

**A voice was heard in Ramah: The uncontrollable and uncomfortable tears of Black parents  
as they navigate complex parenting rules and processes in Toronto**

by

© Eric Minka

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## **ABSTRACT**

Where children grow up has a major impact on what they become as adults. Towards achieving what is optimal for one's children, parents across cultures carry out different parenting practices. Despite this, Black parents in Canada feel their parenting practices are unfairly targeted by Child Welfare Agencies (CWA), resulting in the overrepresentation of Black children in the welfare system. This thesis presents qualitative findings on Black parents' knowledge, perceptions, and experiences of navigating through complex Child protection rules and processes in Toronto, Canada. Results revealed that Black parenting experiences are shaped and influenced by cultural knowledge and perceived anti-Black racism in Canada, yet CWA hardly consider this information in their engagements with Black families. Further, most participants had negative perceptions of CWA as people who disunite families and racially target Black families. The study reifies that CWA need to take necessary steps to understand the complex contexts of Black parenting.

**Keywords:** Black parenting, Child Welfare Agencies, cultural misunderstanding, racism

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## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>ABSTRACT.....</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>Table of Contents.....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Problem Statement.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Personal Location.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Rationale and Justification for the Study.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Outline of thesis.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Chapter 2: Literature Review.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Parenting Style.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Racism, Whiteness and Black Parenting.....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Religion and Colonialism.....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Child Welfare Systems and Black Parenting Practices.....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework.....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Chapter 4: Methodology.....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Sampling.....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Data Collection Procedures.....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Language and transcription.....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Data analysis.....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Ethical considerations.....</b>	<b>43</b>

<b>Profile of Research Participants.....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>Chapter 5: Findings.....</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Conception of Effective Parenting.....</b>	<b>47</b>
Providing necessities of life.....	47
Building Relationship.....	48
Communication.....	49
<b>Description of Parenting Style.....</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>The rationale behind the preferred parenting styles of Black parents.....</b>	<b>53</b>
Learning from parents.....	53
Religion.....	54
Culture.....	55
Personal Experiences.....	56
<b>Racism.....</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>Responses of Child Welfare Services to Black Parenting style.....</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Chapter 6: Discussions.....</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>Chapter 7: Conclusions and Recommendations.....</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>References.....</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>Appendices .....</b>	<b>92</b>

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION:**

Ramah was an ancient city in Israel; a city of Benjamin presently identified with modern Er-Ram, which is about 8 kilometers to the north of Jerusalem. In the Old Testament book Jeremiah Chapter 31 verse 15, it is recorded: “A voice is heard in Ramah, mourning and great weeping, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more” (Jeremiah 31:15, NIV). The scene of this prophecy describes Rachel, the ancestress of the three tribes, Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin and also the beloved wife of Patriarch Jacob, who in this verse is in uncontrollable mourning mood for the loss of her children. The scenery of this prophecy was in reference to when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonians and those taken captive were assembled in Ramah before being moved to Babylon (Jeremiah 40:1). The same prophecy was repeated in Matthew 2: 17-18 when Herod massacred all infants at Bethlehem and its surrounding cities (two thousand in number) with the goal of killing the Messiah. Figuratively, the prophecy represented Rachel as having awoken from her grave, and as a chief mourner on a sad occasion wept bitterly and uncontrollably for the loss of her children, none of whom were present to view her sorrow and pains because either all of them were slayed or sent into exile.

The tears and uncontrollable pains of Rachel on this occasion well suited the stories of Black parents some of whom have “lost” their children to Child Welfare System. One of such example is an African mother who first lost her child to the system on the charge of parental abuse. After this incident, she has had three other children taken away by the system. On each occasion of delivery at the hospital, a child protection worker will be waiting in the delivery room while the mother is in labour. As soon as the child is delivered, the Child protection worker will immediately remove the child. In fact, on two of the occasions, the mother refused to take a look at the new-born baby for fear that a look can trigger a bonding with the newly-born child that will make it further difficult and harder to let the child go into the system. The circumstances of this

African mother and many others in the study could be related to the events Prophet Jeremiah and Matthew spoke about in the Old Testament and New Testament Christian Bible.

Across Canada, research shows that Black families are reported to Child welfare agencies at a greater rate than any group outside Indigenous people of Canada despite the fact that Black families do not abuse or neglect their children at a greater rate (Greenbaum, 2014). What could account for this? How do Black parents engage in parenting practices that result in this higher level of Black children and youth's apprehension and care placement? Several reasons could attribute to this: First, there is a possibility that there is systemic racism and classism within Child Welfare agencies which works in tandem with the racism in the school system and police services to collectively target Black working class families (see, Finney et al., 2011; Greenbaum, 2014; Pon, Gosine & Philips, 2011). For instance, Danielle Mitchell, a child protection worker of Children's Aid Society (CAS) in the Peel Region, cited a case where a teacher in the school system reported a Black family for child abuse and neglect because the family sent their child to school with *roti* — a popular Caribbean flatbread usually filled with goat or curried-chicken (known popularly as *roti*). In the opinion of the teacher, *roti* is not healthy or sustainable enough for a child (Contenta, Monsebraaten & Rankin, 2014). Second, there is also a possibility that the current discourse on effective parenting practices is dominated by White middle class heteronormative ideas to the extent that other cultural interpretation of effective parenting is ignored and delegitimized. For instance, whereas, spanking as a parenting discipline method is common in Africa and Caribbean communities, it could easily get a Black parent investigated and probably lose custody of their child in Canada. In fact, some Black families have been investigated for yelling at their children (Contenta, Monsebraaten & Rankin, 2014).

This study explored in detail Black parenting practices in Toronto and the importance of such knowledge in improving social work education and Child Welfare practice in Canada. The

study is connected to a broader research goal of examining Black parenting practices in Canada. Whereas not all Blacks and Whites may necessarily fit into the racial essentialism (Harris 1990), I use socially constructed terms “people of African descent” and “Blacks” interchangeably to mean individuals born in Canada, the Caribbean, Guyana, and Africa living in Canada who trace their ancestral affinity to the continent of Africa. White is also used in a socially constructed way to mean individuals who link their ethnic ancestry to Europe.

**Problem Statement:**

The study was informed by the following objectives:

1. To explore in details ways in which people of African descent conceptualize and operationalize effective parenting and how their knowledge converge and diverge with how Child Welfare Agencies understand and interpret “effective parenting.”
2. To explore in details how systemic racism, sexism, and classism (if any) inform, shape, and structure Black parenting practices in Toronto\*
3. To identify ways in which Black parenting practices can inform and shape ways social work schools prepare students for practice.
4. To explore in details ways in which Black parenting can inform social work practice in Child Welfare agencies.

The last forty years have witnessed an increased presence of Black population in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2011). Example, in 1901, there were only 17,400 Black population in Canada (1901 Canadian Census); by 2011, the Black population had increased to 945,665 representing 3% of the country’s population (Statistics Canada, 2011) and the figure is projected to increase to 1,809,000 by 2031 (Statistics Canada, 2012). Of this figure, 57 percent (539,205) live in Ontario. Of the Blacks in Ontario, 74 percent (399,011) live in the Toronto census Metropolitan area



(Statistics Canada, 2011). The increasing population of Blacks calls for the adoption of new approaches to how social services are delivered as many Black families have different cultural and racial beliefs and traditions, which have been found to influence and shape their parenting practices (Kagitcibasi, 1996; Ogbu, 1994). If it is to be believed that children are raised according to the cultures, values, norms, and worldviews of their parents, then understanding the cultural norms, values and worldviews of parents will not only be in the best interest of children but also will improve the relationship between parents and Child Welfare workers (Adjei et al, 2017; Alaggia & Vine, 2013). According to LeVine (1980) and Maiter and George (2003), whereas parenting practices across cultures may share certain similarities, there are still cultural and racial differences in parenting goals, values, and standards that need to be considered when constructing the meaning of effective parenting in a society. Any disregard for this reality will imply that certain parenting behaviours considered to be effective and functional among one group will easily be construed as an aberrant by another group (Maiter & George, 2003). This phenomenon is epitomized by Christie's (2010) research where the discrepancies in culture and ethnicity were viewed as probable social problems and child care in Black and ethnic minority communities seen as deficient when compared to the norms of White Irish community.

There is, however, a dearth of literature about Black parenting practices in Canada. The few studies on Black parenting focused on the United States (see Hughes et al., 2006; Lesane-Brown, 2006) and even those studies about Black parenting in Canada focused on topics such as overrepresentation of Black children in the care of Child Welfare Agencies (Child Welfare Anti-Oppression Roundtable, 2009) and the experiences of Black service users in the Child Welfare system (Clarke, 2002, 2011; Dumbrill, 2006; 2010; Rambally, 1995). Other studies on parenting practices focused on First Nations (Muir & Bohr, 2014), Chinese immigrants (Chuang & Su, 2008; Gorman 1998), South Asians families (Maiter & George, 2003; Thandi, Gill-Badesha & Thandi,

2013), and the cross-cultural studies of parenting (see Brotman et al., 2011; Forgatch et al., 2004; Gusec & Rudy, 2001; Ho, Bluestein & Jenkins 2008; Huang et al., 2005; Lalonde, Jones & Stroink, 2008). In 2015, Drs. Paul Banahene Adjei, Delores Mullings, Michael Baffoe, and Lloydetta Quaiocoe received a trio-council fund from Social Science and Humanities Research Council Insight Development Grant (SSHRC-IDG) to examine effective parenting among Blacks in Toronto, Winnipeg, and St. John's and how their knowledge is different or similar to that of Child Welfare Services. Adjei et al.'s (2015) study is the first to respond to this lacuna by being the first in Canada to examine Black parenting practices. This thesis is relying on the data from the study to discuss Black parenting experiences in Toronto.

### **Personal Location**

I am a Ghanaian male graduate student currently pursuing my Master's degree in Social Work (MSW) at Memorial University of Newfoundland, Canada. Prior to coming Canada, I received my Bachelor degree in Social Work from the Department of Social Work of the University of Ghana. I also worked at the Department of Social Welfare and Community Development, Ghana for four years, and this service has exposed me to the dynamics of family life in Ghana. My dual responsibilities as a frontline social worker and administrator enabled me to gain more insight into the complexities of families where majority of work involved interventions that include resolving marital differences and family disharmony. Away from work, my experiences have been shaped by personal experiences of the family that raised me and other families within the community growing up in the district capital of one of the ten regions in Ghana. Parenting in Ghana, just like other African countries, is strict in nature as parents place emphasis on adhering to rules and executing your responsibilities as a child. Parents are not scared to use physical punishments to correct deviant behaviours when necessary. This is usually done to

put the child on the right path and instill good values that will make him or her a more responsible citizen. Parents who are permissive and neglectful are considered as contributing to malfunctioning of children in the near future. The strictness applied in the parenting is generally towards the good of the child and not to harm. Despite the perceived harshness associated with this parenting, many adults are quick to point to the strictness of their parents and sometimes other adults in the community for helping them achieve success in life in the fields of education, careers and marriage life. Although parenting is primarily aimed at promoting the growth and development of children across cultures, the practices and style differ. Hence, I am interested into researching about how Black parents practice their parenting in Canada where their general parenting characterized by strictness is seen as an “anomaly.” What are the responses of Child Welfare Agencies to their parenting style and practices and does this in any way affect their relationship with these agencies? This research will eventually contribute to understanding the issue of parenting from the narratives of Black parents to influence policies and procedures of Child Welfare Agencies that are largely influenced by Euro-Western culture within the spirit of anti-oppressive ideology.

### **Rationale and Justification for the Study**

Social work and other helping professions have come in to resolve the parenting conundrums of Black families. Although social work programs are increasingly being taught from a social justice and anti-oppressive perspective, the practice of social work is typically at variance with these perspectives (Ojo, 2016). Whereas Child welfare agencies across Canada continue to develop support services for parents, these services are deemed insufficient and unreliable at engaging Black families (Alaggia & Vine, 2013). In any case, how could these support services work for Black families when little is known about Black parenting practices in Canada? For

instance, in recent times, there has been a strong push to maximize the involvement of parents in the care of their children and to concentrate in particular on vulnerable or marginalized parents. The aim of this policy push is both to benefit children and to attend to the needs of parents and the barriers to their positive involvement with their children. However, there is a mismatch between ambitious social policy for parents and the reality for most parents from visible minority backgrounds (Eisenberg, 2011). The available literature on the perspectives of these populations suggests that they feel excluded from decisions about their children and have views which are not usually heard (Alaggia & Vine, 2013).

It is evident that the knowledge and perspectives of the visible minority population have not been included in social work education and practice (Bennett, 2013; Gair, Miles, Savage & Zuchowski, 2015). Hence, Black parents may suffer unjust treatment because child protection workers do not have the competence to appreciate the cultural undertones that inform their unique parenting. This serves as an impediment to efficient social service delivery because the unique needs of Black families may be misunderstood. Consequently, planned interventions may fail to satisfy the ultimate aim of ameliorating the lives of Black families. Effective social work practice, on the other hand, encourages social workers to appraise themselves and be receptive to exchange with clients especially when they both have divergent perspectives on reality in what Bakhtan calls the 'dialogical exchange' (Miehls, 2001). When the perspectives of Black parents are understood, Child Welfare Agencies will be in a better position to respond to the needs of Black families. Child Protection Workers equipped with the knowledge of Black parenting can understand the parents well and offer interventions that would address their concerns appropriately. My study offers an insight into what constitutes effective parenting and the reasons behind parenting practices of Black parents. It is thus expected that this study will contribute to the identification of

ways in which Black parenting can inform social policy building and social work practice in Child Welfare Agencies to promote fair and effective treatment for families.

Blacks constitute the third largest amongst the visible minority populations and their increase immigration to Canada is well documented. It is estimated that of African Canadians who are immigrants, 17% are newcomers who arrived between 2006 and 2011 by Statistics Canada (2012). These Black families migrate to Canada alongside their cultural heritage, beliefs and values. Hence, it is not an absurdity to find them clinging to parenting practices that have produced good outcomes for them. However, Black parents have gone on the wrong side of the law due to their parenting style which differs from the preferred parenting style in Canada. The encounters with Child Welfare Agencies tend to be stressful because of the fear of removal of children and even deportation. This is compounded by the lack of adequate information on Child Welfare Agencies on the part of Black parents and the enigma that surrounds the Black parents' parenting practices of offering their children protection in an environment where their culture is seen as peripheral to that of the majority. The integration experience of Black families could be affected as many Black parents are unaware of Canadian child policies after their arrival. There is also the conflict amongst Black parents and their children caused by the rift of Canadian values and traditional values (Ojo, 2016). When such conflicts are unresolved, it lends the families to the scrutiny of Child Welfare Agencies via other mandated referrers such as schools and hospitals. In such cases, the premium attached to these conflicts may be exaggerated exposing Black families to diverse vulnerability. My study offers an exploration of the reasons why Black parents hold onto their traditional values of parenting and how they adopt some Canadian parenting practices to promote the development of their children. Subsequently, the study contributes to the successful integration of Black families as it attempts to respond to cross-cultural misunderstanding from the mainstream Canadian population.

Considering the dearth of literature about Black parenting practices in Canada, most scholars have been relying on studies conducted in the United States. However, the situation of Black families in United States does not necessarily reflect that of their Canadian counterparts. Certainly, different demographics of Black families in these countries mean that there will be discrepancies in their parenting practices. Black parents who often are marginalized do not get the opportunity to offer their knowledge on their parenting practices to influence policy formulation. As such, Black parents have had no other option than to be continually measured by a culture which is foreign to them. The study offers a voice to Black parents to provide witness to the unequal treatment that is meted out to them. It exposes how they are able to navigate a racialized system in fulfilling their parenting responsibility of safeguarding their children. The study responds to the lack of literature on Black parenting as it explores how Blacks in Toronto understand and practice effective parenting. Child Welfare Agencies will be offered valuable knowledge that will assist them in providing support services in a culturally and racially safe manner through discussions with policy makers. Hence, my study offers a perspective on Black parenting practices and provides the impetus to future research on Black parenting practices across Canada because of the rich data it provides.

## **Outline of thesis**

The thesis is organized into seven Chapters. As already noted, Chapter One discusses the introductory aspect of the study with particular emphasis on personal location as a researcher and why the study has personal and professional interest to me. It also delves into the key objectives that guide the study. In the Chapter Two, the literature review, I offer an overview of the essence of the choice of parenting style among Black parents, whether racism and classism in Canada inform and shape Black parenting practices and the ways through which the experience of colonialism and missionary education has impacted Black parenting practices. The Chapter further provides information on available literature by several scholars which address the themes mentioned above.

Chapter Three discusses theoretical framework which underpins the thesis. I provide the justification for the selection of the Critical Race Theory (CRT) for the thesis. CRT was particularly selected because of its interdisciplinary nature in the interrogation of issues of race and racism. It promotes a multifaceted approach to analyzing the parenting experiences of Black parents in Toronto. CRT highlights the significance of the projection stories which hitherto remain unheard of as marginalized Black parents are afforded the opportunity to express their opinions on issues of parenting. It thus acts as the essential precursor that offers a light of hope capable of fighting racial discrimination against persons of colour. The stories of Black parents offer a dichotomy from what is considered as the “norm” in effective parenting within a Euro-Western society.

