may also carry with it other activities. Advocacy activities—that for people who are working in the

system—it's much more difficult politically for them to do that. So, there's a bit of a gap to bridge and I think everybody's aware of it. People don't talk about it in great detail (Participant 6).

The participant suggested that the organizational mandate and mission of child protection agencies may make it more difficult for them to advocate on behalf of their clients.

4.5 Discussion

Although cross-system collaborations are being sought at many organizational levels, their feasibility, implementation dynamics, and impact of such collaborations are still poorly understood. This study has sought to examine closely an instance of collaboration between a child protection agency and grass-roots community organization who established a partnership to reduce the overrepresentation of Black children reported to the child protection agency. A critical perspective was chosen for this analysis, to allow us to identify challenges and to inform future practice and policy in a meaningful way. While many benefits of cross-system collaboration were cited by participants, this study chose to focus on processes at the agency level that may have hindered further development and sustainability.

Our findings revealed that this collaboration experienced significant tension between the dynamics of partnership and tokenism, despite claims by stakeholder participants that they had engaged in the former. The child protection agency's organizational context, the level of socio-political support for the partnership, and the agency's organizational culture were all offered by participants as obstacles to the development of the activities required to make the collaboration effective. These findings are not unique in this field of research, but they do contribute to a better understanding of the particularities of partnerships seeking to reduce overrepresentation.

4.5.1 Challenging organizational context

The challenging organizational context, namely the disruptive restructuring experienced by the child protection agency, limited ability of its representatives to participate effectively in the partnership, at times relegating their involvement to a minimum. The child protection agency had formally contracted to certain responsibilities, including liberating one staff member from the agency to deliver the parenting program and assuming fiduciary responsibility. Beyond this, it was recognized that the community organization was well suited to "take the lead" in activities stemming from the partnership. However, a number of the tasks delegated by the child protection agency to the community organization seemed to exceed the latter's experience in program implementation. Delegating promotion of the program from the child protection agency to the community organization raised questions about the investment and ownership of the former, within the partnership. This concern was echoed by a participant from the community organization who asked, if the parenting support program was an agency project, then "why doesn't everybody in the agency know about it?" The community organization's attempts to promote the project among child protection staff did not appear to increase referrals or program capacity. It may have also indirectly conveyed the message that the program was one community service among others, rather than being an agency intervention specifically for child protection clients. The lack of participation from the child protection agency was most likely to have indicated an organizational context and climate that was not conducive to partnership. More pressing concerns related to the agency's restructuring, and the retirement of key personnel, overshadowed the agency's commitment to the partnership. This was demonstrated by months without scheduled stakeholder committee meetings, delays in program sessions, and poor promotion of collaboration activities within the agency. This produced a one-sided partnership where the community organization was required to sustain the parenting support program on its own. The impact of the restructuring revealed that the partnership and objectives to reduce overrepresentation were not prioritized by the agency.

4.5.2 Lack of socio-political support

Child protection agencies will always be vulnerable to the "revolving door" of management and staff (Collinscamargo, 2007). Within the context of this partnership, the founding member of the partnership was no longer employed by the child protection agency as the program reached the implementation stage. This individual possessed strong leadership skills and was never replaced. According to Huxham & Vangen (2013), the spirit of collaboration is good theoretically, but pragmatically, collaborative thuggery is required to prevent collaborative inertia in instances where extensive barriers and obstacles exist. They further argue that leadership is most successful when individuals are capable of embodying both aspects. While the spirit of collaboration was maintained by the child protection agency, it lacked collaborative thuggery. The findings of this study have demonstrated that, when faced with administrative delays, resignation to the "red tape" and the organizational challenges by restructuring were accepted by agency managers and staff. Meanwhile, the community organization was forced to wait nine months for reimbursement for the initial session it fronted, then waited several months before resuming program while the child protection agency tried to establish a procedure to pay out costs at the start of sessions rather than afterwards. The collaborative thuggery required to seek creative solutions within this partnership was missing, and leadership from both sides lacked the "muscle" to get things done. Participants from the child protection agency described the merit of the partnership and fulfilled their contractual obligations, however the personal investment and commitment to systemic change that was present at the onset of the partnership appeared to diminish. The child protection agency demonstrated limited knowledge of the community organization's mandate, its representatives could not consistently identify the acronym of the parenting support program, typically referred to the partnership as a "dossier," and auto-piloted their involvement while leveraging the expertise of the community organization. Poor agency leadership, particularly in the area of diversity, runs the risk of sending a message to agency staff that efforts to address diversity are not essential (Hyde, 2004). The presence of dedicated "champions" capable of "making things happen," advocating on behalf of their agendas, is required for mobilization to occur across entire organization (Huxham & Vangen, 2013).

4.5.3 Resistant organizational culture

Given the particular demands of child protection work, initiatives for cross-system collaboration can create tensions for agency staff (Healy, 1998). As one participant suggested, the organizational mandate of child protection agencies may create barriers to advocacy and empowerment activities. While cross-system collaborations are formally encouraged and have sometimes been required by decision-makers at higher levels, conditions such as organizational structure and culture can either promote or hinder collaborative practice (Smith & Mogro-Wilson, 2007). Organizational culture refers to the underlying reasons and mechanisms for why things occur in an organization and stems from fundamental ideologies, assumptions, and values (Ostroff, Kinicki, & Tamkins, 2003). Within the child protection agency, participants described an organizational culture that was resistant to full engagement in partnerships and diversity efforts. With regard to working in partnerships, participants described agency staff as "gate keeping" cases. The causes were not fully explained but might indicate an organizational context not suited to such practices. An organizational expectation that agency staff collaborate with community partners is not sufficient to ensure that it will occur. Normative pressures in the form of incentives and supervisory directives are required to influence staff practices, beliefs, and attitudes by providing clear inducement to engage in collaborative practice (Smith & Mogro-Wilson, 2007). In their description of why agency staff were not likely to make referrals to community services, agency representatives situated the locus of the problem at the caseworker level, without acknowledging the agency-wide factors inhibiting collaboration. With regards to resistance to diversity efforts, participants described a culture within the agency that was difficult to penetrate. There was acknowledgement that "White-middle class values" had produced racial biases. The agency demonstrated a commitment to addressing some of these biases through creation of Black staff positions and a Black resource committee. Yet, when the community organization attempted to obtain more information about these specialized resources, the child protection agency skirted the issue. It appeared that these measures may have resulted from a previous policy directive that was no longer valid; the child protection agency was unable to confirm whether or when such efforts had been dismantled. Another example of resistance to diversity occurred within the stakeholder committee. Among its members, only representatives from the community organization were Black. Study participants

did not emphasize the significance of choosing to exclude Black agency staff from decision-making responsibility for services for Black clients of the child protection agency. Insights these staff members could have contributed went under-exploited. Given the nature of the partnership and its aim to reduce overrepresentation, the failure to ensure adequate representation of the target community within the stakeholder committee served to further promote racial bias within the agency.