In the Chapter Four, there is a detailed description of the methods used in this present study. I explain the reasons behind the utilization of a qualitative approach for the study, the sampling procedure, data collection techniques, language and transcription and data analysis. The use of qualitative approaches in this study contributes to understanding how race, gender and

social position influence the daily parenting practices of Black parents. It permits me to understand how social realities of Black families are nurtured by culture.

Chapter Five provides details of the responses of selected participants (i.e. findings section). This section offers insight into how the participants responded to the research questions. Their responses expose their conception of effective parenting, factors influencing their parenting styles, and their experiences of interactions with Child Welfare Agencies.

Chapter Six discusses in a broad spectrum of what was learned from the responses from the participants. This section delves into a further analysis of the findings that emanated from the study. It exposes both divergent and similar views held by Black parents with respect to the main questions that were posed to them and explained and analyzed within the context of available literature on broader parenting practices. Finally, Chapter Seven concludes the study and also offers some suggestions that can help improve Child Protection services in Toronto, Canada.



## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Parenting Style:**

Diana Baumrind (1991) offers an insight to the determinants of adolescence competence and types of substance users utilizing Family Socialization and Development Competence (FSP) research strategy in “The Influence of Parenting Style on Adolescent Competence and Substance Use.” Baumrind (1991) asserts that adolescent development is perceived as the normal development from childhood to adulthood and other changes that borders on shifting alliance from family to peers and diverse blend of responsibilities within the family and the society at large. She further contends that in the face of increasing societal instability, while the classic views promote freedom for adolescents to become competent, transition-proneness encourages protection from palpable threatening situations. The contemporary view offers a solution to this impasse as it argues that the community and the activities that adolescents engage affect their personality. Thus, connectedness to the family and the community promotes individual development at any stage. Cooper et al. (1982, 1983) advocates for a balance between individuality and connectedness for effective parenting. Reiss et al. (1983) also proposed a categorization of families based on their performances in problem-solving and for them the optimal family is the one that is able to interrogate both cognitive and social aspects of the environments. Baumrind (1991) defines optimal competence as the combination of agency and communion which is in tandem with Greenberger’s (1984) definition of psychosocial maturity. While agency refers to independence, communion relates to connectedness as elucidated in psychosocial literature. The hypothesis of Baumrind’s (1991) research suggests adolescents are able to achieve optimal competence when parents exhibit high sense of demandingness and responsiveness while alternating the ratio of freedom to control to align with the current stage of children’s development.

Baumrind (1991) created four different types of parenting prior to adolescence based on demandingness and responsiveness with respect to nurturance and limit-setting. These include authoritative, authoritarian, permissive and rejecting-neglecting. The authoritative parents are both demanding and responsive as they are supportive and set clear guidelines for behaviour. Authoritarian parents are demanding but do not show responsiveness. They expect their children to obey without questioning while monitoring their behaviours constantly. Permissive or nondirective parents show more responsiveness but are not demanding. They do not offer any regulation towards children behaviours and are very lenient. Rejecting-neglecting parents are neither demanding nor responsive as they abandon or deny their parental responsibilities. Baumrind (1991) outlines the effects of these parenting styles on children prior to adolescence under the FSP. It was established that authoritative parenting contributed to children with more instrumental competence than other children. Authoritarian parenting also had devastating consequences on boys than girls while preschool and primary school girls raised by permissive parents were less assertive and cognitively competent compared to children raised by authoritative parents.

Baumrind (1991) mentions that when the study was conducted, the parents in the FSP were categorized into six types of parents by two psychologists to provide added variations of the four standardized parenting styles. Permissive style was separated into democratic and nondirective type where the democratic type being more committed and diligent to children. While the authoritarian parenting was absorbed under directive parenting which values control over freedom, further distinctions were created. That is, authoritarian-directive parents who have much control and monitor children always and nonauthoritarian-directive parents whose level of control and monitoring is less. She explains that a “good-enough” style which assumes a moderate level of demandingness and responsiveness is enough for achieving adolescent competence was coined by

Winnicott in 1965. These parenting styles were quantitatively analyzed through the use of one-way analysis variance and Newman-Keuls post-hoc comparisons.

Baumrind (1991) contends it was hypothesized that children from democratic and authoritative homes will show optimal competence than children of other homes. The children from these homes are expected to imitate their parents who are more logical, agentic and communal than other parents. However, it was expected that children from democratic homes will use more substance heavily due to the ideological differences amongst their parents. The results of the study confirmed adolescents from democratic and authoritative homes were remarkably competent than other adolescents. Although, adolescents from authoritative homes were more competent than those from democratic homes, Baumrind (1991) concedes that the difference was not to a great extent. Adolescents from directive homes were incompetent in self-determination, resisted drug use and perceive their parents as inhibitive. Adolescents from good-enough homes were found to have sufficient competence and lack of disastrous problems. Adolescent from nondirective homes too were less optimally competent and less motivated for success despite having high intelligence. They also tend to use heavy drugs only less than adolescents from unengaged homes. Adolescents from unengaged parents do not only lack social skills, intelligence, and a sense of responsibility but they also reject parents as role models.

Despite the invaluable contribution of Baumrind's (1991) parenting styles to child's development research, Maccoby and Martin (1983) were interested in studying parenting in a broader range. They proposed a two-dimensional framework where parenting style was defined as a function of two dimensions, responsiveness and demandingness through the melding of Baumrind's configurational approach with efforts that were made to describe parenting according to dimensions in the early days. Both Baumrind (1991) and Maccoby and Martin (1983) state that parenting style is better analyzed within a social learning context. For Maccoby and Martin (1983),

parenting style was defined by two processes which include number and types of parental demands and contingency of parental reinforcement. They also established two different forms of parenting styles; neglecting parents who are low both in responsiveness and demandingness and indulgent parents who are high in responsiveness but low in demandingness. Authoritative parents are also seen as high in both responsiveness and demandingness while authoritarian parents are high in demandingness and low in responsiveness.

Darling and Steinberg (1993) proffer an integrative model that delves into parenting practices and universal parenting characteristics to explain the contextual nature of parenting style. Darling and Steinberg (1993) mention that despite the benefits of the accepted authoritative parenting style propounded by Baumrind (1991), its impact together with other parenting styles are divergent depending on the social environments of families. For instance, the authoritative parenting is associated with academic success for European-American teenagers but does not produce same results for African-American and Asian teenagers. Darling and Steinberg (1993) emphasize that there is much literature on the conditions that precipitate differential outcomes for children despite same parenting style. They believe an obvious effect of this boils down to the lack of understanding of ethnic differences on the impact of authoritativeness on children's development. In order to understand the processes through which child development is influenced by parenting style, the authors desegregated parenting into three parts; socialization goals, parenting style, and parenting practices. The authors concentrated on historical models to expatiate the processes by which parenting style impinges child outcomes. Darling and Steinberg (1993) further explain that different theoretical perspectives express divergent components of style as they emphasize different processes.

Darling and Steinberg (1993) argue that Baumrind's (1991) authoritative parenting differs from parenting practice as it is not influenced by content of parenting behaviours and that parenting only transfers parents' attitudes towards children other than child's behaviours. They assert that their model believes both parenting style and practice emanate from socialization goals and values of parents. Despite this, these two attributes enact in different processes to affect child development. While parenting practices refer to the mechanisms utilized by parents directly for attaining socialization goals, parenting style refers to indirect mechanisms that affect the efficacy of parents' capacity to socialize. The authors opine that parenting style regulates parenting practices by influencing parent-child interactions and also affecting child's openness to socialization. They claim that it is puzzling as to how earlier models failed to differentiate the style of parents, socialization goals and mechanisms for socialization used by parents. Darling and Steinberg (1993) states emphatically that the degree to which a particular behavioural characteristic is exhibited by a child is determined jointly by both a) the level of correlation between parent practices and specific outcomes and b) the level of effectiveness of parenting practices. Darling and Steinberg (1993) argue that there is the tendency for models that entirely concentrate on responsiveness and demandingness to overlook disparities in the extent of control between authoritative and authoritarian parents because assessments of other features such as restrictiveness and autonomy are ignored. To assuage the tensions in literature concerning parenting styles attempt to explain parenting environments and the division of parenting mechanisms into singular units to understand them properly, the authors discuss how these elements could merge. They explain that Becker (1964) claims socialization goals influence parenting behaviours and it is solely through parenting behaviours that child development will occur. Darling and Steinberg (1993) further argue that two distinct attributes of parenting, parenting practices and parenting style ought to be differentiated if the processes through which

parents influence child development are to be discerned. They concede it will be necessary to investigate how cultural background influence, processes through parenting style affect child development and the determinants of parenting style. To them, parenting style should be perceived as a context through socialization transpires and this will bode well for future investigation on parental impact on child development.

In chapter one of Amy Chua's, *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother*, Chua (2011) distinguishes Chinese parents from Western parents through parenting practices that have been encouraged by Chinese parents over the years resulting in the successful raising of Chinese children. Chua (2011) who likens Chinese parents to other parents from countries such as Korea, Ghana, Jamaica, Ireland and India assert these parents have a different parenting style characterized by strictness which is incomparable to the strictness claimed by Western parents. Chua (2011) insists that although there is an aversion to cultural stereotypes, several studies affirm considerable differences in parenting between Chinese and Western parents. For instance, her daughters, Sophia and Louisa were restricted from activities such as attending sleepovers, having a playdate, watching TV or playing computer games. Chua (2011) claims that Western parents come in different parenting styles than the Chinese parents. She insists that even when Western parents claim that they are strict on their children, their strictness does not come anywhere close to the strictness of Chinese parents. Chua (2011) explains that although there is an aversion to cultural stereotypes, several studies affirm considerable differences in parenting practices between Chinese and Western parents. For instance, in a study of 50 Western American mothers and 48 Chinese immigrant Chinese mothers, while 70% of the Western American mothers believed emphasis on education is not good for children, none of Chinese mothers thought so. Chinese parents are thus keen on stressing academic excellence for their children in contrast to American Western parents who are keen to see their child engage in sports teams. Chua (2011) refutes the claim that

American sports parents are like Chinese parents. Chinese parents unlike American sports parents who over-engage their children in sports, emphasize being the best in academics, taking math seriously, not praising children in public, agreeing with their teachers when there is disagreement and participating in activities with the aim of achieving only the best results. Relatedly, Gorman (1998) using Chinese immigrants of Canada as a case, has challenged Baumrind's (1991) analysis of authoritarian parenting. Gorman (1998, p.78) observes that "[Chinese] mothers' restrictions on their children's activities were due to their care and protection rather than their need for domination." Rudy and Grusec (2001) appear to agree with Gorman's (1998) analysis. They argue that African-American parents in a high-risk neighbourhood rely on authoritarian parenting techniques as it may be the only way to protect their children from dangers in the neighbourhood.

Ho, Bluestein & Jenkins (2008) establish that discrepancies in relationships between the use of physical punishment and hostile and child outcomes result from different cultural ecologies which affect the expression, perception, and interpretation of similar behaviours across cultures. East Asian parents are known to have preference for the authoritarian parenting style which emphasizes controlling children to comply with a set of standards but European/Canadian families view this style less positively. Despite this contrast, the emphasis of controlling child proffers a different meaning to East Asian parents who views it with a different cultural interpretation of providing warmth, love and involvement with their children (Ho, Bluestein & Jenkins, 2008). Hence, per the culture of East Asian parents the acceptance of an authoritarian parenting style is to rather provide care and engaging with their children. Within the integrative model of culture (Coll et al., 1996), child's development is influenced by the a) meaning of particular parenting practice and accepted child s across cultures b) effects of social position variables such as education and income adequacy on parent's ability to provide effective parenting and c) acculturation (Ho, Bluestein & Jenkins, 2008). Similarly, their study affirms the positive outlook for authoritarian

parenting style of its ability to offer warmth and care while exercising a controlling behaviour resonates with African-American families and Caribbean families. Other studies substantiate the restrictive nature of the authoritarian parenting style on the basis of protecting children from negative social environment other than oppressing them and the tension of having to socialize children in both the native culture and the dominant culture amongst African-American families (Maiter & George, 2003). Restricting children is also exercised to help children to cope with daily stressors of racial profiling that characterizes harsh social environments (Maiter & George, 2003). Even though authoritarian parenting involves closely monitoring the activities of one's children, Gorman (1998) asserts that the approaches utilized by parents suggest it is done with the paramount interest of children as the main concern. In this study, I explore parenting styles of Black parents to see what methods of parenting they use and determine if their actions are informed by the desire to dominate their children as Baumrind (1991) suggests or to protect their children as Chua(2011), Gorman (1998), Ho, Bluestein and Jenkins (2008) have argued.

### **Racism, Whiteness and Black Parenting:**

Kobayashi and Johnson (2007) pointed out that despite Canada being a pioneer in adopting multiculturalism, discrimination occurs in subtle invisible ways, which render any formal interventions to address social problems affecting racialized people futile. Racism is non-partisan and evokes a plethora of meanings and emotions with respect to a person's mindset. According to Kobayashi and Johnson (2007), 'Racism is a set of contingent processes through which the meanings and experiences of the racialized are not only constantly reinscribed and reinforced, but also transformed' (p.4). Racism is thus considered to be a creator and consequence of racialization. Hence, race in itself does not create racism but is an output of racism. Kobayashi and Johnson (2007) asserted that race and racialization are bones of contention which divide public



opinion. Other researchers claim that racial differences are obvious as they have become part of daily life. The tendency for people in 'liberal' countries including Canada to believe that racism is a thing of the past as there is a belief that all people are equal irrespective of colour turns out to be paradoxical. This creates situations where people may consider themselves as not being racists once they ascribe to equality. Racism is hence restricted to constitute certain demeanors which hardly occur in societies that have strong legal frameworks. The authors also talked about how racialization assists to provide a broader spectrum to facilitate discussions within a larger system as well as defusing the tensions that racism emits. However, they further assert that racialization tends to militate against anti-racist agenda as the focus is restricted to a broader system which becomes difficult to countercheck as individuals are not considered as responsible for racism. The authors opined that it will be difficult to eliminate totally the idea of race from people's mindset but there exist opportunities to distort its interpretation in order to affect social relations. This is important in considering the importance of words in formulating human relations as their understandings tend to be socially constructed. This is corroborated by Foucault (1973) as he explained that social interactions serve as the processes of discourse where the negotiation of the relative places of human beings and their commensurate power transpire. Hence, action plans which are intended to fight against racism should thus be involved in such social interactions.

Canada's path to liberal democracy has been muddied with atrocities meted to Aboriginal people and other people of colour including Canadians of African descent and Asian Canadians. The devastating effects of European colonial invasion still remain so much that Frideres and Gadacz (2001) concluded that if measures are not taken rapidly, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal interactions will degenerate. Asian Canadians were maltreated at the expense of economic development and Black Canadians continue to be targets of racial profiling. Although these atrocities are seen to belong to the past, the current racism that Aboriginal people and people of

colour are exposed to cannot be considered ignorable. Kobayashi and Johnson (2007), therefore insist that racism cannot be separated from our daily lives as it has been ingrained in our society and governance. There continues to be tension between values of equity and impartiality against racist principles and thoughts. For Henry et al. (2005) racism in democracy impinges on our philosophical environment in concealed ways as race is considered insignificant in liberal societies. Henry et al. (2005) further argued how language played a role in racialization through cunning ways which leads it to be considered as acceptable in a democratic society. This tends to be achieved through democratic dialogues in Canada which include multiculturalism, White victimization, denial, reverse racism, and colour blindness. Racism is therefore perpetuated by policies which are meant to fight against them. This is typified by the adoption of strategies which overlook race in employment drive as a political strategy resulting in unnamning racism through a colour blind approach. This leads to the creation of what Henry et al. (2005) termed as the 'new racism'. 'New racism' poses a conundrum as it both sees racism as a result of intricate structures and at the same time blaming it on a few bad people. The maintenance of this ideology is as a result of history where racial supremacy was ignored and Western Civilization's assumption that its prosperity is dependent on people of colour. Kobayashi and Johnson (2007) also assert that hatred is funneled through fear towards racist acts. Eisenstein (1996) explained hatred embodies a complex set of fears about difference and others and this hatred emanates from the uncertainty of others. Hatred becomes the impetus for the assimilation of White supremacy. Henry et al. (2005) thus claim that racism is cemented as it is a way of providing identity of the self.

In describing Whiteness, the Kobayashi and Johnson (2007) refer to it as 'a constellation of normative practices through which the value of Whiteness has been privileged' (p.10).

Whiteness permeates the entire fabrics of our daily lives that it tends to be considered incontrovertible practice other than one created as a result of social relations. Kobayashi and

Johnson (2007) insist that the failure of Canada's multicultural policy reveals the pervading prevalence of Whiteness. Canada is still considered a society made up of chiefly Western Europeans which nullifies attempts to make visible minorities integrated as long as they are considered to be outsiders. For Ignatiev (1997), racism is institutionally entrenched as institutions such as school, labour market, legal system, welfare system, medical industry and the family perpetuate racial oppression. In liberal countries such as Canada, there tends to be a de-emphasis of race which contributes to systemic racism because of the concentration of individual action while ignoring systematic practices that perpetuate racism (Applebaum, 2005; Koyobashi & Johnson, 2007; Pierce, 2003).

The paradoxical nature of racism and Whiteness is highlighted in what is happening in Black parenting experiences and practices in North America. According to Lalonde, Jones and Stroink (2008), Black parenting is unique as it involves layers of challenges because of daily racism and classism that target Blacks families in North America. Peters (2002) notes that African-American parents like to impart to their children knowledge of self-esteem, survival, self-respect, and threats of racism in society. Perhaps, in a society where the media constantly portrays Blackness as quintessential evil (Adjei 2013, 2018), it is necessary for Black parents to teach their children about their cultural and racial pride in order to help them regain their self-esteem. Black parents are known to be restrictive because they are aware of the discrimination Black people are subjected and thus socialize their children to avoid the negative social environment (Adjei et al., 2017; Maiter & George, 2003).

Black families have raised issues in the studies done by Adjei et al. (2017), Clark (2012), and Ojo (2016) that treatment they often receive from Child Welfare Services workers are borne out of racism which often operates a colour-blindness model that ignores differences that exist in how Black parents raise their children. Consequently, Black parents are misjudged by the police,

Child Welfare Services workers and the general public in cases of alleged child abuses when their ancestries are established as being different and not White. Their alleged parenting infractions are critiqued differently and connected to savagery synonymous with ‘ancient’ and ‘non-Western’ cultures (Williams, 2004). Conversely, in similar cases involving Whites, their backgrounds are not even interrogated. In the study, I explore in detail to ascertain whether racism and Whiteness in Canada do inform and shape Black parenting practices in Toronto.

### **Religion and Colonialism**

In their study of parenting among Aboriginal people of Canada, Muir and Bohr (2014) note that colonial experience can affect and shape parenting style. Indeed, The Truth and Reconciliation Commission Interim report (2012) notes that many survivors of residential schools requested for support to help them regain lost traditional parenting knowledge as a means of improving their parental skills. Fanon (1963) observes that colonialism engages in a kind of “perverted logic” that distorts, disfigures, and destroys the past of colonized people. This means that survivors of colonialism are likely at risk of losing their traditional parenting knowledge.

Saraceno (2012) admits colonialism still prevails in current institutions and policies because the past and current effects of colonialism in Canadian institutions emerged from the colonizer/colonized relationship. She argues that the research of de Finney et al. (2011) establishes that Canada’s economic growth is still dependent on the oppression of Indigenous societies while maintaining their social exclusion, political and cultural disenfranchisement. Saraceno (2012) further posits that there is a strong connection between colonialism and human service organizations as she states that social sciences and the human services are influenced by dominant Western paradigms which are embedded with colonialism. This is corroborated by the intimate relationship between colonialism and the human service worker where human service workers are

seen as extension of the colonial or cultural machine. Bennett (2015) asserts that the relationship between social workers and Indigenous people has not been promising because of the implication of colonization and social workers' responsibility in the removal of children and thus social workers are mistrusted. Social work has also failed to incorporate Indigenous knowledge even when Indigenous social workers are part of the organization (Bennett, 2015). This has had a negative impact on the social work profession and engagement with Indigenous people and social workers.

In Australia, a White settler's country like Canada, there has been lack of trust amongst Indigenous families and main service providers due to systemic racism and colonialism. The violent colonialism — the removal of children which include poor parenting skills, mental health issues and exposure to abuse — has come with devastating long-term traumatic effects on Indigenous people (Herring, Spangaro, Lauw & McNamara, 2013). These effects have had a long-term trans-generational impact on Indigenous people. Bennett's (2015) research reveals that even social workers of Indigenous backgrounds are not insulated from issues such as drug and alcohol, health and mental health issues as their situations are similar to other Indigenous people in the communities. Herring et al. (2013) identify colonial and post-colonial legacy as contributing to power relations on the basis of race where Indigenous people are disadvantaged. The history of Black parents in Canada is similar to that of Indigenous people irrespective of where they originate from they have been subjected to colonialism thereby affecting every facet of their lives including parenting. In what ways have the experience of colonialism and missionary education imparted parenting practices of Blacks in Toronto? This study investigates that.

## **Child Welfare Systems and Black Parenting Practices**

Christie (2010) asserts that despite the surge in migration to Ireland in the mid-1990s, the size of Black and non-European population continues to be relatively small in Ireland. Christie (2010) argues that Black and minority groups have been made invisible through racist national guidelines for the protection of children. Christie (2010) insists that despite the multicultural make up of Ireland, Black and ethnic minority parenting practices continue to be measured by White Irish ideals of parenting thereby rendering Black and minority children as needing protection by Child Welfare Service providers. In a sense, through its child protection regulations, Christie (2010) reveals that Ireland has moved from a 'racial state' whose policies used to have no intended negative effects on racialized group to a 'racist state' formulating racist policies intentionally target Blacks and racial minority groups. Example, the Irish Children First policy although its original intent was to harmonize procedures for identifying and reporting child abuse to assist both statutory and voluntary organizations that had direct contact with children, it has today become an avenue to enact Whiteness agenda on Black and racial minority families.

Christie (2010) argues that differences between Black and minority ethnic children and other children are used to accentuate the connection between Black and minority ethnic groups and 'deviant' cultural problems. She further establishes that "Black and minority communities are thereby represented as not just having problems but also being problems" (Christie, 2010, p. 209). Christie's (2010) analysis brings into focus the failure of Child Welfare Services providers to understand how ethnic and racial differences are produced through legislation, child care policies and guidelines. Christie (2010), therefore, contends that it will be beneficial to Child Welfare systems when policies are analyzed to expose how White dominance is strengthened through the measuring of 'Other' through White gaze. Christie (2010) entreats social workers to move beyond

the normal social work activities to participate in a continual debate of racism in Ireland, which often masquerades as policies and practices in social work practices.

Relatedly, Saraceno (2012) examines how the influence of western ontology marked by coloniality and masculinity affect delivery of professional help by organizations like Child and Youth Care (CYC). Saraceno (2012) asserts that dominant colonial and racist practices, which operate as Whiteness, have become part of our everyday lived experiences and therefore have become difficult to identify and challenge. Saraceno (2012) argues that colonialism still prevails in our current institutions and policies. Yet what makes the coloniality of power in today's time difficult to deal with is that it includes ideals of respect, freedom, and equality while at the same time maintaining Western imperialism in the form of neo-liberalism. She asserts that neo-liberalism has influenced greatly the structures and institutions of Western societies like Child and Youth Care and the idea of professionalization. Neo-liberalism values economic growth more than living beings and demands that individuals minimize their dependence on government while increasing production and consumption. She posits that neo-liberalism fails to recognize and understand the ways identities of race, class, gender, sexuality and disability intersect to complicate the idea of equal opportunities.

Saraceno (2012) claims that the helping professions are part of the neo-liberal structure which undermines different ways of knowing and being of minorities while maintaining the authority of those perceived as 'normal'. She asserts that professional helping stifles individual and community strengths and promote overreliance on their expertise. Hence, while people become the focus of professionalized human service delivery, conditions that account for their problems are ignored (Szasz, 2002). She argues that neo-liberalism exacerbates social problems by holding people responsible for these social problems. Most importantly, neo-liberalism is presented as having no alternative because its ideals align with Whiteness. The complexity of

Whiteness is that it operates to promote White privilege by positioning the ‘other’ as degenerates and inferior. Even more importantly, Whiteness is a powerful force because it operates as an “unseen and unknown”; that which functions as normal (Rodriguez, 2000, p.254). What does this mean for Child Welfare Services delivery? Considering that the development of discourses that have come to define and shape accepted “parenting practices” (at least as seen by Child Welfare Services providers) are rooted in Whiteness, it is important Child Welfare Services providers shift from the space of “racial neutrality” and the polity of colour-blindness to the space where they challenge the Euro-Western methodologies of learning appropriate s.

Saraceno (2012) highlights the importance of a decolonizing practice which disrupts White privileges and reveals how neo-liberalism perpetuates its normalized ways of knowing, doing and being. A decolonizing praxis, according to Saraceno (2012), involves “mapping out new, engaged methods to uncover, track, and resist these hegemonic normative values” that have come to define and shape ways in which human services ought to be delivered (p.26). Saraceno (2012) stipulates that a socially just praxis for Child and Youth Care requires an integration of theory and practice that involves collaboration amongst diverse population. She asserts that White practitioners ought to investigate how White privilege affect their lives and practice while making efforts to integrate an engaged socially just praxis. It thus requires self-reflection which Newbury (2010) highlights as occupying the core of effective and ethical practice and also enables the unearthing and resistance to hegemonic narratives within a socially just praxis.

Williams (2004) discusses how multiple identities influence privilege and oppression through the analysis of two child custody cases. These two cases were popular at that time as mothers, Kimberly Van de Perre and Nadia Hama lost custody of their children to their respective fathers generating discussion around race and racism. Williams (2004) explains the background in which Kimberly and Nadia were compelled to make terms with child custody and racialization.



She exposes the advantages that men have over women such as women becoming more restricted to childcare and men granted 50% of child custody despite the perception of their disadvantage. Men make the case for child custody by outlining the inefficiencies of mothers and the importance of fathers in raising children. Williams (2004) insists that women are measured by high standards of parenting by joint custody fathers and courts. This contributes to the father empowerment agenda. She opines race and the women's disadvantages in the custodial cases shaped the experiences of Kimberly and Nadia. Williams (2004) stressed that racism prevails in Canada just like the United States despite the perception of its non-existence. However, the United States has established constitution and legal systems for fighting racial oppression unlike Canada. Williams (2004) hints that multiculturalism hinders the efforts to addressing racism in Canada.

Williams (2004) utilized document analysis technique in analyzing the two cases. She argues that in the Case One: Kimberly Van de Perre vs. Theodore Edwards, it garnered media attention because Theodore argued his case for custody on the back of racism in Canada and the United States. Theodore Edwards, a Black American father with a family had appealed to a decision that granted full custody of their son, Elijah, to his former lover, Kimberly, a White woman residing in Canada. Williams (2004) alludes that the case was hyped by the media due to the arguments put forth by Mr. Edwards, his wife, Valerie Edwards and organizations of Black Canadians and American communities. They argued that it will be necessary for Elijah to be raised in a Black household and in the United States because he would be considered as a Black to enable him deal with racism better. The case as intimated by Williams (2004) was entangled with race. She asserted that the historical legacy of America's laws and policies of the protection of White racial purity made it difficult to challenge the argument that Elijah, their bi-racial son will be considered as Black. Williams (2004) mentions that race was used to characterize Kimberly as both empowered and disadvantaged through her Whiteness and as a promiscuous woman by the

legal team of Edwards. Kimberly was depicted as training their child to hate Blacks and unfairly criticized for having amorous relationships with non-Whites as it was the case in both Canada and United States. Williams (2004) believes. Theodore gained from the transference of America's racial right advocacy to the Canadian context.

With case two: Nadia Hama vs. Kjeld Werbes, Williams (2004) mentions that this case gained popularity for two years before Nadia lost custody of her children. Their 18-month old daughter, Kayla, with Down's syndrome fell from a suspension bridge at a tourist site where she was taken to by Nadia. The accident was relayed to the media by other patrons who had taken pictures of them before and after the accident. Nadia was initially charged with murder of Kayla but it was dropped due to inadequate evidence. Kayla and her brother, Jovan, 5 years were removed by child welfare authorities but were reunited with Nadia after the murder charge was dropped. Kjeld Werbes, the ex-husband of Nadia and the biological father of the two children was subsequently granted custody of the two children by the court. Williams (2004) opines that the link between child custody case and race was not clear immediately because it was less clear that Nadia was a person of colour. Elements of racism were easier to recognize when it was established that Nadia was of Syrian ancestry and not White. Williams (2004) declares that Nadia's disadvantage was evident in the unfair treatment by the police and newspapers that portrayed her as a 'savage mother,' an 'ancient' and 'non-Western' cultures where mothers leave their babies by the mountain sides to die. However, neither the background of Kjeld nor his attitude to their Down's syndrome child was interrogated by anyone. Even when the murder charge was dropped, Williams (2004) opines that the court and public still had memories of Nadia as a mother who had tried to murder her daughter because of serious issues raised about her mental stability. She believes this is akin to the strategy which Kjeld used which has been grounded by Whites which gives them the authority to remove children of other races because of the misrepresentation that adults of such

race have a higher tendency to maltreat children (Bishop, 2002). Williams (2004) argues that the court and the media portrayed Nadia as an abusive parent by emphasizing her different cultural background when evidence failed to incriminate her. Conversely, her ex-husband Kjeld, was portrayed as representing Canadian Whiteness in exercising his rights to seize and socialize their children.

In analyzing the cases, some people argued for the use of single axis analysis in examining types of oppressions that are analytically distinct as they are so fundamental to the workings of power. Williams (2004) claims that race falls into this category due to its significance and its daily link with violence. She outlines that the biases associated with race which affected the family dynamics of Kimberly and Nadia justified why this kind of analysis was used. While Kimberly was described as dominant, pernicious and immoral based on her skin and relationship with non-Whites, Nadia was represented as barbaric, infanticidal and unstable based on her accent and cultural background.

What remains consistent in the literature review so far is that race, racism, and Whiteness consciously or unconsciously inform and shape ways in which Child Welfare services providers understand, relate, interpret, and response to policies, rules, and child protection guidelines and their attendant effects on parenting practices of racialized minority families. In the study, I was interested to know how Child Welfare Service providers respond to the Black parenting practices in Toronto. The discussion that follows focuses on the theoretical framework that guides the study.

## **CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The thesis draws on Critical Race Theory (CRT). Critical Race Theory emerged in the mid-70s from the critical legal scholarship of Derrick Bell (an African American) and Alan Freeman (a White male) and offers the interrogation of race and racism from the legal standpoint (Crenshaw, 1995). Derrick Bell and Alan Freeman facilitated the development of CRT in reaction to the ineffective approach of Civil Rights Movements in the United States. Their writings also challenged liberal ideals in the form of colour-blindness and meritocracy. While critical legal scholarship affirmed that there were injustices in the legal system, CRT scholars expressed that race, which was one of the necessary evils, was neglected in this analysis (Stovall, 2010). Hence, with emphasis on class, it was necessary to incorporate race as one of the reasons for an unjust legal system. Other notable scholars such as Kimberle Crenshaw, Angela Harris, Charles Lawrence, Mari Matsuda, Patricia Williams, Neil Gotanda, Eric Yamamoto, Francisco Valdes, and Kelvin Johnson have been credited with further development of the CRT (Stovall, 2010). However, Carol Aylward and local legal groups such as the African Canadian Legal Clinic in Toronto are notable entities with works of CRT in Canada. CRT is interdisciplinary in nature in its analysis and addressing of issues of race and racism as it incorporates constructs from the disciplines of ethnic studies, women's studies, legal theory, philosophy, sociology, and history (Stovall, 2010). Recently, it has transcended these disciplines into other fields such as urban planning, public health, medicine and social work (Clark, 2012; Jeffrey, 2005; Stovall, 2010). The adoption of the CRT in research enables the researcher, users and readers of the research to appreciate how victims of systemic racism are affected by cultural perceptions of race and their ability to oppose prejudice.

In this study, CRT is employed for three purposes. First, CRT is employed to offer a thorough analysis of how the quotidian nature of racism informs Black parenting experiences in

Toronto. There is a continual denial of racism in Canada as it is perceived less intense in nature compared to the United States (Saraceno, 2012). Despite this perception, several studies confirm both the covert and overt forms of racism in Canada (Kobayashi & Johnson, 2007; Saraceno, 2012; Williams, 2004) which are perpetrated by institutions such as school, labour market, welfare system, legal system, medical industry and the family in contrast to racist groups (Ignatiev, 1997). Black people and other racialized people continue to face discriminations as they are positioned as the “Other” aided by Whiteness and White privilege which is often normalized (Saraceno 2012, p.254). The normalization of Whiteness has had dire consequences for Black parents as their parenting practices are measured through the lens of Whiteness (Kobayashi & Johnson, 2007; Miehl, 2001; Saraceno, 2012; Twine & Gallagher, 2008; Walter, Taylor, & Habibis, 2011). The supremacy of Whiteness in parenting practices dates back to the past where Aboriginal families had their children removed from them through colonization with complicity roles of social workers (Bennett, 2015; Herring et al. 2013). Pierce (2003) confirms this assertion as she believes several discourses affirm that “Whiteness is a social and historical construction and is tied to relations of domination and subordination” (p.56). Hence, it is necessary for a focus on Whiteness to “explore and interrogate the raced assumptions that underpin all the frameworks of professional knowledge, teaching, learning and practice” (Walter et al.2011, p.15). It is noteworthy that Canadian socio-political milieu is akin to the Australian context where race continues to be the basis of human relations comprising power relations which have been honed through colonization and post-colonial legacy (Walter et al. 2011). For Adjei & Gill (2013), “race continues to gain social currency because it has become an effective marker for the distribution of unequal power, privilege, social prestige, rewards, penalties, and punishments” (p.140). With the advent of multiculturalism, it is envisaged that the days of Western hegemony would have been put to rest while promoting equality for all. However, several studies affirm that even with the emergence of

multicultural policies, social injustices still prevail because these policies are connected to Western hegemony (Saraceno, 2012; Williams, 2004) and there is a continual identification of visible minorities as outsiders (Koyobashi and Johnson, 2007). I agree with Christie's (2010) assertion that the comparison of the Black and ethnic minority communities within the tenets of White culture in the Irish welfare system contributes to their labelling as deficient in his study. Are the parenting practices and beliefs of Black parents being measured in cultural and environmental contexts which fail to acknowledge the worldviews of Black people? Thus, does this in any way contribute to the overrepresentation of Black children in the welfare system and how are Black parents responding to not to be part of the statistics? Employing CRT in this research aids in exploring how systemic racism and Whiteness within the child welfare system affect parenting experiences of Black families in Toronto.