4.5.4 Cross-system collaborations to reduce over-representation: Partnership or tokenism?

This study illustrates that, despite claims to partnership, this form of cross-system collaboration ran dangerously close to resembling tokenism where supporting practices of inclusion were neglected. The child protection agency's determination of when and how collaboration would occur left the community organization floundering in their attempts to compensate for the child protection agency's lack of involvement. The community organization only voiced their concerns when the child protection agency was available to listen, and their views and opinions went overshadowed by the agency's internal process of reform and restructuring. This unequal balance of power was also present from the start of the collaboration, with a funding structure that placed the child protection agency in the position of "authorizing" and "releasing" funds. Activities stemming from the partnership were halted because of administrative delays, which posed further deleterious effects in implementation of the parenting support program. No continuous process was undertaken to strengthen the infrastructure of the partnership; the child protection agency remained committed only to the essential tasks stipulated in the authorized proposal. Despite a desire to further promote this model of cross-system collaboration with other ethno-cultural communities, no mechanisms were put in place to ensure this would occur. Thus, the desire to improve service adaptation and increase accessibility for ethno-cultural minorities remained a policy guideline without directives on how to achieve this. The lack of directives and normative pressures left the child protection agency unaccountable in their efforts to collaborate.

Existing literature has demonstrated that cross-system collaborations to reduce overrepresentation within child protection systems have not been successful when they were not omnipresent. Positive impacts are more likely when approaches are inclusive, multi-faceted, and accompanied by several components. Bilodeau, Lapierre, & Marchand (2003) have suggested that for cross-system collaborations to be successful, partnering organizations must be equally involved in strategic, tactical and operational planning. The authors suggest that if planning remains only operational in nature, partners will have limited bargaining power and the collaboration will take the form of consultation without negotiation and influence (Bilodeau et al., 2003).

Previous studies of cross-system collaboration that have managed to reduce overrepresentation significantly involved regular review of data, knowledge transfer activities, opportunities for reflection and brainstorming, legitimization of community members among agency staff, and measures of accountability (Lorthridge, McCroskey, Pecora, Chambers, & Fatemi, 2011). Furthermore, efforts to secure engagement occurred at all levels of the agency concerned, from directors, to management to front-line staff. The findings from this study demonstrate that engagement at the stakeholder level and implementation of single-activity approaches are not sufficient to create organizational change. Cross-system collaborations advocating for systemic change require strong leadership, unwavering agency commitment, opportunities for reflection, and the collective development of conditions necessary to yield an effective partnership. Without most of these features, cross-system collaborative efforts to reduce overrepresentation run the risk of becoming "empty rituals" of partnership maintaining status quo, that is, token collaborations.

4.6 Limitations

There are several limitations to the present study. The cross-system collaboration examined was a relatively young partnership, with the parenting support program only in its second year of implementation. The developmental stage of any collaboration is critical in marking progress and identifying challenges. Our findings may thus be negatively skewed by choosing to collect data near the beginning of program implementation. Furthermore, the reform

and reorganization of the child protection agency created unique challenges in the organizational landscape. The consequences of the restructuring may have increased or aggravated some of the challenges reported. In addition, while the consequences of restructuring helped bring certain phenomena to light, it may also have obscured other dynamics and limited the applicability of the study. Lastly, this study only included perspectives of members from the stakeholder committee. Hearing the experience of other participants, such as caseworkers and program staff, would have helped deepen our understanding of the challenges faced by cross-system collaborations from a "front line" perspective.

4.7 Conclusion

Partnerships between child protection agencies and community organizations are necessary to address the overrepresentation of Black children within the child protection system. When successful, these partnerships can help address the disproportionate level of needs faced by marginalized families and serve to mitigate against racial inequities further propelled by the child protection system. However, systems change is difficult to achieve within a single agency. This study has demonstrated that reducing the overrepresentation of Black children requires more than a formal commitment at an agency level. A policy approach to reduce service disparities across systems is necessary. Within child protection, this involves creating opportunities for partnerships with community organizations to possess a high degree of organizational inter-connectedness, intensity, and inclusive practices to help build community capacity and agency competency. In addition, mechanisms must be established to ensure government and organizational accountability. Without these key features, cross-system collaborations between child protection agencies and communities aiming to reduce overrepresentation of Black children run the risk of exemplifying tokenist approaches rather than meaningful and effective ways of addressing disparity.

Chapter 5: Discussion and conclusion

The preceding chapters aimed to further our knowledge on the overrepresentation and disparity of Black children receiving child protection services within a Canadian context. Through its examination of longitudinal data, this study sought to better understand how the primary causes of overrepresentation: 1) disproportionate need, 2) service accessibility and 3) discriminatory practice influence outcomes in disparity for Black children in Canada over time. In addition, this study sought to document challenges to implementation of effective models of cross-system collaboration. This discussion and conclusion chapter will summarize the results of all three studies, their limitations and implications for social work research, theory and practice.

5.1 Three-paper dissertation overview

The first paper in Chapter 2, *Overrepresentation and disparity of a subsample of Black Canadian children receiving child protection services in Quebec* used longitudinal clinical administrative data and the Canadian census to document population and decision-based rates of disparity across a ten-year span. In addition, it compared socioeconomic characteristics of Black, White and other visible minority family households in the general population to determine whether exposure to risk conditions and economic hardship mirrored rates of disparity within the child protection system. The second paper, in Chapter 3, *Time to reunification: Examining Black children's service outcomes within Quebec* used longitudinal clinical administrative data to determine the length of time spent in out-of-home placement for a sample of Black children residing in Montreal and whether disparate outcomes to reunification were associated with race. The third paper, in Chapter 4, titled *Child protection agencies collaborating with grass-root community organizations: partnership or tokenism?* used thematic analysis to analyse semi-structured interviews conducted with members of a stakeholder committee to describe the development and challenges of a cross-system

collaboration between a child protection agency and community organization aimed at reducing overrepresentation of Black children reported to the child protection agency.

The results from these three chapters reveal that Black children are overrepresented within the child protection system and face disparate outcomes throughout their service trajectories. Of children receiving child protection services in 2011, Black children represented 24% of the child protection sample while representing only 9% of the general population. Over the ten-year period covered by this study, Black children were five times more likely than White children to have their protection reports screened in, substantiated, and brought to court. Black children were also five times more likely than White children to enter out-of-home placement and were on average 9.8 times more likely to experience recurrence of maltreatment. In comparing exits from out-of-home placement, Black children were found to spend the longest time in out-of-home placement and to have a lower proportion of children experiencing family reunification. Lastly, exploration on the development and challenges of cross system-collaborations revealed that child protection system's organizational context, level of socio-political support and organizational culture can pose barriers to the efficiency of the collaborative model resulting in a collaboration that struggles between tokenism and partnership.