Second, the use of CRT helps to understand how the nuances and complexities of the multiplicity of identities shape the parenting practices and knowledge of Black parents in Toronto. Within an intersectionality perspective, CRT unveils how other identity matrices such as race, class, gender, sexuality, disability, religion, and ethnicity, among others, interact to shape and complicate ways in which oppression is constructed and understood (Crenshaw 1991). Intersectionality is an important tenet as it highlights the different shades of oppressions that visible minorities face and it does not permit a one-dimensional approach of the world's complexities. In this way, Williams (2004) proposed that intersectionality which involves analysis of multiple identities has the potential of offsetting the limitations of the single axis analysis. Williams (2004) augments this proposition by insisting that the incorporation of race, gender, class and other forms of oppressions in analysis provides the avenue to move beyond oppositional and hierarchical orders that emerge out of the single axis analysis. Intersectionality "can better illuminate how policy constructs citizens' relative power and privileges vis-à-vis their status,

health and well-being” (Hankivsky, 2012, p.8). Intersectionality is useful in many fronts: One, it helps us to understand how different forms of social marginality and structures of dominance intersect and shift with time and changing social conditions. Two, it helps us to identify the common link to all forms of social oppression and ways in which critical educators and social activists can individually and collectively respond to injustice and inequities in society. The impact of Canadian parenting “standards” molded from a Euro-Western culture positions people differently along the identity lines of race, class, sexuality, age, language, religion, nationality, disability, and gender. It is therefore necessary to explore how Black parents who mostly immigrated to Canada execute their parenting responsibilities along these identity matrices while adapting to a culture which is at variance with their original culture and how it affects their interactions with Child Welfare Agencies especially the Children Aid Society, Toronto, Ontario. The use of CRT helps to discover the intricacies of how multiple identities of Black families affect their conception of effective parenting, parenting style and practices, and how these concepts compare and contrast with the perspectives of Child Welfare Agencies.

Third, in White settler societies such as Canada where White hegemony continues to determine how system and structures function, CRT will assist in bringing out counter stories and narratives on alternative worldviews. In this way, minority ethnic groups who are often silenced by White hegemony can have access to a voice as the voice of the marginalized is crucial in understanding the discriminations they encounter. One of the tenets of CRT is the recognition of the power of stories. The essence of stories is evident in the sharpening of the collective imagination of the oppressed where the narratives of struggle, loss, grief, creativity, and liberation are expressed through narratives. Stovall (2010) explains that narratives allow historical and socially significant accounts of minorities that are often ignored within law and educational scholarship to be understood. Stories should be analyzed with an intersectional approach as

storytellers have race, class, gender, sexuality which all filters the lens of the narration. Narratives provide avenue for the victims of discrimination to express their thoughts to enable members of the dominant group who do not appreciate the oppressions they face understand their situations better. Counter-stories “can be a powerful individual testimony of resilience, ingenuity, and pain but can also bear witness to institutionalized and unequal social relations that the dominant culture tends to minimize or deny” (Hunn, Guy & Manglitz, 2006 p.249). Counter-stories are deemed as capable of providing grounded ways towards the fight against racial tensions in their ability to reflect diverse perspectives and situations while understanding social patterns through individual experiences (Hunn, Guy & Manglitz, 2006). It is expected that through counter stories Black parents will get the opportunity to recount how their experiences with respect to parenting in Canada and how they affect their interaction with Child Welfare Agencies. This helps amplify their ordinary voices as the discussion centers their divergent thoughts on issues of parenting in Canada.



## CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

This study which relies on data of a study funded by Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Insight Development Grant (SSHRC IDG) employed a qualitative approach to critically compare and contrast the issue of effective parenting and parenting knowledge between Black parents in Toronto (Ontario), Winnipeg (Manitoba) and St. John's (Newfoundland) and Child Welfare Agencies. The study analyzes one part of the data of this SSHRC-IDG funded research with sole emphasis on data generated in Toronto, Ontario. Qualitative approach thus defined the processes of collection, utilization and interpretation of the experiences of Black parents in these three cities which are shaped by personal, cultural, religious and racial elements. According to Gelling (2015), qualitative research “allows researchers to explore human experiences in personal and social contexts, and gain greater understanding of the factors influencing these experiences” (p.43). Qualitative approaches involve immersion in to the everyday life of individuals, groups, societies and organizations and offer the opportunity to discover the inner experiences of participants to unearth how meaning are constructed through culture (Barbour, 2008; Corben & Strauss, 2008; Shaw& Gould, 2010). Thus, the objective of qualitative approach is to discover rather than testing variables (Corben & Strauss, 2008) which is more synonymous with quantitative research. In order to discover, researchers “explain how the ‘macro’ (i.e. social class position, gender, locality) is translated into the ‘micro’ (i.e. everyday practices, understandings and interactions) to guide individual” (Barbour 2008, p. 4). Additionally, qualitative approaches make it possible to study how people comprehend concepts (Barbour, 2008). These reasons justify why the study utilized a qualitative approach in the gathering, handling and interpretation of the experiences of Black parents in the three cities and other stakeholders in the Child Welfare Agencies with respect to their conceptualization of “effective parenting” and understanding and practice of parenting.

## **Sampling**

Whereas quantitative research focuses on maximizing generalization on a larger population, qualitative research such as this offers an insight into the specific situation or phenomenon being studied (Koerber & McMichael, 2008). Thus, this research utilizes a nonprobability sampling as the research was not necessarily designed to carry out studies of the sample to enable generalization to the populations (Koerber & McMichael, 2008; Maruyama & Ryan, 2014). The sample was carefully selected to ensure saturation which is an important element in qualitative research. That is the point where there an increased sample size or new data does not significantly contribute to new evidence (Barbour, 2008; Tracy, 2013). Owing to the nature of the research, purposeful sampling and a short screen instrument were used in recruiting participants. Participants were thus selected to suit the parameters of the research questions, goals, and purposes and to reflect diversity of the Black community in Toronto, Ontario (Barbour, 2008; Tracy, 2013). The contacts of the Principal Investigator and other two co-applicants who had previous stays in the research cities helped in the recruitment of the participants. Fifty (50) Black parents with diverse socio-demographic variables (socio-economic status, religion, age, gender, and ethnicity) were recruited from Toronto, Ontario for the research; Canadian born and immigrants from the Caribbean and Africa were recruited.

## **Data Collection Procedures**

The data were collected as part of a SSHRC funded research aimed at exploring the issue of understanding and practice “effective parenting” amongst Black parents and Child Welfare Agencies in cities including Toronto, Winnipeg and St. John’s. The data of Toronto was collected by Dr. Paul Adjei Banahene, Memorial University of Newfoundland who was the Principal Investigator (P1) between September 2015 and December 2016.

Data collection involved the application of a multi-faceted research design. There was an extensive literature review of documents on selected immigrant communities of African and Caribbean origin. Also, to examine issues affecting immigrants in integration, literature on resettlement and policy documents on integration and social capital were reviewed. In addition, the profiles of the study communities were mapped with respect to the immigrant population and regional differences between sites based on demographic reports and documents from Statistics Canada.

In-depth interviews which offers the opportunity for a comprehensive exchange between the researcher and the researched (Atkinson & Delamon., 2010; Barbour, 2008) was utilized. The use of in-depth interviews was justified as they “provide opportunities for mutual discovery, understanding, reflection, and explanation via a path that is organic, adaptive and oftentimes energizing” (Tracy, 2013 p. 132). Security is also afforded to participants in the form of anonymity which provided participants the opportunity to express opinions bothering on race and ethnicity without fear of victimization. Similarly, interviews offered a culturally safe environment as participants felt more comfortable to contribute to interviews conducted by researchers of same race or ethnicity consistent with Bennett’s (2015) study. The interviews were semi-structured which allowed the flexibility in ordering questions to provide emphasis on topics of importance by research participants. Follow-up questions or probes were also encouraged in addition to prepared list of questions (Chu & Ke, 2017). Semi-structured interviews were thus conducted for individuals and key informants for a duration between 45 to 60 minutes while each focus group interview lasted for 1.5 to 2 hours.

The interview guide comprised of questions demanding information on socio-economic backgrounds. In seeking information on these, participants were asked questions such as “Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?”, “What is your country of origin?”, “How long have you been

in Canada?”, “Do you have any religious affiliation?”, “What is your educational background?”, “What is your marital status?”, “How many years of marriage have you if married?”, “How many children do you have?”, “What are the ages of the children?”, “What is your present occupation?” To explore the parenting style, parenting practices and the factors that influence the participants’ parenting, specific questions were asked. These included, “Can you recount your experience growing up with your parents?”, “How were you disciplined?”, “How has your experience growing with parents affected your own parenting?”, “What does effective parenting mean to you?”, “Would you say your religion or faith influence your parenting style?”, “Do you set rules for children?”, “How do you discipline your when children when they break the rules?”, “What do you see as some of the major challenges in raising children in this country especially raising children as Black parents?” In examining the relationship between the participants and the Children Aids Society, questions such as, “What do you know about Children Aid Society?”, “Do you think that there is a cultural misunderstanding and racism, anti-Black racism on the path of Children Protection workers concerning Black families? In line with its semi-structured nature, the interview included other several probing questions to seek clarification or ensure emphasis on topics which were of importance to the participants. The interviews were conducted at places selected by the participants and with the consent of participants, all individual and focused group interviews were digitally recorded and notes were taken to assist data analysis and interpretation.

### **Language and transcription**

Language in research is important as it helps in easy dialogue between researchers and participants and provides insight into participants’ perspectives (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Tracy, 2013). Language also offers the opportunity for themes and continuities between interviews to be built by participants as opposed to be imposed by researchers (Shaw & Gould, 2010). Despite the

importance of language, in situations where participants' first language is different from that of the researcher and the cultural context is foreign to the researcher, Shaw & Gould (2010) argues that it could result in complexities of translation. However, the participants were fluent in English as many had stayed in Canada for several years and also arrived from countries with English as the official language. The Principal Investigator who conducted the interviews in Toronto is also fluent in English and hence there was no difficulties conducting interviews in English. Only one participant had his interview conducted in a language other than English. It was conducted in Asante Twi, a language spoken amongst a section of the Akan people in Ghana which the Principal Investigator is also fluent in. As translation raises issues of language and culture (Shaw & Gould, 2010), the investigator's same linguistic and cultural background with the participant contributed to an efficient capturing of the participant's worldview.

### **Data analysis**

Data analysis is part of the processes which commences the "real work" of a research after engagement with participants (Shaw & Gould, 2010). In tandem with the qualitative nature of this research, inductive reasoning is employed in comprehending local meanings from the data through the interpretations of the researcher (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Maruyama & Ryan, 2014). While inductive based research begins from observation to the formulation of hypotheses, deductive based research proceeds from hypotheses to observations (Maruyama & Ryan, 2014). Researchers claim that both manual and computer qualitative data analysis achieve the same purpose. The data for this study were analyzed manually and this helped to prevent most common problems which novice qualitative researchers encounter when they are concurrently learning how to do qualitative analysis and how to use a specific computer package (Barbour, 2008). Barbour (2008) further argues that it will be necessary to learn the principles of qualitative data analysis before trying any

computer package. Barbour (2008) hints that analyses executed through computer packages are not necessarily more comprehensive than manual analysis as the researcher is the one who ensures that analyses are comprehensive and not the means. Thus, the decision to use a manual data analysis in this research is a good step considering my position as a budding researcher and its ability to produce similar results just like the computer packages.

Qualitative data analysis involves a lot of work which includes reading and re-reading transcripts of interviews that are voluminous and documenting analytic reflections (Tracy, 2013). This thus calls for a systematic and organized analysis of the data collected. Through the conceptualization and theorization during the data collection stage, a researcher should be able to determine how the research will conclude. As indicated earlier on, the data were collected between September 2015 and December 2016 as a part of a SSHRC funded research. Hence, I had to peruse the interview transcripts on several occasions to acquaint myself with the data, to determine how the research will conclude and code with themes from the data.

Coding themes involves the “active process of identifying data as belonging to, or representing some type of phenomenon” (Tracy, 2013 p. 189). Researchers recommend the use of “open coding” which aims at opening meaning in data and reflexive processes (Tracy, 2013). While I employed the use of “open coding”, I also relied on a combined approach of axial coding which emphasized intensive analysis of a category at a time and selective coding which entailed focus on core codes sufficiently (Shaw & Gould, 2010). Utilizing Microsoft Word, I was able to create a table with emerging themes, voices of participants that relate to the themes and the representation of the key ideas of the participants’ voices. The key ideas highlighted my own interpretations of each code in relation to the broader theme. I highlighted similar voices speaking to a particular theme with the same colour for better analysis and organization. The emerging themes were coded out of the major questions which were posed to all the participants during the

interviews. For instance, on the emerging theme of “conception of effective parenting”, I selected opinions of participants that addressed this theme and analyzed it to figure out the core idea of their opinions. By this approach, I was utilizing the axial coding which emphasized on a rigorous analysis of a category at a time. While doing this, I also coloured opinions which are interpreted as having the same meaning with the same colour. For instance, in response to the question of what constitutes effective parenting, I interpreted the opinions of Hannah from Trinidad & Tobago and Dorcas from Nigeria as representing “building relationship with one’s children”. Thus, their opinions were coloured with the same colour (green). This procedure was repeated for other themes such as parenting style. The opinions of the participants were placed at the column which was labelled “voices of participants” while analysis of these voices was placed in the “key ideas” column.

For better analysis, some of the emerging themes had several sub-themes due to the nature of the questions. For instance, on a broader theme of “What informs or the rationale behind parenting”, the responses of the participants led to the creation of other sub-themes such as (a). Learning from parents (b). Religion (c). Structural issue (d). Cultural factor and (e). History and Personal experience. This method was also applied to the theme of “Responses of Child Welfare Agencies to Black Parenting Style”. The sub-themes that emerged under this broader theme included (a). Cultural misunderstanding (b). Cultural incompetence (c). Racism and (d). Mistrust. Analysis of such nature was in tandem with selective coding as it enabled sufficient interrogation of core codes significantly.

Research which engage small number of participants are criticized as having low statistical power in predicting the probability of an effect on a population which raises issues of validity (Maruyama & Ryan 2014). However qualitative research is not necessarily carried out to devise a theory generalizable across populations but to understand phenomenon and the meanings they

represent within a context (Shaw & Gould, 2010). To encourage validity and reliability of qualitative research, it is expected that the findings are believable, consistent, applicable and credible to readers and other users. Thus, to ensure these were achieved, I conducted a goodness of fit test by using a null hypothesis. Through reviewing transcripts after coding, strong themes were developed while counter themes did not emanate from the data. Qualitative research demands a high sense of transparency as it requires researchers to be honest and open on activities of the research (Tracy, 2013). Hence, to offer cogent analysis, I used extracts of the transcripts to buttress my points when appropriate. Towards promoting confidentiality and anonymity, the participants were given pseudonyms and all information that could aid in their identification were also altered. The quotes and statements of the participants were also edited to remove pause words (such as "like," "uh" and "um") and grammatical errors were corrected where necessary to make them more articulate. Despite the corrections that were carried out, efforts were made to retain the authenticity of the original quotes and statements.

### **Ethical considerations**

Since the study involved interviews with human participants, the Principal Investigator and other two co-applicants obtained institutional ethics approval from the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICHR) at Memorial University of Newfoundland. The Principal Investigator who collected data from Black parents in Toronto ensured that informed consent which is an important ethical element in research is followed thoroughly. The consent form was read to all the participants in English except one which was read in Twi. The aim of the study was explained to all the participants. The participants were advised they could stop the interview at any time during the process without any reason and they were not under any obligation to answer questions uncomfortable to them. By withdrawing, the participants were told doing so would not



affect them now or in the future. Participants were informed on their rights to ask questions about the study. The Principal Investigator advised that the participants that if they choose to end participation during data collection, any data collected from them up to that point would be retained by the researcher, unless they indicate otherwise. The interviews were conducted at places chosen by the participants.

Digitally-recorded interviews were transcribed and used as part of the data for analysis and interpretation. The participants were at liberty to ask for exclusion of particular interactions or remarks that have already been recorded. Thus, the copies of the interview transcriptions were given to the participants for their comments before they were analyzed and interpreted. Relatedly, participants were advised that if they choose to withdraw after data collection had ended, their data could be removed from the study up to October 31, 2016.

The signed informed consent forms, fieldnotes, digitally-recorded individual interviews and transcriptions were stored in locations that were secure and only accessible to the Principal Investigator and the research team. The audio data of the study were transferred to a research computer protected with a password. The audio data on the digital recording machine were erased. The collected data is expected to be stored for a minimum of five years in accordance with Memorial University policy on Integrity in Scholarly Research. The participants were informed that student research assistants may use some of your interview data for their own dissertation. This offered me the opportunity to undertake this study relying on the data collected from the Black parents in Toronto, Ontario.

Given that I was not part of the research team that collected the data, to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of participants are protected, I was given transcripts with anonymized names. While analyzing the data, I edited statements to correct grammatical errors and remove pause words (such as “like”, “uh” and “um”) to make them coherent. However, I

ensured that the authenticity of the original statements was maintained. In the study, I ensured that all cited sources were duly acknowledged.

### Profile of research participants

The following table gives an overview of the participants whose voices are discussed in this study:

Table 1: Overview of Study Participants Characteristics

NO	PSEUDONYM	PLACE OF BIRTH	EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND	OCCUPATION	FAMILY STRUCTURE	NO. OF KIDS
1	Hannah	Trinidad & Tobago	Postsecondary (PhD)	Corporate-Skilled	Two-parent	2
2	Eva	Ghana	Postsecondary (Diploma)	Private-Unskilled	Two-parent	2
3	Solomon	Ghana	Postsecondary (Diploma)	Public-skilled	Two-parent	2
4	Paul	Ghana	High School Certificate	Pensioner	Two-parent	3
5	Jackson	Ghana	Postsecondary (Masters)	-----	Two-parent	4
6	John	Zimbabwe	Postsecondary (first degree)	-----	One-parent	3
7	Harriet	Nigeria	Postsecondary (Masters)	Public-skilled	Two-parent	5
8	Dorcas	Ghana	Postsecondary (Masters)	Public-skilled	Two-parent	4
9	Olivia	Kenya	Postsecondary (Masters)	Public-skilled	One-parent	3
10	Naomi	Ghana	Postsecondary (PhD)	Student	Two-parent	2
11	George	Trinidad & Tobago	Postsecondary (PhD)	Public-skilled	Two-parent	2
12	Ruby	Nigeria	Postsecondary (Masters)	Public-skilled	One-parent	3
13	Phillip	Ethiopia	Postsecondary (PhD)	Public-skilled	Two-parent	4
14	Marcus	Trinidad & Tobago	Postsecondary (Masters)	Public-skilled	Two-parent	3
15	Joshua 1	Ghana	--	Private-	Two-parent	4

				unskilled		
16	Joshua 2	Ghana	---	-	Two-parent	5
17	Kevin	Jamaica	Postsecondary (first degree)	Private-skilled	One-parent	4
18	Martha	Nigeria	Postsecondary (Masters)	Private-skilled	One-parent	1
19	Wilson	England	Postsecondary (Masters)	Public-skilled	One-parent	2
20	Rosina	Ghana	Postsecondary (PhD)	Public-skilled	Two-parent	3
21	Sally	Nigeria	Postsecondary (Masters)	Private-skilled	One-parent	2
22	Melissa	Ghana	Postsecondary (Masters)	Private-skilled	Two-parent	2
23	Belinda	Jamaica	Postsecondary (Phd)	Student	Two-parent	2
24	Samuel	Ghana	-----	Private- unskilled	Two-parent	1

Table 1 provides an overview of the participants whose voices have been used to emphasize findings and discussions of this study. The voices of 24 Black parents were used. Majority of the Black parents (70.83%) are in a two- parent family structure. Most of the research participants (87.5%) have at least completed high school. All the research participants were fluent in English language except one. This could be attributed to their living in countries which had English as its official language, had their formal educations in English and most of staying in Canada for more than five years. In the ensuing chapter, I explain some of the emerging findings of the study.

## CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS

### Conceptualization of Effective Parenting

As already noted in the literature review, research has revealed that Western conceptualizations of appropriate parenting practices tend to place visible minority immigrant parents at a disadvantage as minority persons are expected to assimilate their culturally-grounded and value-laden parenting approaches used by the majority and favoured based on hegemonic standards (Maiter & George, 2003). According to Ards and colleagues (2003), cultural differences in child-rearing practices as well as differences in socio-economic status between service users and service providers ultimately influence under-and over-reporting rates within the child protection environment. Over-representation of Black children in the child welfare system has been attributed to the notion that there is one way to raise a “normal” child appropriately (Muir & Bohr, 2014). In this assumption, cultural differences in child rearing and parenting practices may be judged as being abhorrent and thus involvement of child protection services is believed to be warranted (Bornstein, 2012). It is important therefore, to understand how Black parents themselves understand and operationalize “effective parenting”. In the study, participants were asked to explain how they conceptualize “effective parenting”.

The study exposes diverse opinions from Black parents as to what constitute “effective parenting” in response to the question, “What does effective parenting mean to you?”. Themes such as “providing necessities of life”, “building relationship”, “communication” and “guidance” emerged from this question.

#### *Providing necessities of life*

Solomon, a Ghanaian parent, claims that effective parenting involves the provision of the necessities of life including education to ensure a better future of child(ren):

*“Effective parenting to me is to make sure your kid has a better place to live. Always food in the home, encouraging them to become good people in the society. Effective parenting again is also making sure that they get the necessary education that they need so they become a better person in future” [Solomon, Interview, 05/23/2016].*

Philip, an Ethiopian parent with four children, emphasizes providing necessities of life as well as preparing them by instilling values that will enable them to manage the system:

*“Effective parenting depends on in my case the extreme love I give to my children is just I don’t know as long as you love your children you provide them with basic, the time the education everything. I think effective parenting is also trying to instill certain values that there is the real world out there to be navigated through the system” [Philip, Interview, 05/13/2016].*

It has to be established that some parents are of the view that providing necessities of life complement other activities such as inculcating values to make parenting effective. This was typified by Eva, a Ghanaian mother of two and a Personal Support Worker:

*“Well, if you are able to provide for your kids and you correct them when they go wrong and you are always there for them. I think you are being effective” [Eva, Interview, 05/20/2016].*

### Building Relationship

According to some parents, the essence of relationship building amongst parents and their children is beneficial to the family as it provides a friendly environment for communication which happens to be one of the themes I will discuss later in the study. Within the perspective of Dorcas, a Ghanaian parent, building relationship with your children offers a diversion from the “top-down” approach where parents are seen superiors. It thus offers the opportunity for a “bottom up” approach where people are to cooperate with their superiors based on equality and devoid of individualism (Saraceno, 2012):

*“So for us to be effective in our parenting, I think we should have a rapport with our children. They should see us as their friend. We shouldn’t be like their enemies or somebody so superior that they should be free to talk to us about every subject matter and we should be able to also be*

*able to tell them whatever questions that they ask so when they have that trust in you they are not going to seek solution elsewhere which might be detrimental to them” [Dorcas, Interview, 05/17/2016].*

Hannah, a mother from Trinidad and Tobago, emphasizes the importance of trust in building relationship with children and the ability to maintain a healthy relationship:

*“I will say to be able to have my children trust me as a parent. To tell me what exactly is going on with them in their lives and trust me not to punish them if they make. To me, that’s effective and to be able to maintain a relationship. I am very keen on maintaining a relationship with my children” [Hannah, Interview, 05/27/2016].*

On the other hand, a Nigerian woman, Harriet posits that the process of relationship building must offer the opportunity for children to make their individual decisions to make their lives better and not the emphasis on education as was highlighted by Solomon and Philip:

*“For me it’s if as a parent you are able to get kids to learn from your own experience while respecting their individual choice to also learn from their own experiences. For me that is effective parenting, not so much that your child listens to you, goes to school every day, gets the straight A’s, goes to university. Not necessarily that, as long as you are given, as a parent you are giving the kids that tools that will help them to be responsible citizens irrespective of the path that they take in life. We have certain goals for our children and we hope that they will follow that but if the kids choose to chart other paths themselves, as long as they are doing things that they can be proud of, as long as they are doing things that are gradually bettering their lives, for me you are being an effective parent” [Harriet, Interview, 05/26/2016].*

### Communication

On the theme of communication, the parents expressed that effective parenting should be able to offer better understanding of the roles that the children have to undertake in the home in a respectful manner. For instance, Naomi, a Ghanaian mother posits that communication should involve agreement and the subsequent completion of roles to be performed:

*“I think effective parenting I wouldn’t say that I have achieved it hundred percent (100%). But it’s been able to reach that agreement with your children where they know what their role is and they are able to do it that is effective parenting because is not that we don’t know how they should it but how to communicate it and to get them comply or agree with you cooperate with you that is effective parenting” [Naomi, Interview, 05/04/2016].*

Similarly, another Ghanaian parent, Melissa, corroborates this opinion of effective parenting as she posits that communication of expected roles of children should be done in non-coercive way:

*“Effective parenting must be a two-way thing. Both parent and children, communicating is important. Whatever we want them to know, we have to communicate it to them. And I think it must also be democratic. We shouldn’t be like, dictate to them, force them into doing something which they don’t want to do. But rather we explain to them in a good way, let them know that this is what you have to do. We shouldn’t force them and give them any autocratic, put any autocratic force on them. I think with that they might easily rebel” [Melissa, Interview,05/15/2016].*

Sally, a Nigerian parent who has lived in Canada for the past fourteen (14) years believes that parents should serve as role models to their children. They should also be capable of assessing and responding to their needs in every situation:

*“You are always there for your kid, you know try and understand every situation that they find themselves in, try to help them out of that situation. Be a role model to the kids, to the children for example you know, and I feel like you know respect is a big aspect of it too, because as much as I expect respect from my kids, I respect my kids as well. And I let them understand that their views and their opinions [are] always important to me” [Sally, Interview, 05/12/2016].*

### **Description of Parenting Style**

The responses of the parents as to what constitute their parenting style offers divergent perspectives but the paramount aim of each style is to safeguard the interests of the children. Some of the parents concede that they had to make changes to their parenting style in order to make it more suitable within the Canadian environment and laws. However, they keep their parenting styles which mostly were acquired in the families they raised in their home countries. Ruby, a Nigerian-Canadian who recently graduated with a bachelor’s degree from a university in Canada, admits that her parenting has been shaped in part by Canadian laws but she maintains aspects of her own parenting style which can be traced to Nigeria, where she grew up:

*“In Canada, well what I do is I try hard to adhere to Canadian rules around raising kids but at the same time I apply some of the techniques that I got from back home because at the end of the day they call them Canadian but they are not Canadians. You know by treatment, probably by what nationality, I am Canadian but because of lip service I am Canadian but truly truly by service or by gaining things they are not actually Canadian so you want to try and see if you can implement some of those experiences that you had back home to your kids you know because you want them back there so you they are not completely lost” [Ruby, Interview, 05/27/2016].*

Ruby’s response establishes that Black parents are insistent on parenting styles that are in tandem with their cultural heritage as they see their children returning to their cultural roots which will contribute to their proper functioning in such environments when the time comes. Most parents have also devised various ways of avoiding physical punishments because of its perceived negative outcomes for children by Child Protection Services and have resorted to facial expressions in warning children to desist from committing bad acts. Eva corroborates this assertion:

*“The regular stuff. Whenever they go wrong I try to correct them but unlike Ghana that you beat them, here I have strategized my own way with them. I use my eyes. I have a certain facial expression that when I show to them, they know what I am talking about and then they stop.” [Eva, Interview, 05/20/2016].*

Thus, the use of facial expressions in communicating with their children resonates with many Black parents.

The study further shows that the parenting styles of Black parents are strict in nature especially when in situations where children exhibit unacceptable s. Philip insists that it is the obligation of children to learn and hardly entertains inappropriate acts from his children:

*“My principle and my wife we happen to believe our kids need to be, kids they learn. We believe as teachers and I don’t let them get away with some sort of mis or insult each other or hit each other or misbehaving that is not okay. So, they need to be shaped from the bottom up and I also teach them as much as I could and provide them support at home and connect with the teachers” [Philip, Interview, 05/13/2016].*



Hannah's parenting style is a combination of both authoritarian and permissive styles depending on the outcomes for her children. She is strict with issues of education as she believes it is the avenue for improving the lives of her children while she overlooks other mistakes:

*"How is different, I think I am a little bit more relaxed sometimes and sometimes I am stricter. So, there are certain things I am serious about. Things like education, you know they can't fool around with that and only because the expectation of education has a way of advancing one's quality of life. Whereas there are other things that I am relaxed with, you know let's say if the kids make a mistake or something like that or if they...sometimes they tell me I am very forgiving mummy" [Hannah, Interview, 05/27/2016].*

However, parents such as Rhones, a Ghanaian, and Sally, explain a parenting style which presents a departure from the strict parenting styles of Philip and Hannah. Their parenting styles encourage communication from their children in order to keep them abreast with issues that bother with the children:

*"But I try as much as possible to do my best for every child and (laughs) what do you say, I try to make sure that am right on top of things. You tell me everything, I tell them not to hide anything from me. I rather have their friends come here than they go there so that I can monitor them. Basically, that's how it's been, I have been there for them, I will be there for them no matter what" [Rhones, Interview, 05/07/2016].*

*"Oh Well, my parenting style you know, like I said, there is a lot of it too that I got from my own parent, which I listen to my father and to my kids I listen to whatever they have to say. You know I listen to their opinion because their opinion matter a lot to me, you know I, I try my best, you know, I try my best you know to provide a good environment for my son and I also try to you know let him understand that there are consequences for every action you know, especially when you are doing what you are not supposed to be doing, I have to call you out on that"[Sally, Interview, 05/12/2016].*

Sally indicates that she learned her parenting style from her parents. I will thus be exploring the other factors that affect the choice of the parenting style by Black parents in the ensuing theme, the rationale behind their preferred parenting style.

## **The rationale behind the preferred parenting styles of Black parents**

In response to the rationale behind the preferred parenting styles of Black parents, themes such as “learning from parents”, “religion”, “cultural factors”, “history-personal factors” and “racism” were cited by study participants. Many Black parents revealed that their preferred parenting styles were influenced by learning from their parents. Others conceded that they had made changes to the parenting they experienced as children to satisfy the demands of contemporary parenting.