5.2 Interpretation of findings

The research questions explored throughout this dissertation help in understanding how the various causes of overrepresentation influence outcomes for Black children in Canada. Figure 8 provides a diagram depicting the various contributions of each of the chapters of this dissertation. The findings from this study will be interpreted in conjunction with the diagram to understand how the various elements found in each study shape our knowledge on the causes of overrepresentation and what can be done.
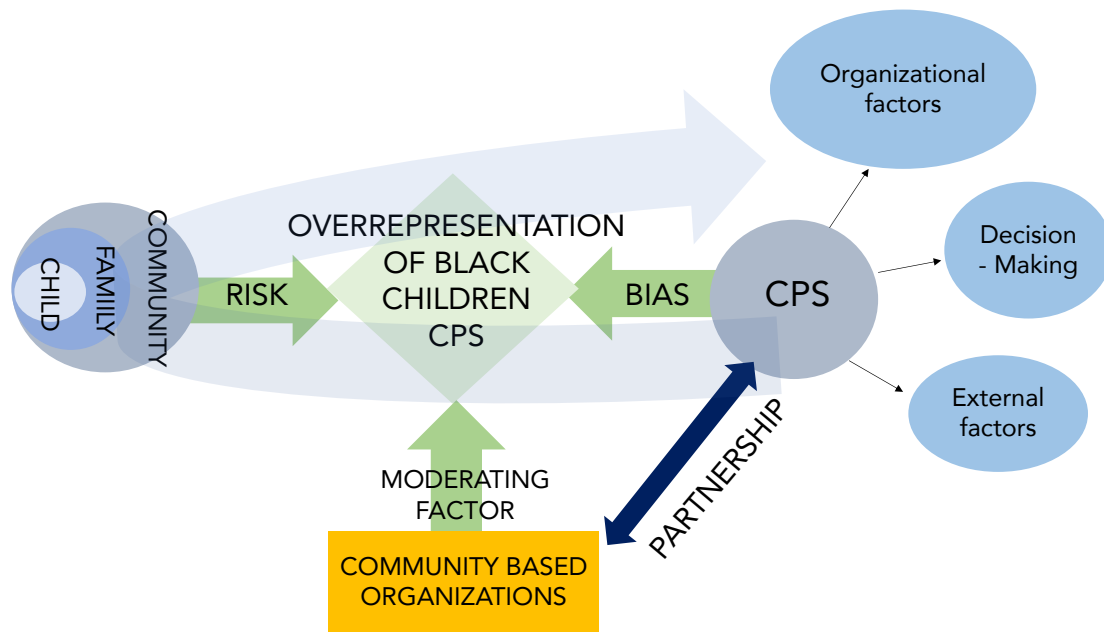
Figure 8.   Conceptual map of findings relevant to overrepresentation

Figure 8 illustrates a child's ecological system and how risk factors within their various environment are shown to contribute to overrepresentation. Black children in this study were found to be exposed to risk factors within their family and community environment that made them more prone to child protection involvement. The majority of these factors stemmed from a heightened level of socioeconomic disadvantage, in addition to certain child and family factors. Black children reported to the child protection agency were comparatively younger than other racial categories and were more likely to be reported for physical abuse concerns. While other visible minority families shared some of the same risk factors as Black families, their rates of racial disparity compared to White children were lower and gradually diminished over time. One factor that was found to distinguish Black children from the other visible minority children was the higher proportion of Black children residing in lone-parent families. Studies on family structure and whether single-parent status places children at higher risk of child maltreatment have provided inconsistent results (Berger, 2005; Harris & Courtney, 2003). While this may not be the sole cause for higher rates of overrepresentation, parenting status remains a risk factor that when combined with other socioeconomic factors may contribute to a higher likelihood of maltreatment. The findings from this dissertation, despite the limited variables available for

study, suggests that overrepresentation of Black children in Canada is most likely caused by several factors within a child's environment resulting in increased risk for maltreatment.

On the opposite end of Figure 8, we have the child protection system and the various elements that may contribute to discriminatory practice and bias resulting in the overrepresentation of Black children in Canada. These elements represent organizational factors, decision-making and other external factors such a child protection policy that may result in prejudicial treatment of Black families. Chapter 4 of this dissertation included a reference from a participant who described organizational culture within the child protection agency adhering to "White-middle class values" yielding racial biases, in addition to a culture of agency staff reluctant to collaborate with community partners. While this study did not account for how the child protection agency's organizational factors directly influenced overrepresentation, we were able to explore decision making. Through use of decision-based disparities, it was found that Black children were slightly more likely that White children to have their investigation concerns substantiated, but less likely to be placed in out-of-home placement. Decision-making resulting in discriminatory practice of Black families contributing to overrepresentation was not found to be a driver of overrepresentation at the front-end of the child protection system.

In examining exits from the child protection system and whether Black children faced disparate outcomes, it was found that from initial entry into out-of-home placement, Black children spent a longer time in care and were less likely to reunify with family. In order to determine bias from the child protection system, and whether the mere fact of being Black resulted in longer lengths of stay in care, the study controlled for other case characteristics. The results revealed that being Black significantly decreased the likelihood of reunification after controlling for the age of the child, reason for investigation, declarant and socioeconomic disadvantage. However, when the number of placement moves (i.e. placement instability) was added to the statistical model, being Black was found to no longer statistically influence reunification. In comparing case characteristics of each of the racial categories, Black children experienced on average more placement moves than the other racial categories. This would suggest that Black children have a placement trajectory that decreases their likelihood of family

reunification. This results in Black children spending more time in out-of-home placement contributing to their overrepresentation as a result of their failure to exit (i.e. through reunification with family) the child protection system.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, the inability to account for socioeconomic disadvantage at the individual level prevented accurate control of this factor in the statistical model. However, the role of socioeconomic disadvantage (i.e. disproportionate need) is still relevant to understanding exits from the child protection system. In fact, the Black children studied experienced on average more socioeconomic disadvantage than the other racial categories. Thus, the disproportionate burden from exposure to risk factors prior to involvement with the child protection agency remained present at the time of out-of-home placement. This would suggest that support services needed to moderate overrepresentation at the front-end of the child protection system are also required throughout Black children's involvement within the child protection system to ensure they are able to return home. Similarly, in examining case closures from Chapter 2, Black children's disparity in rates of recurrence suggest that these children may continue to face disproportionate need resulting in subsequent involvement by the child protection system.

Figure 8 illustrates how partnership between community organizations and child protections systems can help address the disproportionate need faced by Black children in addition to addressing concerns of bias within the child protection agency. The arrow stemming from the partnership suggests that the partnership is not static and requires participation from the child's immediate environment, the child protection agency and community organizations. While a move towards more formalized forms of collaboration between child protection systems and community organizations has been proposed as a way to address the underlying socioeconomic factors resulting in Black children's overrepresentation, Chapter 4 of this dissertation cautions that we not underestimate the complexity of cross-system collaborating. The findings from this study underline the importance of ensuring that both child protection systems and community organizations have the capacity to collaborate. Beyond strong leadership and agency commitment to addressing overrepresentation, consideration must be given to both the organizational context and culture of child protection systems. Additionally,

effective cross-system collaborations need to have the infrastructure necessary to stipulate mechanisms within the partnership that serve to promote inclusive practice between child protection systems and community partners. Without this, cross-system collaborations may run the risk of becoming token demonstrations.

This dissertation corroborates to a large extent what has been found by American scholars regarding overrepresentation of Black American children in the child protection system. Similarly to Black American children, Black children in Canada are overrepresented within the child protection system and face similar rates of racial disparity across the various decision points within the child protection system (Dufour, Lavergne, & Ramos, 2015; King et al., 2017; Kyte et al., 2018; Lavergne et al., 2009). These findings are surprising given differences between the Black population in both countries and the respective differences in social welfare policies between the United States and Canada. Black Canadians are relatively recent immigrants in comparison to Black Americans, who have not been exposed to the extensive legacy of slavery and segregation experienced by Black Americans. Black Canadians also have access to better labour markets, education and social welfare (Reitz et al., 2011). This would suggest Black children in Canada reside in a more favourable social context, compared to Black children in the United States, where the disproportionate need experienced by Black Canadians can be more readily addressed. This would then be expected to reduce opportunities for involvement by child protection systems. However, what the findings from this study indicate, is that similarly to other indicators (i.e. income gap, rates of incarceration and preterm birth rates) rates of overrepresentation and disparity in child protection system outcomes for Black children in Canada remain comparable with those of Black children in the United States. While attempting to understand the reasons for this went beyond the scope of this study, certain conclusions can be drawn. Similarly to Black American children, the disproportionate need experienced by Black Canadian children remains prevalent throughout involvement with the child protection system. In addition, despite access to support services for marginalized communities being more prevalent in Canada, Black children in Canada continue to face comparable rates of overrepresentation and racial disparity.

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5.3 Study limitations

The use of secondary clinical-administrative data poses several limitations to this dissertation regarding: the anonymization of data preventing the ability to control for sibling pairs, racial information being determined by caseworkers, the extent of missing information on racial category and our inability to capture informal out-of-home placements with family. The use of clinical administrative datasets for research purposes attempts to make sense of data that was originally intended for case management purposes. Administrative data prevents us from fully describing the environment in which children are parented and documenting the experience of parents as users within the child protection system.

Missing information on racial identity prevented an accurate rate per 1,000 for each of the racial groups. While missing information diminished the further along the trajectory of services, this percentage ranged from 8% to 21% across the ten-year study in Chapter 2 and represented approximately 15% of children in out-of-home placement from Chapter 4. Exploration of case characteristics for missing children revealed that they are not a homogenous group and are not missing at random. While values for these children were imputed in Chapter 4, limitations of this method are cautioned. The last limitation regarding the datasets, was that the actual rates of placement may have been underestimated given the datasets were unable to account for placements with extended family that were not formalized by the child protection system. Informal kinship care and legal guardianship were not systematically documented in the clinical-administrative data.

Lastly, Chapter 4's study on examining the development and challenges of a cross-system collaboration meant to reduce overrepresentation presented findings regarding a relatively young partnership. Challenges revealed at the onset of their partnership could have been attributed to the developmental stage of the collaboration rather than constructs of organizational functioning. Furthermore, the landscape of the partnership significantly shifted from the onset of its development to its current state following the restructuration of services. However, restructuration and reform are factors inherent to any government agency, including

child protection services, thus the difficulties posed by reform raise important questions for cross-system collaborations.

Despite these limitations, this study is one of few Canadian study to use longitudinal clinical-administrative data to explore the overrepresentation and disparity faced by Black Canadian children within the child protection system. The findings of this study are particularly interesting to overrepresentation studies on Black children given the research was conducted within a Canadian context, where the Black population are more recent immigrants and where access to social service programs are more readily available. Furthermore, in an area where research is lacking, this dissertation raised important considerations for implementation of effective models of cross-system collaborations.

5.4 Implications and recommendations

5.4.1 Research

This dissertation provided us with a portrait of Black Anglophone children residing in Montreal that is not representative of all Black Canadians. As mentioned earlier, beyond the heterogeneity that can be found within a single subsample of Black Canadians in one jurisdiction, is the provincial variability of the Black population within Canada. At this time, it is not possible to say whether findings from this study can be generalized across Canada, or whether the overrepresentation and disparity faced by the Black children in this study was high or low. Additional research documenting overrepresentation in each of the respective provinces, given differences in immigration patterns of Black Canadians and where they settled, will provide a better gauge of the full extent of overrepresentation and disparity of Black children's involvement within child protection systems in Canada. In addition, additional research on overrepresentation and disparity should include more rural areas outside of metropolitan areas.

As data availability improves, additional analyses that include measurement of agency-level processes such as clinical and organizational characteristics will provide more accurate measures of decision making influences related to disparities in child protection outcomes for Black children. Multi-level statistical models would be helpful in partitioning agency level variables to better understand the extent of influence accorded to bias stemming from the child protection agency amongst other ecological contexts. This is particularly relevant given that qualitative studies conducted in Canada have demonstrated that Black families experience discriminatory practice and bias within the child protection system (Mixon-Mitchell & Hanna, 2017). By going beyond main effect models, research in Canada will be in a better position in understanding how constellations of risk factors influence poor service outcomes for Black children.

Continued monitoring of rates and tracking patterns of overrepresentation are very important in order to avoid missing differences over time. To better document and understand the true extent of service disparities within the child protection system, reliable and consistent data on racial category needs to occur. Caseworkers should have standardized guidelines on how to determine racial category that includes treatment of mixed-race children. Accuracy and availability of this information is needed to monitor progress and to identify the nature and extent of between group disparity. In addition, failure to disaggregate statistics by racial group can mask important differences with regards to service provision. Numerous studies on overrepresentation have chosen to compare Black children to an "all other children" category. Comparing a relatively homogenous group (i.e. Black children) to a heterogeneous group (i.e. all other children) is not methodologically recommended. The primary reason for this is that variability within the heterogeneous group will reduce the effect of the homogenous group. For this reason, this study excluded First Nations children from analysis. However, prior to making this decision, analyses were initially run with First Nations children in the sample (see Annex 5). A survival model with only children whose race was identified, that included First Nations children serving as part of the reference category for "all other children", resulted in being Black not statistically influencing the likelihood of reunification, and this in Block 1 of the model. This would suggest that the presence of First Nations children in our sample significantly changed the results to the point where no effect was observed for Black children.