### Learning from parents

Philip asserts that his love for his children and ability to communicate with facial expressions were learned from his parents:

*“Absolutely informed because first and foremost I just cannot tell you how much I love my kids and that I definitely got it from my parents. My mom and my dad even the way they look at you, it sends some message. So, for me I love my children, I cannot even describe it, the way I love. Every family, every mom loves the children” [Philip, Interview, 05/13/2016].*

Martha, a Nigerian-Canadian, who has lived in Canada for the past twenty-seven (27) years, credits the experience of her parent’s parental style for the success in raising her daughter:

*“Oh yes, if there is something am grateful for, it’s that experience that I got. Because coming here to Canada and seeing how the system is. I’m not saying it’s a bad system but when it comes to discipline, the way we discipline back home is totally different from the system here, so it really shaped me in a way I was able to nurture my daughter. Like I had to do a little tweak here and there but because of that value and moral that they instill in me, I was able to use that to raise my daughter” [Martha, Interview, 05/20/2016].*

Martha placed emphasis on child discipline which she avers differs in Nigeria and Canada, but she insists disciplinary strategy in Nigeria is more effective. The use of physical punishment by Black parents in disciplining is done with the aim of correcting children and not to harm and for many Black parents such as Martha it is effective. Contrarily, Rhones suggests that her parenting style

differs from that of her parents. This is due to largely the freedom and opportunities her children have in contrast to what she enjoyed as a child:

*“How should I put it, my parenting style has been a little different from my parents because I grew up in Ghana, so here I find that my children have a lot more liberty than I had when I was growing up. And then my children too are open to certain opportunity that I didn’t get when I was growing up. So, the difference is that..., okay those are the differences” [Rhones, Interview, 05/07/2016].*

### Religion

Majority of Black parents who also happen to be Christians contend that religion shape their parental style. They refer to quotations in the Bible which serve as a guide to parenting. For instance, Dorcas made reference to Ephesians Chapter 6 which recommends that children obey their parents while parents also desist from provoking their children. Hence, conflicts may emerge when parents recognize that their children are engaging in acts that are in contravention of what the Bible teaches. John, a Zimbabwean parent of three children, illustrates the significance of the Bible in parenting:

*“Yeah, definitely we are Christians, we go to church sometimes twice a week to the church, and we also have the one bible study. So, I sometimes let him lead the bible studies. So, he has to lead and understand and share. So, I believe if you share something, you also believe in it, you have something that is guiding you the bible itself. Because whenever he goes out of line I say what does the bible says”. [John, Interview, (05/30/2016)].*

Religion also helps parents in the instillation of virtues such as love, respect and diligence. Philip underlines the importance of religion in parenting as it offers the opportunity for connection with one’s roots and offers knowledge beyond the confines of a school:

*“I think it has a significant part because my religion for me speaks about loving, respect so for everyone generally you have respect for yourself and you have respect for others and respect for elders so having to instill that in my kids is very important because this is a very important value you may not learn from school so I think that is good and the other thing is also been respectful and ethical and hardworking, yeah it does influence and actually when I look at it just calms me and reconnects me back to life and I believe for me I find comfort in that coming to Toronto, one of the craziest city I could say, it is just a lot of people at times will feel lonely*

*and I find that church and pray to reconnect me to my roots to give me certain hopes and understanding. I think that also plays part” [Philip, Interview, 05/13/2016].*

A couple of parents, however, indicated that religion had no influence on their preferred parenting style. Ruby claimed that her perspective on religion had changed due to her scholarly research as a criminology student. She thus has doubts about religion and has decided not to involve religion in her parenting:

*“Well now because of who I am Ruby that graduated from [a university] and did a lot of research as a criminologist, that question you know if asked the same question five years ago I will answer differently because already I am at war with religion right. That is why I am not able to answer because you will be surprised that religion, because I am not believing some of the things that religion is saying. I found out that it is for a different intention you know, and it is used to brainwash people for a very long time right so yes I do not bring religion in when I am raising my kids, no I don’t” [Ruby, Interview, 05/27/2016].*

Although Sally affirms that religion does not influence her parenting, she did not give specific reason why her parenting style is not informed by religion:

*“Not really to be honest, not really” [Sally, Interview, 05/12/2016].*

### Culture

Considering that most Black parents grew up in the cultures of their home countries, they still keep their culture which many of them believe affect their parenting style per this study. The change of destinations does not necessarily change the way of life of people and thus people are inclined to fall on cultural practices that produce the results they desire. Solomon was emphatic about the influence of culture on his choice of parenting style. He, however, concedes that although he finds the Canadian parenting strategies funny, he picks out some positives from them for incorporation to his own parenting style:

*“The culture that you grew up has an effect on the way your parenting system should be. I go around in the White neighbourhood, they have parenting systems to me sometimes kind of funny because but I pick up certain good aspect of it too. The closeness of their, the closeness to their children is a motivation factor too. Especially when we grew up right, there was no*

*way you could go close that to your parents so when I came here I try to balance it. Find a way to make my kids able to come a little closer, more than what I could do. So, what I see is in the White neighbourhood, their parenting is more like not much discipline but closeness, communication works within them. So, I try to adapt it to make effective for me” [Solomon, Interview, 05/23/2016].*

Rhones attests that the environment she was raised in is crucial as well as her culture in her choice of her preferred parenting style. Indeed, these form the basis of the difference in her parenting and that of a White parent:

*“Oh, definitely, my parenting style is very different from how, I think a race like a White person will raise their children, because and like I mention, because I grew up in different environment I come with different culture” [Rhones, Interview, 05/07/2016].*

While Rhones argues that culture contributes to the difference in parenting styles amongst Black parents and White parents, Marcus contends that despite differences in culture, the ultimate aim of every parent is to promote the paramount interest of their child:

*“I think all groups want success for their children. How they come at it depends on their experience, the culture, you know...the methodology, the nuances, the norms of that particular community. For me, I mean when I talk to other ethno-cultural groups you know...they all say the same thing you know...our kids are our prized possessions. We want the best for them. We’ll do anything for them and for us it’s the same thing we’ll do anything within reason” [Rhones, Interview, 05/09/2016].*

### Personal Experiences

Many of the parents claim that their personal experiences have influenced the way they raise their children. The personal experiences are an amalgamation of experiences in their countries of origin and Canada. The impact of personal experiences from countries of origin represent valuable source of knowledge which the Black parents cannot easily discard especially when they have been witnesses to their positive outcomes. Hence, in some cases, some parents incorporate parenting strategies experienced in Canada to make their parenting. This opinion is

echoed by Solomon who explains that his personal experiences have culminated into a ‘blended’ system of parenting especially in the act of disciplining children:

*“As I came here I realized parenting system here is kind of different from that back home, but I have blended it up. When you need to discipline your kid, you have to find a balance to do it. We do it but not excessively as we do it back home. And the way the system [is] here I think it is not bad, in a way but it is also bad in a way. Assuming your kid is doing something, you can’t control the kid, I think it is bad. Excessive disciplinary is also too bad. And so, you have to find a way to balance it” [Solomon, Interview, 05/23/2016].*

Kevin, who is a Jamaican and a naturopathic doctor, also confirms that personal experiences have influenced his parenting. He mentions that the parenting style in Jamaica is at a high variance with the preferred parenting style in Canada. He favours the application of the parenting style which is strict in nature because his success in life is due to this style:

*“Well there is a difference, there is a massive difference- vast difference- but the training I have received growing up, had set the precedent, I should say, for one of the best parenthood I have ever known. Because, unlike Canada, or United States, or England for that matter, which has the same basis of how they grow children up, Jamaica has a very high disciplinary way of dealing with children... So, yes, it’s one of the best I should say, the disciplinary actions that have brought me to the point where I’m able to or capable of handling my own children” [Kevin, Interview, 05/22/2016].*

Kevin posits that is a misconception to assume that high levels of disciplinary actions from Black parents is an abuse towards children. Many Black parents share this view and perhaps it is corroborated by the Akan proverb, “The feet of the mother hen do not kill her chicks”. Thus, parents do not discipline or correct their children to death:

*“Now, there are those who may say that they might abuse children. I do not find it to be so. What I found with myself, yes, I was disciplined physically but not in the sense that I would be killed or anything like that” [Kevin, Interview, 05/22/2016].*

Harriet’s personal experiences lead her to share a similar view to that of Solomon. She tried to incorporate both strategies learned from Nigeria and Canada in parenting because of difference in

the power wielded by children in these two different countries. She laments that after her immigration to Canada she was in a way compelled to parent her Black child in an “American” way:

*“Well naturally when we started having kids in Nigeria there was some style we were using and then we immigrated to Canada, we quickly realized that you know, it is another way. Not saying a better way but another way to raise children here, where there is some kind of negotiation on what the rules are. There are some ground rules we find that parents here have, a lot of things are you know subject to negotiations. And some of us you know had to you know learn quickly, some of us had more difficulty [laughs] getting to that realization but it is a slightly different parenting style where the kids have a strong say in how things happen. And that is what we had to learn here in order to raise what essentially is not an American kid” [Harriet, Interview, 05/26/2017].*

## **Racism**

Another theme that continued to appear in the study was whether racism affects the parenting style of Black parents. Some Black parents have had first-hand experiences of discrimination or heard friends and relatives encounter it. Considering the sometimes pernicious effects of such discrimination, Black parents raise their children in ways to assuage the impact of the discrimination. Hence, it is not surprising when Black parents tend to be strict on their children to prevent them from entering environments that pose danger to their well-being which is in line with their responsibilities of safeguarding the welfare of their children. Black parents encourage their children to rise above average performances in every facet of their life if they are to be at par with average White counterparts who are beneficiaries of White privilege. Jackson received this message as an adolescent when he first arrived in Canada from his parents. After several years in Canada, Jackson recognizes the significance of this message and has thus passed this message to his children:

*“Yes, I think that yes they do that and I remember even me when I came here as a teenager my parents telling me that you know you cannot just be good. If you want to go to where the White people go you have to be the best. The best is what will get you to where the good is, you understand... You need to know that you know where you are coming from; you know your*

*colour fights against you, so you need to make sure that you are the best in everything you do. And I think we continue to do the same thing without even thinking about it to be preparing our children that you know the need to be the best in everything that they can be, they need to be careful in everything because very easily you can be labelled you know, identified with so many things just because you are Black” [Jackson, Interview, 05/16/2016].*

Jackson’s opinion also reveals how easily Blacks are stereotyped and thus it has become necessary for Blacks to be extra cautious in their daily activities to avoid being labelled. Harriet shares the view of Solomon. She believes that Black children are not treated fairly and the only way they can prevent this situation is to teach them to rise above average status to avoid this unfair treatment which average White children are often exempted:

*“Absolutely, every day, yeah if my kids listen to that part of my trying to give them advice, they will be the hardest working people because if you are average that is when you get ignored. Because you are average with the pack, because if they want to pick they can pick anybody that is average. Then they will be able to use the excuses not to pick you. But if you are above average, nobody can ignore you. Nobody, nobody, you are in a better position to challenge them. Not that it is fair, it is wrong. We should be, if we are average we should be where most human beings are, we should be treated fairly. But the reality, it is[not] easier to get you over those hurdles, one of those obstacles, if you are just mediocre, if you are just average” [Harriet, Interview, 05/26/2016].*

Black parents who share similar view will always ensure that their children do not play with their education. In such instances, even Black parents like Harriet who is usually lenient with their children become stricter due to the benefits that will inure to the future of the children.

Black children are further cautioned to be extra vigilant in their day-to-day activities to prevent being racial profiled. For Ruby, training children to face racism is non-negotiable and it is a mark of a good Black parent. Like Jackson, Ruby had unpleasant personal experiences of discrimination which was exacerbated by the fact that she was not prepared on how to deal with racism. To forestall the predicaments, she had to endure due to her lack of ability in dealing with racism, she believes preparing children to deal with the challenges of is an important aspect of Black parenting:



*“I will be stupid if I don’t. So I went through hell because I had nobody prepare me for challenges for racism that I faced so a lot of one been a good parent is been able to recognize that there is racism and then equip their children to be able to face the challenges. Yes, I do raise my kids to face the challenges of racism in Canada” [Ruby, Interview, 05/27/2016].*

On the other hand, John advocates the training of children to face racism by embracing their Black identity and developing a positive self-esteem as he is aware of the reality of racism. The essence of this type of training is grounded by the discrimination Black children are subjected to in schools of which John’s child was a victim. He makes efforts to instill a sense of self-confidence amongst his children by exposing them to Black role models who have been able to break barriers to achieve momentous achievements:

*“First of all, I assure because when my child came in, he really wanted to fit in at school with whoever like accept them. And I was telling him, you don’t have to, you are you. Actually, if you are able to pull a crowd better, be yourself so that people will also admire you, can follow you. So, I was saying ooh yeah, people here sometimes they will show racism to you but don’t ever want to be what you are not. Be proud of what you are, and you can make it, colour is just, skin is just like nothing. It is just a colour, a pigment, so don’t look down upon yourself. You are somebody and you can be whoever you will want to be. And if you give him an example of Barack Obama he is now president of America after what they were saying. So, don’t let anyone look down upon you, you are what you are, you are going to make it” [John, Interview, 05/30/2016].*

In the light of both overt and covert racism in Canada, the complexities of Black parenting towards protecting their own children is different in style as compared to that of White Canadians to meet the unique needs of the children adequately.

### **Responses of Child Welfare Services to Black Parenting style**

Child welfare agencies such as the Children’s Aid Society have the legal mandate of keeping children safe from abuse and neglect and to strengthen families. However, their services are carried out within dominant Western paradigms embedded with colonialism (Saraceno, 2012) which are incongruous with the knowledge of Black parents who mostly grew up in their home

countries. This casts doubts about Canada's claim of a multicultural country when the cultural practices of minority groups are not understood and consequently restricted. In response to the theme above, Black parents talked about cultural misunderstanding and racism which characterize the responses to their parental style by child welfare agencies.

Jackson laments that the child welfare agencies that are required to help families address issues of concern have no cultural understanding of the population of they are to serve. It is thus a serious impediment to the efficiency of child welfare agencies that mostly rely on professional expertise (Saraceno, 2012) to make professional judgement:

*“We have a culture which is embedded in us that is the way that we raise our children. So, our perceptions are shaped by our culture. The way we talk to our children are shaped by our culture, everything that we do are shaped by that culture. So, for them not to know what our culture is but makes judgment and interpretations based on it is what is causing the big problem that we have. And when I spoke to her [child welfare worker], she like off the record she agreed and said that that is the problem, to her she believe that for Children Aid people to be in the position to make informed decisions, there should be a way for them to know the reasons why such decisions are made, understanding the culture and stuff like that” [Jackson, Interview, 05/16/2016].*

These cultural misunderstandings account for the exaggeration of abuses by Black parents and the persistent critique of their parenting strategies. For instance, had it not been the intervention of Olivia, a social worker and a parent from Kenya, the normal shaving of the hair by a Kenyan parent was treated as a serious child abuse issue when it was reported by school authorities:

*“Yes, I think that, that would be very true because I know for instance now if I talk from a child protection stands there have been situations where you find the protection worker from a different culture especially the Canadian culture taking for granted situations thinking a child needs protection. A very quick example is a mum had shaved the child's hair, just for a start the school calls and says the child has been abused because the child came to school bald headed is a girl and the child was crying because the other kids were laughing at her and it was in a lack in the sense that I someone realized they were from my country and say that I work with that family when I went it's something so simple we our hair is kinky” [Olivia, Interview, 05/09/2016].*

What would have happened to this parent in the absence of a social worker who was knowledgeable about the Kenyan culture? Ruby attributes the over-representation of Black children in foster homes because of the cultural misunderstanding from child welfare agencies and the undermining of the communal way of caring for one's children by neighbour which is accepted in Black communities:

*“Of course, of course the cultural misunderstanding is that as Africans if I live in this building and my friend live in that building I will call my friend and say listen I'm running to field building, my kids are at home, it is a culture thing for neighbour. In fact, in Africa there is a saying that it takes a community to raise a child. But in Canada it takes a parent to raise a child, nobody else. So, this culture clash is actually claiming a lot of children from their parents because what we do not take for anything, what we take for granted is a big deal for the Canadian society. And when law begins to quote its criminal codes you will be like wow that I am coming in five minutes that is all this law? As if, if something happens to that child that something couldn't have happened to him or her. It is just because the mother left him or her for two minutes that is why that thing happened to him or her” [Ruby, Interview, 05/27/2016].*

Black parents believe that there is an over-reporting of cases involving Blacks because of the presumption that Black parents do not raise their children well. This opinion is shared by Dorcas who talks about the quotidian nature of racism and some kind of stigma attached to being a Black person in Canada:

*“I think that, that stigma attached to the Black yeah. I think that there is racial problem going on in every community and this place is not an exception so is like people have the assumption that Blacks don't really do good parenting so .... magnitude of the amount of force that they would put in reporting case I don't think is the same as what they do to the people from the other communities” [Dorcas, Interview, 05/17/2016].*

Racism, according to Kobayashi and Johnson (2007), cannot be separated from our daily lives as it has been ingrained in our society and governance. Thus, some parents like Philip establish that racism occurs towards their parenting through the dominance of Canadian values in parenting and the consequent non-acceptance of different parenting strategies by Black parents:

*“Ooh absolutely, I cannot differentiate if it is a misunderstanding; I think already it is ingrained in their brain. Sadly, some of them believe that anything different from their values their principles is wrong which is completely baffling and it is in fact unless there is a certain prescribed by the book of certain condition or certain value so there are times you think you are not the right person or the way you are raising your children is not correct, quote and unquote, because they are not looking outside the culture and the way they were brought up. Absolutely it is about cultural understanding, cultural values and so it is a very different; they do have their own misunderstanding of the Black families” [Dorcas, Interview, 05/17/2016].*

The judgment of Black parents through the standard of Whiteness is pervasive (Nakayamaka & Penalzoa, 1993) as claimed by Philip. This does not bode well for Blacks as Jackson mentions that the system makes Blacks more disadvantaged:

*“Mostly, yes. I think you know the system is in such a way that it affects Black people more than any other culture in this country... And you know I think that Children Aid people are particularly very harsh with Black families and they are very less tolerant with them. And the Black community, from the people I know everybody feel that they are a target by this Children Aid. It is like they’ve made it their aim to destroy Black families with, there hasn’t been at least from what I know the people that I know any better outcome from Children who have been taken away from their parents and thrown away into the foster homes and those places” [Jackson, Interview, 05/16/2016].*

Kobayashi and Johnson (2007) point out that despite Canada being a pioneer in adopting multiculturalism, discrimination occurs in subtle invisible ways which render its addressing futile through formal interventions. This lends credence to Paul, a retiree Ghanaian parent’s assertion that Black people are subjected to discrimination akin to what the Indigenous ethnic groups in Canada face:

*“[Racism]It is also part. Because when I view it worldwide, the way they treat the natives that we came to meet here I am sure they have the same idea for the other ethnic groups. Because the natives that we came to meet here they do not treat them well” [Paul, Interview, 23/05/2016].*

The discrimination in Canada is further accentuated by Ruby who believes that Canada’s multiculturalism is a façade because the system inhibits the exercise of other cultural practices in parenting. Also, there is an unequal treatment of cases involving Black parents and White parents and there is not much clarity on what the standards are for effective parenting:

*“You asked me to come and practice my culture and I cannot raise my child that is hypocrites. You ask me to come to Canada your culture is welcomed right but there is a standard which we do not know what the standard is. That standard keeps changing when the demographics change, the standard will change when a White person’s child is taken from the society a different treatment is given to them and not the same treatment” [Ruby, Interview, 05/27/2016].*

Negative outcomes for children taken away from Black families, the application of stringent measures by child welfare agencies and other social injustices contribute to mistrust between Black parents and child welfare agencies. George, a Trinidadian and Tobagonian parent who migrated to Canada forty-six years ago, affirms these negative outcomes affects Black families and leads to the sour relationship between Black families and child welfare agencies:

*“I will say I am aware of ;instances where it’s the teacher or someone from the school that made the referral to CAS and I think there’s been a lot of misunderstanding of various Black cultures on the part of CAS worker, on the school and it’s had very negative effects on the families where children have been removed from parents permanently it’s just you know the level of mistrust that already exists with Black families and systems I think it just feels that and it’s had some very negative consequences” [George, Interview, 05/25/2016].*

Mistrust of child welfare agencies is shared by other Black parents which left unaddressed can mar the interventions of child welfare agencies towards strengthening Black families and protecting children from abuse. What is remarkable about the level of mistrust and distrust among Black parents about Child protection services is that they are built on misperception of Black parents about the agency even before the initial encounter. Black parents perceive Child Protection Services as an “enemy” who only comes to take children away from families based on suspicion of child abuse despite their diverse responsibilities to families. The perception has thrived well because most Black parents receive information about Child Protection Services through acquaintances who have experienced the perceived unjust removal of children personally. The spread of such information is vital and received with trust in Black communities because of their communal attitude to doing things. In fact, Bennett (2015) establishes that the dissemination of

good deeds of the social work profession will lead to cordial relationship between social workers and minority ethnic groups.