Currently, we are unable to collect data on maltreated children that is not reported to child protection agencies. This becomes problematic in attempting to document accurate rates of overrepresentation and racial disparity within the child protection system. While Black children are overrepresented in both Canada and United States, we know that certain other racial categories are underrepresented. The causes of underrepresentation are varied, with some studies citing protective factors within certain racial groups as the cause (B. Drake et al., 2011), and others suggesting that certain racial groups go undetected because of negative social perceptions prohibiting disclosure of abuse (Lee et al., 2016). Thus, the disparity faced by Black children may in fact be inflated due to our inability to account for maltreated children belonging to other racial groups that go undetected by the child protection system. Similarly, it may be possible that current rates of disparity for Black children are conservative given our inability to account for the Black children who are maltreated but remain undetected by the child protection system. Conducting research under these circumstances is extremely biased. Researchers need to consider our ethical responsibility to account for children who are maltreated but go undetected by child protection systems. In addition, efforts should be made to consider the impact of research findings for these children as well.

Lastly, more research is required on effective collaborative approaches between child protection systems and community organizations in the area of overrepresentation. More specifically, further knowledge is required on how community efforts can be scaled up to have an impact on the incidence of maltreatment. While some advances have been made in the United States, these efforts are mostly statewide implementations resulting from child protection system reforms (Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, 2010). Research on the development of cross-system collaborations, their impact on children and families and whether they can be effective in reducing overrepresentation is not well known. Further evaluation with diverse stakeholders: policy makers, child protection workers and administrators, parents and youth and community members will help in conducting more rigorous validation of findings and interpretation of results. The inclusion of service users is particularly useful in obtaining broader perspectives on the limitation of these approaches, while encouraging accountability of child protection systems. Their involvement in the research process will allow

overrepresentation research to be framed in response to their lived reality, leading to more innovative practice.

While transformative systems change in the form of restructuration of child protection systems to address the incompatibility of the helping/supportive/family preservation role from the investigative/coercive/child removal role is most desirable, this will take time. Black children shouldn't remain overrepresented in child protection systems until restructuration and reform are proposed. Further research on cross-system collaboration can help provide child protection agencies with immediate strategies and tools to ensure proper implementation of collaborative approaches in response to Black children's disproportionate need.

5.4.2 Practice

Within Canada, compared to the United States, families have access to an extensive number of prevention programs. Thus, the suggestion here is not to increase funding for support services but rather to improve access and involvement of Black families prior to and immediately following the start of child protection services. Doing so could result in a reduction in the proportion of Black children overrepresented in child protection systems. As it remains, despite the availability of services within Canada, Black Canadians share similar rates of overrepresentation and disparity as Black Americans who do not have access to the same social programing. This may be indicative of an underutilization of services. The use of public government run services are made complicated for Black families because of a number of reasons: stigma, self-reliance, minimization of the problem and inadequacy of the service (McMillen, & Snowden, 2013). Studies have demonstrated that Black families are more likely to seek informal versus formal help, and that their help-seeking behaviours are predisposed to certain attitudes towards mental health services and a cultural mistrust of health professionals (Hill, 1998; Scott, McMillen, & Snowden, 2013). Thus formalized, government run services may not be culturally appropriate forms of support services for Black families. The implementation of more informal, culturally-matched community services may be more

beneficial for these families, allowing them to seek assistance in a culturally comfortable environment without the fear of being misunderstood. A major obstacle for Black families in receiving treatment by professionals is the existence of cultural differences resulting in a fear of being labeled and the perceived negative consequences towards them and their children as a result (McMillen, & Snowden, 2013). By providing services for Black families within their community by their community, we can decrease some of the stigma preventing access to services for risk factors that have found to be particularly relevant for Black families (i.e. parenting younger children, use of corporal punishment, and neglect).

Beyond the implementation and existence of culturally appropriate services, once Black families enter the child protection system these services need to be mobilized and incorporated in the various intervention plans for Black children. Their involvement is essential in ensuring Black families have the appropriate support services in addressing maltreatment concerns. The findings from this dissertation highlight the disproportionate need experienced by Black children as a result of their increased exposure to socioeconomic risk factors. Any attempt to resolve maltreatment concerns without consideration for the underlying causes of disproportionate need sets Black families up to fail. While child protection systems are not expected to resolve the socioeconomic disparities faced by Black children in society, they can play a central role in connecting these families with services in their community to ensure their needs are met. This should not be left to agency or worker discretion. Forming strategic alliances between child protection systems and community organizations are required, and for them to be effective consideration must be given to the process. Collaborative work requires slow planning and the development of trust and consensus. In addition to financial resources ensuring both organizations have the capacity to collaborate, collaborative work requires a particular set of convener skills to facilitate meaningful engagement of participants.

5.4.3 Policy

Historically, child protection interventions have focused efforts on addressing parenting behavior (Lonne et al., 2008). By holding parents responsible for child safety and well-being,

child protection systems failed to acknowledge the social context where children are raised and the impacts of socioeconomic disadvantage (Pelton, 2015). An anti-racist approach is a critical perspective that acknowledges the existence of institutional, systemic and individual racism and takes proactive steps to fight racial disparities(Dei, 1996). This critical approach within child protection systems is gaining recognition in North America and Canada. In Ontario, an Anti-Black Racism Strategy was released in December 2017. The strategy acknowledges that Black Ontarians are subject to systemic barriers that impact public policies, decision-making and services. This definition of systemic racism includes institutions and systems that create and maintain racial disparity as a result of hidden intuitional bias in policies, practices and procedures, that privilege some groups and disadvantage others. Among objectives within this framework is the necessity to create sustainable change across systems, increase system capacity and competency within government and its institutions, in addition to increasing Black community engagement and capacity through building stronger community relationships. While this approach is promising and outlines activities associated to ensuring objectives, it will be important to monitor progress and evaluate the impacts of the policy given the complexity of partnering and cross-system collaborating.

This dissertation provided an example of a cross-system collaboration where neither organization had the capacity to collaborate and lacked a roadmap regarding how to navigate collaboration between a public institution and grass-root community organization. Collaboration is not intuitive, and this dissertation highlighted the pitfalls of a partnership that lacked strategic planning and the infrastructure needed to support it. In some instances, this infrastructure represented adequate funding for the community organization and mechanisms to provide opportunities for inclusive practice with the community organization. Often times, infrastructure emerges from reform. Without reform, and solely the commitment of a select few, cross-system collaborations are not sustainable. The revolving nature of personnel within child protection systems, as cited in Chapter 4, often results in staff departures or transfers into other divisions. Recognition on the part of government officials that overrepresentation of certain minority groups is problematic and an expressed commitment to addressing racial disparities is required for cross-system collaborations to become prioritized within child protection agencies and for community organizations to be supported in collaboration activities.

The *Community Engagement Model* implemented within the Texas statewide reform to reduce overrepresentation is grounded in anti-racist principles (Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, 2010). This model has been successful in decreasing overrepresentation, through a rigorous implementation of inclusive practices involving both the child protection agency and community. The reform recognized that child protection systems cannot do this work on their own and provided the infrastructure needed to support initiatives. A major distinction between what has been done in Texas, compared to other efforts to reduce overrepresentation, is that their focus is on undoing racism and not overrepresentation. Reframing the target outcome in this manner places emphasis on the underlying social conditions that place Black children at risk rather than the child protection agency. The Community Engagement Framework implemented in Texas called for involvement not just from community organizations but also members of the Black community. Community awareness and engagement was a central area of their framework and involved making the problem visible and sharing the data. Sharing the data with members of the target community is important to ensure that research benefits the community it is intended for. Including community actors in efforts reducing overrepresentation recognizes their strengths and provides opportunities to hear what the needs of the community are. This should go beyond opportunities for simply being heard but through government measures that support and increase the capacity of community members to engage in the process.

5.5 My future directions

Building on research findings from this dissertation, future research would benefit from documenting pan-Canadian rates of overrepresentation and disparity. The subsample studied in this dissertation is not representative of all Black children in Canada. Moving forward, it will be important to understand jurisdictional differences of Black Canadians and how this influences overrepresentation and racial disparity. This involves going beyond Ontario and Quebec, and outside of major urban cities to provide a more accurate measurement of disparity.

Furthermore, research needs to include the perspective of service users within the child protection system and cross-system collaborations. These perspectives provide meaningful insight and tailoring of research findings to the reality of Black families yielding more innovative and effective evidence-based practice.

While it is argued that collaborative approaches are needed between child protection systems and community, more research is necessary to determine the impact of cross-system collaborations and whether they are successful in reducing overrepresentation and disparity. Moving forward, university partnerships can support development and reflection on cross-system collaboration in an attempt to strengthen efforts in providing innovative strategies to meet the needs of Black families.

5.6 Conclusion

Efforts in reducing overrepresentation and disparity faced by Black children in child protection systems should account for racial disparities in socioeconomic conditions that make these children more likely to come to the attention of child protection systems and less likely to return home. The findings from this study would suggest that the mobilization of support services is necessary for Black children all throughout their service and placement trajectory within child protection services. This study also highlights the importance in considering not only the availability of health and social service programs in Canada, but whether Black families will utilize these services given concerns of bias, stigma and cultural suitability. Cross-system collaborations between child protection systems and communities can overcome some of these barriers through their ability to engage families within their community. Community-based supports then become better ways of responding to the socioeconomic disadvantage faced by Black children. Child protection systems can help bridge these supports and when investigating and completing intervention plans, caseworkers should be interested in asking whether the necessary links have been made with community organizations. By not asking this question all throughout a child's involvement within the child protection system, little will be done to reduce

overrepresentation and disparity. Furthermore, the complexity of this work should not be underestimated. It requires that both child protection systems and community organizations have the capacity to effectively partner and engage with each other. Failure to provide consideration for organizational capacity may run the risk of a partnership that more closely resembles token forms of collaboration, doing little to change the status quo.

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ANNEX 1: Authorization letter for three-article thesis

Le 5 janvier 2018

Dr. Jacques Moreau
Responsable du programme de doctorat
École de travail social
Université de Montréal

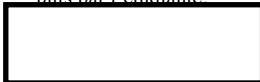**Objet:** Demande d'autorisation de rédiger par articles

Dr Jacques Moreau,

Je vous écris concernant une demande de rédaction de thèse par article. Vous trouverez la liste de mes articles proposés ainsi que les revues ciblées. L'accord des coauteurs, par écrit, sera fourni lors du dépôt de la thèse.

Liste des articles proposés :

1. **Titre:** Overrepresentation and disparity of urban Black children receiving child protection services within a Canadian context.
   Ordre des auteur(s): Alicia Boatswain-Kyte, Tonino Esposito, Nico Trocmé
   La revue ciblée: Child Abuse and Neglect: The International Journal
   État actuel de l'article : En préparation

Déclaration de l'étudiante: L'article comprend des analyses secondaires d'une base de données qui a été fournie par mon directeur de recherche et des analyses secondaire du recensement 2001, 2006 et 2011. Les analyses descriptives, les calculs de l'indice de disparité et la rédaction de l'article (en entier) ont été faits par l'étudiante.

Nom de l'étudiante : Alicia Boatswain-Kyte
Date : le 5 janvier 2018

2. **Titre:** Time to reunification : a comparison of Black and White service outcomes within a Canadian context.
   Ordre des auteur(s) : Alicia Boatswain-Kyte, Tonino Esposito, Nico Trocmé
   La revue ciblée : Child Abuse and Neglect: The International Journal
   État actuel de l'article : En préparation

Déclaration de l'étudiante: L'article comprend des analyses secondaires d'une base de données qui a été fournie par mon directeur de recherche. L'analyse de survie et un Kaplan-Meier ont été effectués par l'étudiante afin de comparer les trajectoires de services entre les enfants noirs et blancs qui furent placés par un Centre Jeunesse. La rédaction entière de l'article a été faite par l'étudiante.

Nom de l'étudiante : Alicia Boatswain-Kyte
Date : le 5 janvier 2018

3. **Titre:** Child protection agencies collaborating with grass-root community organizations: partnership or tokenism?
   Ordre des auteur(s) : Alicia Boatswain-Kyte, Nico Trocmé, Tonino Esposito
   La revue ciblée: Children and Youth Services Review
   État actuel de l'article : En préparation

Déclaration de l'étudiante: L'article porte sur une étude qualitative pour décrire le processus de collaboration entre un Centre Jeunesse et un organisme communautaire. L'étudiante a mené 6 entretiens semi-structurés avec des membres du comité d'implantation. La transcription, codification, les analyses des données et rédaction de l'article (en entier) ont été complétés par l'étudiante.

Nom de l'étudiante : Alicia Boatswain-Kyte
Date : le 5 janvier 2018

Si jamais vous avez besoin de renseignements additionnels, n'hésitez pas à m'en faire part.

Je vous prie d'agréer, Monsieur, l'expression de mes sentiments distingués.

Alicia Boatswain-Kyte
Doctorat en travail social (3-250-1-0)
École de travail social
Faculté des arts et sciences
Université de Montréal

AVIS ET SIGNATURE DU DIRECTEUR DE RECHERCHE:

Je confirme que l'information fournie par l'étudiante est conforme, et que sa contribution à chacun des articles était majeure et déterminante.