The comments of Hannah suggest that information on the mandate of Child Protection Services amongst Black parents remain scanty and validates the general view of their one-sided responsibility of removing abused children:

*“All I know is that when a child is not being looked after or been in any harm or anything like that the government can step in or I don’t know if they [Child Protection Services] are not government or not, but they can step in and take possession of the children” [Hannah, Interview, 05/27/2016].*

This view is shared by many Black parents who may exhibit uncooperative behaviour when workers of Child Protection Services visit to investigate issues referred to them. Consequently, relationship building and communication which are important elements of therapeutic interventions are hampered which negatively affect the efficiency of the professional help rendered. The reluctance to release information and being unfriendly to Child Protection Services is rooted in the understanding of their roles as being punitive and not remedial. Their presence at the homes of Black parents is a source of a stressor that impacts negatively on their mental health because of the fear of removal of all their children from them even when the issue of investigation is about a single child. Black families conceive the removal of children as destabilizing families as the parents are denied parenting of their own children. The children are disconnected from their natural homes and the community. John confirms this assertion:

*“I think they destroy families because they take sometimes a child out of home where there is a mother who gives; motherhood is just to care for the children and give them the best. But they take children and put them in a foster home where there is some much detachment. Usually people who do this foster home is a business right. So, the more children they keep the more money they get, but mostly scrutinize the needs of this child. And once they are eighteen they are on their own. Social work they get 500 dollars or so what do they do with 500 dollars, so they can’t even afford rent. But if you grow up in the home, you will never lack because in the Black communities, even in our church we help each other, whatever you lack you will get it from others. Even there was some women who didn’t have money for their children, people*

*chop in even sometimes if you don't have someone to live your child with people are willing to do sleepovers with each other's children just to make them feel comfortable in the company of others. So, when a child is taken by Children Aid, they don't monitor all these things, as soon as they say the child is full of food and they have clothes, that is it. That is what I think" [John, Interview, 05/30/2016].*

On the basis of the negative outcomes for children removed from Black families, Black parents do not trust the Child Protection Services. They believe that foster homes do not provide the attachment that familial ties offer. It also stifles individual and community strengths and promotes overreliance on professional expertise (Saraceno, 2012) because resources in Black communities such as the church are overlooked.

Naomi also emphasizes the removal of children as contributing to the mistrust between Black parents and Child Protection Services. She highlights that the hasty separation of children away from their families and the lack of comprehensive approach to the socio-psychological issues that impinge Black parenting as contributing factors to the frosty relationship:

*"The first thing that I would say is that they are too quick to separate the children from their parents. I'm very sure that the problem we have as a Black community, we may have a different set of problems due to our different circumstances but if they go into the White community they probably have the worst community. However, I noticed they are too quick to take away the children from the parents within the other community I think that they should give parents the chance. Sometimes the parents themselves needs support and with proper support they can parent the children better because if you have parents who are struggling financially all the time and are stress health wise and are stressed trying to keep hold of the children and give what they need that parents don't need added stress of the legal instrument used in taking away their children from them. So, I think first thing I would say is don't be too quick find a way to bridge a gap between the parent and child at least get some mediation going on before you make a decision" [Naomi, Interview, 05/04/2016].*

The lack of mediation seems to corroborate the perception that Child Protection Services sole aim is to disunite families and not to strengthen them. Joshua has a similar opinion on Child Protection Services just as have been expressed by the parents above:

*"What I also know is that they come in and take your children away. They are the ones going to train the child, but when the child is taken it is not a good thing. So as parents we should*

*make sure that those people do not get near our home, because it is not a good thing”*  
*[Joshua, Interview, 05/14/2016].*

Joshua’s statement outlines his dread of Child Protection Services. How will he respond if he were to receive a call from them for an investigation to a child abuse? Will his ‘worst fears’ affect his cooperation with them? He also believes that the removal of children will hamper the training that would have been preferred for one’s own children and thus prays that he never experience any encounter with the Child Protection Services. Not all Black parents have had prior contact or information on Child Protection services such as Solomon and Philip. Thus, they were unable to proffer any comments on why Black parents mistrust Child Protection Services.



## **CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION**

The findings of the research suggest that Black parenting practices are often misunderstood in the broader Canadian context, thereby accounting for the overrepresentation of Black children in Ontario's child welfare system (Ojo, 2006). The parenting style of the Black parents is a prototype of the authoritarian parenting style which favors more control and strictness from parents (Baumrind, 1991; Chao, 2000; Darling and Steinberg, 1993). This style is however at a variance with the authoritative parenting style which has been validated by several studies for promoting optimal competence in all facets in the lives of children from Euro-Western families. Black parents are therefore constantly measured against a parenting style which they believe does not necessarily contribute to their socialization goals when gauged against their socio-economic history and background. Darling and Steinberg (1993) insist that although authoritative parenting is enough, it is not an essential condition to produce competent children since other parenting styles can also produce competent children. It is understandable that parents will continue to be important in facilitating healthy development of their children. Baumrind (1991) emphasizes the importance of parents as constituting part of one's self genetically and through socialization processes and that a separation from parents could be problematic. Due to the enormous importance of parenting, it is reasonable when Child Protection Services intervene to prevent harmful practices carried out against children by their parents to protect them. However, when the parental practices of the parents are misunderstood, it is likely to affect the assessment and intervention plans thereby failing to produce or weakening the desired impact. Most of the Black parents interviewed were born and raised in their home countries before migrating to Canada. Thus, they were influenced by the parenting strategies of their own parents which proved to be effective based on the evidence of their own lives. While adapting to the accepted norms of parenting in Canada, they still keep hold of other learned practices tailored to protect their children

and to promote academic excellence. These practices sometimes tend to create tensions amongst Black parents, Child Protection Services and schools. Miehl (2001) explains that social work promotes the comprehension of one's behaviour through several explanations and the influence of social factors on the identity of people. Additionally, other demographic factors such as race, gender and other forms of difference shape people's life experiences on daily basis (See Weber, 2001). Hence, social factors contribute to the adoption of the parenting styles by Black parents and with most of the parents residing in their home countries before migrating to Canada, there will be discrepancies in the social factors that influence parenting among Black parents and other parents born and bred in Canada. The findings of the research suggest majority of the participants confirmed that their current parenting approaches were influenced either partly or completely by their own parents' parenting practices. The lack of appreciation of these sociological differences in the long run affects how both Child Protection Services and Black parents interact when the need arises. These misunderstandings could lead to abuse and disrespect consistent with the findings of Gair et al. (2015). On the other hand, Black parents also become hostile and unreceptive to Child Protection Services thereby marring the required therapeutic relationship essential for facilitating the desired change or improvement. Participants asserted that it is stressful when their parenting practices are unduly scrutinized because they do not fall into the accepted "norms" especially with the dreaded removal of children always lurking around with the presence of staff from Child Protection Service workers.

The research also exposes the effects of cultural misunderstandings on the relationship between Black parents and Child Protection Service. The Black parents are of the view that the much-touted multiculturalism in Canada is a façade as the dominant culture of the White population preponderates over the culture of ethnic minorities. This, according to Kobayashi and Johnson (2007) renders formal interventions ineffectual due to discrimination which comes in

subtle and invisible ways. For instance, Herring et al. (2013) in their study in Australia establish that with at least one in eight Australians having misconceptions about other cultures. The lack of information and understanding of cultures of ethnic minorities can lead to the situation where these cultures are perceived as “weird” and thus are unwelcomed. Consequently, the emphasis of one’s different cultural background could serve as the catalyst for labelling the culturally different person as an abusive parent even when there is no evidence to incriminate them (Williams, 2004). Child Protection Service Workers always come with professional expertise to help Black families. However, they lack cultural information and may have misconceptions about the cultures of the ethnic minority (Bennett, 2015; Ojo, 2006) despite the clarion call for cultural competence premised on the need to offer effective services to other diverse population. Lack of cultural understanding thus tends to affect the interactions amongst Black families, mandated referrers such as schools and Child Protection Service workers with undesired outcomes for the agency and the parents. For instance, a referral from a school concerning the hairstyle of an African child was resolved promptly and without much stress because the social worker assigned the case understood the cultural undertone of the hairstyle which did not necessarily mean abuse in their culture as it was being misconstrued in the school by a White teacher. The absence of such a social worker could have resulted into a lengthy psychosocial assessment which Black parents find demanding. It could have also triggered the feelings of low self-esteem due to the undeserved scrutiny of a parenting practice which was intended for the good of one’s own child. The participants reiterated the fact children are precious and the responsibility to protect your children is common amongst all diverse cultures in the world.

Apart from cultural misunderstandings, the Black parents reveal that the manner in which child welfare agencies respond to their parenting style depict racism which Dominelli (1997) describes as where one race assumes innate domination over all other races. This is corroborated

by the dominance of White Canadian knowledge in parenting and the neglect of divergent ways of parenting exercised by Black and other minority parents by the staff of child welfare agencies. These are further exacerbated by Whiteness which Miehl (2001) describes as being the reference point for checking people of different races. Miehl (2001) further explains that social workers become apprehensive when the identity of other co-workers does not suit their prejudiced identity. This revelation can be extended to situations where White social workers engage Black families as even though, human service organizations claim to be “acultural”, Walker (2004) posits that White privilege prevails in them. Hence, the social work profession in Canada which has a large number of White people contributes to the undermining of parenting styles favored by Black parents.

Christie (2010) argues that differences between Black and minority ethnic children and other children are used to emphasize the connection between Black and minority ethnic groups and ‘deviant’ cultural problems. Christie (2010) further elucidates that it leads to a situation where “Black and minority communities are thereby represented as not just having problems but also being problems” (2010, p. 209). Cultural practices which thus do not belong to the powerful Anglo-White culture and are different are perceived as being culpable for rendering Black children problematic due to their exposure to these practices through socialization in their various families (Ojo, 2006). Considering the substantial influence of parenting on children which has confirmed been severally by numerous researchers, parents are inevitably held responsible for the behaviours of their children (Griffith & Smith, 2005). It is not surprising that the cultural practices of Black parents are misunderstood because social work embodies the culture and practices of Europe and North America (Walter et al. 2011). Hence, there is the paucity of literature on issues, research and practice of the ethnic minority. According to Kobayashi and Johnson (2007), Canada is still considered a society made up of chiefly Western Europeans which nullifies attempts to make

visible minorities integrated as long as they are considered to be outsiders. The perception of an “alien culture” hampers the successful integration of ethnic minorities. The Black parents further argue that apart from the advantages of cultural practices in protecting the welfare of children, it is necessary for them to continue these practices as they keep their children to their roots and ensure proper adaptation in Africa whenever they relocate there.

The broader perspective that reifies the non-consideration of other cultures in the child welfare system is the issue of the ubiquitous White culture. Koyobashi and Johnson (2007) insist that the failure of Canadian multicultural policy boils down to the prevalence of Whiteness and its omnipresence in the quotidian life in Canada. Pierce (2003) explains that several studies confirm Whiteness as “a social and historical construction and is tied to relations of domination and subordination” (p.56). This definition reveals the complex nature of Whiteness which continues to be the universal standard for measuring other people of different races (Christie, 2010; Kiyobashi and Johnson, 2007; Miehl, 2001; Walter et al. 2011). The child welfare system in Canada is thus built on a foundation of Whiteness which stifles the initiatives and underrates the knowledge and values of ethnic minorities. Similarly, the legal and social frameworks that underline the operations of Child Protection Services also fail to include other diverse populations such as Black families. The Child Protection Services operate within an institutional framework which incorporates policies, practices and procedures largely influenced by Eurocentric ideology which work better for White families than other racialized population. This is further accentuated by Jeffrey (2005) who hints that the early social worker, who was epitomized by the venerable, middle class White supporter emanated from issues of order and decadence continues to provide the guidelines for modern social work.

This creates an imbalance where Black families are disadvantaged. They are continually judged by the welfare system according to standards which has no room for their general way of

life including parenting practices. The dominance of Whiteness means that White people are considered as inherently “good” and it is considered as an anomaly when acts of some Whites cast a slur on this “goodness”. Jeffrey (2005) mentions that Whiteness is not only characterized by “normality and universality” but it is also strong linked to “goodness and innocence”. Contrarily, ethnic minorities including Black parents are constantly interrogated based on their diverse cultural backgrounds when compared to the White culture. This claim was typified by the analysis of a popular custody case in Canada by Williams (2004), Kjeld Werbes, Canadian vs Nadia Hama, a Syrian. While the court and the media criticized Nadia on her parenting competence due to her cultural background, there was no interrogation of Kjeld and he was portrayed as representing Canadian Whiteness in exercising his rights to seize and socialize their children. Black parents believe the effects of Whiteness are thus manifested in the over-reporting of cases to welfare agencies. While social work education in Canada is making strides towards the incorporation of Indigenous social work (Walter et al. 2011), the incorporation of knowledge of Blacks has not received concomitant attention yet. Consequently, Child Protection Service workers complete their training lacking the requisite skills to work with Black families effectively. I believe that the acquisition of knowledge on Black culture and self-reflexivity from social workers will help to assuage the influence of Whiteness in the child welfare system. However, this will not be enough because White social workers will be incapacitated by the lack of living experience as a minority (Bessarab, 2012). Hence, the interpretations of the lived experiences of Black parents by White Child Protection Service workers become susceptible to misrepresentations and prejudice. Black parents are compelled to ensure their children are well-behaved in an environment where Whiteness is the order of the day to safeguard their children’s protection. Black children are always under the microscope because they are measured against standards which fail to acknowledge their diversity in upbringing. Some Black children expressed that there is usually

overreaction to their behaviours in contrast to their White counterparts in school and in foster homes which they attribute to fear from their teachers and foster parents (Ojo, 2016). Their non-Whiteness separates them from the privileged and makes them susceptible to abuse. As long as Whiteness continues to be the basis for relations in both cultural and social terms (Jeffrey, 2005), the racially different will be positioned as the “Other” (Christie, 2010; Herring et al. 2013; Saraceno, 2012) which lends them to oppression. Whiteness thus needs to be the subject of continual analysis and interrogation to comprehend how they contribute to the subjugation of the racially different (Bennett, 2015; Christie, 2010; Walter et al. 2011).