Tonino Esposito
Nom du directeur de recherche
Date : le 5 janvier 2018

ANNEX: 2 Ethical certificates

Centre intégré
universitaire de santé
et de services sociaux
de l'Ouest-de-
l'Île-de-Montréal

Québec 🔲🔲

Institut universitaire en santé mentale Douglas

Comité d'éthique de la recherche/Research Ethics Board
Pavillon F.B.C, #F.1116
514 761-6131 #2708
cer.reb@douglas.mcgill.ca

ELECTRONIC MAIL

September 14, 2016

Claire Chamberland Ph.D.
professeure titulaire à l'École de service social
Université de Montréal

And

Nico Trocmé, MSW, PhD, TS
Director of the School of Social Work
Philip Fisher Chair in Social Work
McGill University

SUBJECT: **IUSMD-16-20** "Examination of an inter-organizational collaboration and emerging pilot project for English-speaking black families reported under the child protection system"

Alicia Boatswain-Kyte, Ph.D. candidate

REB approval

Mrs Chamberland, Mr Trocmé,

Following the initial review dated July 8, 2016, the Douglas Mental Health University Institute Research Ethics Board (DMHUI-REB) reviewed in a delegated (expedited) manner the following documents which were received August 9, 2016:

- Letter of response – 5 pages, dated August 3, 2016
- application for REB approval for a research protocol involving human subjects (English) – 7 pages, signed and dated August 1, 2016
- research proposal summary – 1 page, Version 2 – August 1, 2016
- a brief literature review – 1 page, Version 2 – August 1, 2016
- complete version of the protocol (including appendices) – Version 2 – August 1, 2016
- Appendices - Version 2 – August 1, 2016
    - Interview guide: Stakeholder Individual interviews
    - consent form

The REB wishes to thank you for addressing all its initial issues and concerns. **All the responses to those issues and concerns were found to be complete and satisfactory. Therefore, this project is ethically approved for a period of one (1) year following the date of the present letter.**

Following all the applicable laws and guidelines, the REB is responsible for the ongoing ethical monitoring of this research project. Therefore, this approval presumes that you agree:

- To respect this decision;

6875, boulevard LaSalle
Montréal (Québec) H4H 1R3
Téléphone : 514 761-6131
www.ciusss-ouestmtl.gouv.qc.ca

- To return to the REB an annual report outlining the progress of the project, which necessary for renewal of ethics approval;
- To respect all of Douglas Institute's applicable policies and procedures with regard research activities;
- To advise the REB in the shortest time of any incident during the project as well as changes or modifications you want to make to research particular protocol or consent form
- To notify the REB as soon as possible of any new information which may affect the inte or the ethical validity of the research project or to influence the decision of a participa research on his participation;
- To communicate to the REB any suspension or cancellation of authorization of the proje a funding agency or a regulatory agency, the case being;
- To inform the REB of any problems found by a third party during a surveillance a internal or external, that is likely to challenge the ethical validity of the project;
- To notify the REB of a temporary or a definitive interruption of the project and subr report stating the reasons for the interruption and the impact thereof on the rese participants;
- To submit to the REB a final report and summary reports of the research results.

For any questions regarding this project, please contact the REB's office by phone 514-761-(poste 2708 or by email (cer.reb@douglas.mcgill.ca).

In closing, we kindly ask you to mention in all correspondence the number assigned to project by the REB (IUSMD-16-20).

Wishing you all the best with your research project,

Best regards.

Jean Poupart, M.A.
Signing authority for:
S. Richard-Devantoy, MD, PhD.
Acting Chairperson
Research Ethics Board – Douglas Mental Health University Institute
/jp

Encl.:   consentform2_REBappr_16-09-14

Université de Montréal

Comité d'éthique de la recherche en arts et en sciences

CERTIFICAT D'APPROBATION ÉTHIQUE

Le Comité d'éthique de la recherche en arts et en sciences (CÉRAS), selon les procédures en vigueur, en vertu des documents qui lui ont été fournis, a examiné le projet de recherche suivant et conclu qu'il respecte les règles d'éthique énoncées dans la Politique sur la recherche avec des êtres humains *de l'Université de Montréal.*

Projet	
Titre du projet	**Examination of an Inter-Organizational Collaboration and Emerging Pilot Project for English-Speaking Black Families Reported Under the Child Protection System**
Étudiante requérante	**Alicia Boatswain-Kyte** ☐ Étudiante au doctorat, FAS-École de travail social
Sous la direction de	Claire Chamberland, professeure émérite, FAS-École de travail social, Université de Montréal & Nico Trocmé, professeur titulaire, School of Social Work, McGill University.

Financement	
Organisme	Non financé
Programme	
Titre de l'octroi si différent	
Numéro d'octroi	
Chercheur principal	
No de compte	

MODALITÉS D'APPLICATION

Tout changement anticipé au protocole de recherche doit être communiqué au CÉRAS qui en évaluera l'impact au chapitre de l'éthique.

Toute interruption prématurée du projet ou tout incident grave doit être immédiatement signalé au CÉRAS.

Selon les règles universitaires en vigueur, un suivi annuel est minimalement exigé pour maintenir la validité de la présente approbation éthique, et ce, jusqu'à la fin du projet. Le questionnaire de suivi est disponible sur la page web du CÉRAS.
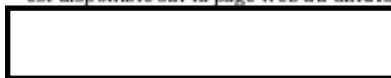
martin Arguin, président
Comité d'éthique de la recherche en arts
et en sciences
Université de Montréal

7 octobre 2016	**31 décembre 2021**
Date de délivrance	Date de fin de Validité

ANNEX 3: PDI representation with inclusion of unidentified children of screened in reports (2002, 2006, 2011)

	General Population < 15		Screened In			
	N	%	N	%	Rate per 1000	PDI
*2002**						
All**	113540	100	912	100	8.0	
White and unidentified	86395	76	544	60	6.3	
Black	8860	8	180	20	20.3	3.2
Other VM	18285	16	188	21	10.3	1.6
All**	113540	100	912	100	8.0	
White	86395	76	316	35	3.7	
Black and unidentified	8860	8	408	45	46.0	12.4
Other VM	18285	16	188	21	10.3	2.8
2006						
All**	114250	100	850	100	7.4	
White and unidentified	83520	73	535	63	6.4	
Black	9955	9	170	20	17.1	2.7
Other VM	20775	18	145	17	7.0	1.1
All**	114250	100	850	100	7.4	
White	83520	73	247	29	3.0	
Black and unidentified	9955	9	458	54	46.0	15.3
Other VM	20775	18	145	17	7.0	2.3
2011						
All**	111765	100	818	100	7.3	
White and unidentified	76655	69	471	58	6.1	
Black	10195	9	200	24	19.6	3.2
Other VM	24915	22	147	18	5.9	1.0
All**	111765	100	818	100	7.3	
White	76655	69	272	33	3.5	
Black and unidentified	10195	9	399	49	39.1	11.1
Other VM	2491	22	147	18	5.9	1.5

*Population counts for this year were generated from the 2001 Census
** Does not include First Nations children

ANNEX 4: Cox proportional hazard model for family reunification without imputation

	Number of events and censored values					
	Total 1285[8]	Events 1103	Censored 182	% Censored 13.8		
	Block 3 (final model)				Block 2	Block 1
	Beta	SE	Wald	Adj. HR (95% CI)	Adj. HR (95% CI)	Adj. HR (95% CI)
Race:						
Black	-.087	.072	1.439	.917(.796, 1.057)	.845*(.733, .973)	.822**(.717, .943)
Age (0 – 17)	.027	.007	14.461	1.028***(1.013, 1.042)	1.025***(1.016, 1.048)	
Reasons for investigation						
Psychological & emotional abuse	-.320	.163	3.866	.726*(.528, .999)	.737(.536, 1.012)	
Physical, material & health neglect	-.335	.149	5.081	.715*(.535, .957)	.732*(.546, .982)	
School truancy & neglect	-.224	.161	1.951	.799(.583, 1.095)	.848(.620, 1.159)	
Parents' high-risk lifestyle	-.284	.087	10.631	.753***(.635, .893)	.731***(.617, .864)	
Declarant:						
Professional	.097	.075	1.704	1.102 (.952, 1.276)	1.125(.972, 1.301)	
Socioeconomic disadvantage	.056	.031	3.205	1.057(.995, 1.124)	1.049(.987, 1.116)	
Number of days in placement	-.449	.031	204.571	.638***(.600, .679)		

$*p < 0.05$; $**p < 0.01$; and $***p < 0.001$

---

[8] 33 cases were dropped because of missing values

ANNEX 5: Cox proportional hazard model for family reunification including First Nations children

	Number of events and censored values					
	Total 1203	Events 984	Censored 188	% Censored 15.6%		
	Block 3 (final model)				Block 2	Block 1
	Beta	SE	Wald	Adj. HR (95% CI)	Adj. HR (95% CI)	Adj. HR (95% CI)
Race:						
Black (other categories ref)	-.069	.074	.863	.934(.808, 1.079)	.944 (.820, 1.088)	.910(.792, 1.046)
Age (0 – 17)	.029	.007	15.102	1.029***(1.014, 1.045)	1.029***(1.014, 1.044)	
Reasons for investigation						
Psychological & emotional abuse	-.474	.184	6.668	.622**(.434, .892)	.626* (.437, .897)	
Physical, material & health neglect	-.342	.153	5.015	.710*(.526, .958)	.711* (.527, .960)	
School truancy & neglect	-.173	.167	1.077	.841(.606, 1.167)	.841 (.606, 1.166)	
Parents' high-risk lifestyle	-.376	.091	17.236	.687***(.575, .820)	.687***(.575, .820)	
Declarant:						
Professional (Citizen ref)	.134	.081	2.774	1.144(.977, 1.340)	1.143(.976, 1.339)	
Socioeconomic disadvantage	.023	.034	.470	1.023(.958, 1.093)		

*P < 0.05; **P < 0.01; and ***P < 0.001.

ANNEX 6: Consent form for interview study participants

Examination of an inter-organizational collaboration and emerging pilot project for Black families reported under the child protection system

Researcher:
Alicia Boatswain-Kyte
PhD candidate, MSW
Université de Montréal
École de service social
alicia.boatswain-kyte@umontreal.ca

Supervisors: Dr. Claire Chamberland (Université de Montréal) and Dr. Nico Trocmé (McGill University)

I am soliciting your participation in a research project. However, before accepting to participate in this project and signing the consent form, take the time to read, understand and carefully examine the following information. This form may contain words that you do not understand. I am inviting you to ask any question that you may deem useful, and ask me to explain any words or information that is unclear.

Purpose of the research:
This dissertation project seeks to explore a model of inter-organizational partnership between Centre Intégré Universitaire de Santé et de Services Sociaux de l'Ouest de L'Île Batshaw Youth and Family Centres (CIUSSS Batshaw) and the African Canadian Development and Prevention Network (ACDPN). Firstly, the study will use quantitative methods to calculate the disproportionality rate of Black English speaking youth residing in Montreal receiving services from the child protection system. Secondly, the study will explore the collaborative partnership between CIUSSS Batshaw and ACDPN by use of qualitative methods through interviews with members of the stakeholder committee, staff involved in the implementation of the pilot project *Empowering Parents and Families* program and service users. The goal is to describe a model of inter-organizational partnership between a community organization and public health agency and to determine the outcomes associated with this type of service delivery. This project is particularly relevant given the current budgetary restraints in the health sector and the lack of research on the use of collaborative service delivery models to reduce disproportionality.

The interview I would like to conduct with you should take about 30 minutes. I will be asking you as series of questions regarding your participation in the scope of the *Empowering Parents and Families* program. Your participation is entirely voluntary. You may withdraw from the process at any time and are not obligated to answer any or all of the questions if you do not want to. Your decision not to participate in the study or to withdraw from it will not have any impact on the quality of services you are entitled or your relationship with the researcher in charge of the project. I would like to audio record this interview and I will use the results for my doctoral dissertation, future publications and conference proceedings.

Anything you say will only be attributed to you with your permission; otherwise the information will be reported in such a way as to make direct association with yourself impossible. My pledge to confidentiality also means that no other person or organization will have access to the interview materials and that they will be coded and stored in such a way as to make it impossible to identify them directly with any individual.

Consent: I wish to be identified in the report
YES_____ NO _____

Audio Taping: Please indicate whether you agree to an audio taped interview
YES_____ NO _____

The research subject's signed consent:
I took notice of the consent form. I acknowledge that the research project was explained to me, that my questions were answered and that I was given sufficient time to make a decision. I agree to participate in this research project according to the conditions stated above. A date and signed copy of the present consent form was given to me.

_____
Signature of participant
Date: _____

Signature and commitment of the researcher in charge of the project:
I hereby certify that I have explained to the research subject the terms of the present consent form, that I have answered the questions that the subject had in that respect and that we have clearly indicated that he remains free to withdraw from the study without suffering any prejudice. I commit myself to respect what was agreed upon in the consent form and to give a signed copy of this form to the research subject.

_____
Signature of researcher
Date: _____

ANNEX 7: Interview guide

An exploration of inter-organizational collaboration between CIUSS ODIM Batshaw Youth and Family Centres and the African Canadian Development and Prevention Network

Participant information questions:

1. Place of employment:

2. Job title:

3. Years of experience within the organization:

4. Years of experience within the field:

PART I: Questions pertaining to the process of collaboration

1. What was the process of collaboration? How did it unfold?
2. What was central to the process?
3. What influenced or led to the emergence of the pilot project?
4. What strategies were employed during this process?
5. What, if any, unanticipated secondary effects resulted?
6. Is there anything else you'd like to comment or add?

PART II: Questions pertaining to the nature of collaboration

1. In your partnership are the necessary actors concerned by the problem mobilized?
2. Is the population concerned by the problem involved in the partnership?
3. Are the partners actively involved in the analysis of the problem and the solutions and not simply the execution?
4. Do community partners have an influence in your decisions?
5. Are the members involved in the partnership capable of making agency level decisions with regards to the allocation of resources?
6. Within the partnership are there sufficient resources to ensure mobilization of the project?
7. Is the partnership able to recruit new partners to further implementation of the project?
8. Within the partnership how is each partner's contribution acknowledged?
9. Within the partnership how is reasonability to the funder being negotiated?
10. Within the partnership is there flexibility in agency participation to ensure innovation of the project?
11. Is there anything else you'd like to comment or add