The research revealed that both overt and covert racism affected the how Black parents exercised their parenting. Kobayashi and Johnson (2007) corroborates the existence of racism in Canada as they affirm that racism cannot be separated from our daily lives as it has been ingrained in our society and governance. This claim seems to be in doubt because Canada’s perception of its non-existence and less intense history of slavery and turbulent racialized friction as compared to the United States (Saraceno, 2012; Williams, 2004). However, the Black parents revealed that they have had personal encounters where they believed their maltreatment were borne out of sheer discrimination and also they had also been informed of discrimination by their fellow Black people. In the light of this evidence, Black parents suggest that it will be a great disservice to their children if they are not trained to deal with racism within the larger Canadian society. While some parents train their children to always excel above average performances in all spheres of life to keep up with White children, others build up their self-esteem to embrace their African roots with pride. To the Black parents, training your children to be able to navigate Canada’s racialized society separates good parenting from bad parenting. This highlights the importance Black parents attach to this training as they are aware of the risks the lack of it portends to the children. The Black parents suggest the differential treatment which always put them on the wrong side of the

law is synonymous with the past and current maltreatment of Indigenous families through the removal of children which contributes to frosty relationship between them and Child Protection Service. It is consistent with the findings of Bennet (2015) that the relationship between social work and Indigenous people has not been encouraging because of the implication of colonization and social workers' responsibility in the removal of children. While Child Protection Service workers apply several interventions with removal of children as the last resort with White families, Black parents observed that their case is different. They claim Child Protection Service are quick to remove their children in their case causing a lot of stress to the family because of the value of connectedness in Black families. The Black parents believe the discrimination that they are subjected to are borne out of stereotypes that are circulated on the media. Hence, White social workers who have had no prior contact with any Black family are likely to look up to what is provided in the media to inform their professional judgements. There is thus the tendency to perceive all Black families as the same neglecting how other demographic factors may impinge on individual families differently. It is fascinating to note that training on how to deal with everyday racism has developed into an intergenerational practice. The Black parents recounted how their own parents had advised them to prepare for racism by excelling above the average to keep pace with the average Whites. Considering that Canada's society is currently not devoid of racism, the message is still valid and is of great importance to Black children growing up here. Similarly, it has been established that social environment influences parenting style and practices (Darling and Steinberg, 1993). Accordingly, it is not surprising that most Black parents tend to be strict with their children to prevent from venturing dangerous situations which may not be perceived immediately by the children themselves. The Black parents posit that the continual execution of differential treatments in similar positions and the outright abandonment of Black knowledge in



the policies, practices and procedures of the Child Protection Services is the perpetuation of racism.

In the research, the Black parents recounted their mistrust in Child Protection Services. It was established that most Black parents do not have full information on the mandate of the agency. Most of them believed that their role is to only investigate issues of child treatment to consequently remove children. This limited information on the agency resonated with most Black parents because they only tend to know about the agency when there is a complaint to be investigated. Others who have no contact with the Child Protection Services also rely on information provided by Black families with prior contact. Hence, the Child Protection Services is seen as an “enemy” who comes to ruin families by disuniting children from their families. Even when children are finally reconciled with their parents, it involves a lot of bureaucracy, time and resources. This perception affects how Black parents respond to workers from the agency. Black parents therefore become uncooperative and may shield information which could have even helped workers to make better decisions. Though Child Protection Services come in to prevent maltreatment of children to improve their conditions, Black parents argue that it is not always the case. They argue that some Black children had their lives worsened after they were removed. They lose their African identity because they are mostly sent to White foster parents due to the dearth of Black foster parents and misapply the freedom afforded them there. In the end when they become adults, they find it difficult adapting to the real world and become susceptible to social vices which are detrimental to their growth. Bennett (2015) offers a solution to this as he encourages that it is imperative for social workers to show respect, compassion, empathy and honesty when working with ethnic minorities owing to power imbalance, mistrust and fear harbored by them.

The Child Protection Services works under a colour-blind approach. Applebaum (2005) suggests colour-blindness discourse “is the point of view in which racial membership is considered

irrelevant to the ways that individuals are treated.” (p.6). She further opines that colour-blindness fails to acknowledge the constructive impact of race to the development of a person’s identity. The functioning of the Child Protection Services promotes equal services for all people irrespective of race and cultural backgrounds. How race underpins some parenting practices of Black parents are not considered which contributes to the overrepresentation of Black children in the child welfare system. Due to this, Applebaum (2005) argues that colour-blindness fortifies Whiteness which leads to the oppression of people of colour. Colour-blindness appears to be a perfect moral stance grounded on equal treatment for all and sundry on the surface. However, a deeper interrogation of colour-blindness reveals cracks of subtle subjugation of the ethnic minorities. Carr (1997) thus concedes that “colour-blindness has become a new form of subtle racism that masquerades as a moral stance” (p.9). For Miehl (2001), because of the political, social and economic relevance of race, its impact cannot be disregarded. However, for many White peoples, race does not matter but Black parents recognize the substantial impact of race on their perceptions, income and opportunities. Black parents lament they arrive in Canada with fervent hopes of opportunity to continue parenting practices that form part of their culture but they have to come to realize that their unique experiences do not matter. They are compelled to adhere to standards which are not clearly spelt out. Akin to the impact of Whiteness, colour-blindness also permeates the daily lives of Black people. The study of Pierce (2003) affirms that even when affirmative policies are enacted to curtail discrimination of ethnic minorities, it can still promote racism as these ethnic minorities are perceived as being favored and not worthy of assistance.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is worthy to note that despite Black parents' critique of the overrepresentation of Black children in the child welfare system, they understand the role of the child welfare system in protecting children from abusive parents (Ojo, 2006). However, this role is hinged on policies, practices and procedures that emanate from Whiteness. Hence, the persistent measurement of the efficiency of Black parenting according to standards of the White culture regardless of the impact of culture and race tends to have debilitating outcomes for Black families in the child welfare system. For a better comprehension of the impact of racial differences on the lives of people, analysis should concentrate on political, cultural and historical realms other than inherent biological differences (See, Fenton, 1999). I agree with Saari's (1993, 2000) assertion which underlies the importance of the knowledge of one's culture in enhancing social performance.

Black parents expressed the misconceptions on the impact of culture on their parenting practices and thus it will be necessary for Child Protection Service workers to be acquainted with knowledge on cultural practices which inform Black parenting. When this is done, the parenting practices of Black parents will not be seen as deviating from the psychosocial assessments of Child Protection Service workers which have been largely developed based on White culture. The dearth and non- inclusion of the knowledge of Black parenting in general social work practice and policies affect how Black parents are perceived, understood and treated. For Gair et al. (2015), the neglect of knowledge of ethnic minorities in social work practice and the consequent reliance on Euro-Western ideas despite its incongruity with ethnic minorities implicates social work in institutional racism.

Several writers point to the fact that in understanding a phenomenon, it is necessary to appreciate its historical and current situations. Thus, it is not astonishing that the frosty relationship between social work and ethnic minorities is encumbered with an aura of colonialism.

In the day-to-day interactions between Child Protection Service workers and Black families, it is apparent from the study findings that the White social workers still harbor a colonialist mentality toward Black parents, which is confirmed already in the work of Gair et al. (2015). It is thus necessary that Whiteness and racism in Child protection services are critically examined and addressed to enable social workers work effectively with different racialized groups. Here the suggestion of Ignatiev's (1997) that such exercise should be comprehensive enough to examine in a broader sense how the state and its institutions are complicit to racist policies and practices becomes relevant. The essence of such exercise will bring to the fore a holistic perspective of the factors which affect Black parenting in contrast to a simplistic view when the focus is on just racist groups. It will also prevent the allocation of full responsibility to Black parents for issues that arise in the family. If through research, the Child Protection Services aim at acquiring more information on Black families, a collaborative research approach will be more appropriate. It embodies both respectful and participatory engagement with ethnic minorities as well as valuing their past and present and cultural knowledge (Gair et al. 2015). After these studies, the Child Protection Services should be in a better position to provide culturally appropriate services to Black families.

The research also revealed that most Black parents do not have information on what the Child Protection Services actually offers. In the absence of this information, the void has been unfortunately be filled by only unpleasant encounters thereby presenting the Child Protection Services as “enemy” to the Black families instead of potential allies in the raising of Black children. To promote a better relationship between Black parents and the Child Protection Services, it will be necessary for the agency to draw programs and activities that will draw them closer to Black communities other than their usual visits of investigations of complaints. Such exercises, if they are carried out in more informal environments, will promote more cordial relationships for free information sharing. In the same way that the “bad publicity” of the Child

Protection Services is disseminated, positive feedback from such meetings will be disseminated too.

Black parents have a plethora of proverbs that express the importance of children to families and the society at large as well as the responsibility of parents towards the growth of the children. However, different ways of parenting which are tailored to assuage the impact of racism and promote ancestral connections bring them into conflict with the law due to misconceptions and lack of information. I do not intend to conclude that all Black parents are “angels”; just like in every society, there are people who may hurt their own children. There are multiple cases where removal of children from Black families is the best course of action to take. However, it is necessary that the Child Protection Services take the appropriate steps to abreast itself with the cultural and racial nuances that inform Black parenting. In the end, the frosty relationship that impairs meaningful intervention plans could be averted.

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## APPENDICES:

### Appendix A. Instruments of Data collection: Guide questions for the Individual interviews

1. Can you please tell me a little bit about yourself?
  - a. What is your country of origin?
  - b. How long have you lived in Canada?
  - c. What I your educational background?
  - d. What is your present occupation?
  - e. Do you have any religious affiliation?
2. What parenting experiences did you have in growing up with your own parents and in your community in your country of origin if you grew up there?
3. How have these and any other personal history or experiences informed and shaped your own style of parenting here in Canada?
4. Can you share with me your parenting style with your children here in Canada?
5. What does “**effective parenting**” mean to you?
6. Based on your description of effective parenting you just described, do you consider your parenting style as effective?
7. How is this understanding of effective parenting similar or different from other racial groups in Canada?
8. Can you explain to me what parental rules and regulations you set for your child (children)?
9. What actions do you take when they (she or he) break(s) the rules?
10. Do you consider your religion to be influential in your style of parenting?
11. Have you had any experience with the Child Welfare agencies in relation to your parenting style or conflict with your child(ren)?
12. If yes, how was that encounter? Did you feel that the Child Welfare agencies showed understanding of your parenting style or experiences?
13. Do you know any person (family, friend, or neighbour) that have previously had issues with Child Welfare agencies in relation to parenting? (*you don't have to mention their names*)
14. Do you consider racism and discrimination as serious issues in Canada?
15. Can you explain your understanding of these issues?
16. Will you agree or disagree to the statement that Black parenting styles in Canada re informed by racism and discrimination?
17. Based on all that you have explained so far, can you describe some of the major challenges of parenting in Canada?
18. How are these challenges similar or different from that of your country of origin?
19. If you are given the opportunity to talk to Child Welfare agencies about “effective parenting,” what will you say to them?
20. Is there anything else you want to say that I did not ask you?
21. Do you have any question(s) for me?

## Appendix B. Recruitment Flyer:

### *“Effective parenting”: What do African Canadian or Black parents have to say about it?*

*Be part of an important research study*

- *Are you a parent living in Toronto?*
- *Do you identify yourself as a Black or African Canadian?*

*If you answered YES to these questions, you may be eligible to participate in a research study that examines “effective parenting” among Black parents*

*The purpose of this research study is to explore in detail the ways in which Black or people of African descent in Toronto, Winnipeg, and St John’s think about and carry out “effective parenting” and how their knowledge fits (or not) with how Child Welfare Agencies understand that. Participation will help address the gap in the literature about Black parenting practices in Canadian context; challenge stereotypical thinking about Black parenting practices; as well as inform and inspire new strategies for engaging Black parents positively in the child protection process, perhaps enabling more Black children to remain at home safely.*

*Please call Dr. Paul Banahene Adjei at (709) 864-4512 or email: [pbanahene@mun.ca](mailto:pbanahene@mun.ca) or Latif Abdul-Rahman, Child Protection Supervisor at [nabeega@yahoo.ca](mailto:nabeega@yahoo.ca) for more information*

The proposal for this research has been reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research and found to be in compliance with Memorial University’s ethics policy. If you have ethical concerns about the research (such as the way you have been treated or your rights as a participant), you may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at [icehr@mun.ca](mailto:icehr@mun.ca) or by telephone at 709-864-2861

## Appendix C. Recruitment letter:



School of Social Work  
Coughlan College, MUN—Room J4004  
St John's College  
St. John's, NL A1B 3P7  
[www.mun.ca/socwrk/home/](http://www.mun.ca/socwrk/home/)

### LETTER OF SOLICITATION: Individual interviews

Dear Madam/Sir:

I am an Assistant Professor at the School of Social Work of Memorial University of Newfoundland. I am the principal investigator of a SSHRC funded research titled: “Effective parenting: What do African Canadian parents in Toronto, Winnipeg, St John’s have to say about it.” My co-investigators include *Dr. Michael Baffoe*, Faculty of Social Work, University of Manitoba, Phone 1(204)474-9682; *Dr. Delores Mullings*, School of Social Work, Memorial University of Newfoundland; *Dr. Lloydetta Quaicoe*, Founder and President, Sharing Our Cultures

Our study will explore in detail the ways in which Black people in Toronto, Winnipeg, St John’s think about and carry out “effective parenting” and how their knowledge fits (or not) with how Child Welfare Agencies understand that. The study forms part of the adaptation and integration processes and challenges that new immigrant communities in Canada face. We focus on Black immigrants in Canada because of the specific challenges facing this population group many of which are borne out of cross-cultural misunderstanding from the mainstream Canadian population.

This study involves qualitative analysis of semi-structured interviews of one hundred (100) Black parents—50 from Toronto, 30 from Winnipeg, and 20 from St John’s for both individual and three focus group interviews. Three focus group interviews will be conducted—one each in Toronto, Winnipeg, and St John’s. Each focus group will consist of five participants. In addition, we will recruit and interview 15 key informants from resettlement agencies and service providers —five each from Toronto, St. John’s and Winnipeg.

The individual interviews will start in May 2016. Your individual interview will last between 45 and 60 minutes. Your individual interview will be conducted at places of your choosing. With your consent, your interview will be digitally recorded. Interview notes will be taken to support data analysis and interpretation. Your interview will be transcribed and you will be given a copy of the transcribed interview for your comments before we will proceed with data analysis

We would like to request your assistance to participate in the study.

Upon receipt of your expressed interest to participate in the study, Latif Abdul-Rahman of Child Protection Services or I will contact you by email or phone to schedule the interview date and time.

Your identity if you choose to participate in the study will remain anonymous and confidential. You may end participation in the interview at any time without any explanation or possible consequences. Once you withdraw from the study, you may request removal of all recorded information about your participation until October 31, 2016 after which you can no longer remove your data from the study. Data access, uses and interpretation will be restricted to me as a Principal Investigator and the research team. Field notes, audio individual interview and transcriptions will be kept in a locked file drawer as required for confidentiality.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and do not feel that your participation or lack thereof will affect any existing relationship with any member of the research team (if any).

We would be happy to answer any questions that you might have about this research. I can be reached at 1-709-864-4512 or by email: pbanahene@mun.ca

The proposal for this research has been reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research and found to be in compliance with Memorial University's ethics policy. If you have ethical concerns about the research (such as the way you have been treated or your rights as a participant), you may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at [icehr@mun.ca](mailto:icehr@mun.ca) or by telephone at 709-864-2861

Thank you for considering this request to assist in my research project.

Yours sincerely,

Paul Banahene Adjei  
Assistant Professor  
School of Social Work  
Memorial University

## Appendix D. Letter of Consent:



School of Social Work  
Coughlan College, MUN—Room 2014  
230 Prince Philip Drive  
P.O. Box 4200  
St. John's, NL A1B 3P7  
[www.mun.ca/socwrk/home/](http://www.mun.ca/socwrk/home/)

### INFORMED CONSENT FORM—INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

**Title:** “Effective Parenting” What do People of African Descent or Blacks in Toronto, Winnipeg and St John’s have to say about it?

**Principal Researcher:** Dr. Paul Banahene Adjei, School of Social Work, Memorial University CL-2014, St

John’s NL. A1B 3P7 Phone: 1-709-864-4512 [pbanahene@mun.ca](mailto:pbanahene@mun.ca)

**Co-investigators:** *Dr. Michael Baffoe*, Faculty of Social Work, University of Manitoba, Phone 1(204)474-9682; *Dr. Delores Mullings*, School of Social Work, Memorial University of Newfoundland; *Dr. Lloydetta Quaiocoe*, Founder and President, Sharing Our Cultures

You are invited to take part in a research project entitled “Effective Parenting” What do People of African Descent or Blacks in Toronto, Winnipeg and St John’s have to say about it?

This form is part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. It also describes your right to withdraw from the study. In order to decide whether you wish to participate in this research study, you should understand enough about its risks and benefits to be able to make an informed decision. This is the informed consent process. Take time to read this carefully and to understand the information given to you. Please contact the researcher, Dr. Paul Banahene Adjei either by email at [pbanahene@mun.ca](mailto:pbanahene@mun.ca) or by phone at 1-709-864-4512, if you have any questions about the study or would like more information before you consent.

It is entirely up to you to decide whether to take part in this research. If you choose not to take part in this research or if you decide to withdraw from the research once it has started, there will be no negative consequences for you, now or in the future.

**Introduction:**

I am an Assistant professor at School of Social Work of Memorial University and the Principal researcher for this study. This is a SSHRC funded research that explores in detail the ways in which people of African descent in Toronto, Winnipeg, St John's think about and carry out "effective parenting" and how their knowledge fits (or not) with how Child Welfare Agencies understand that.

The study will explore in detail the ways in which Black people in Toronto, Winnipeg, St John's think about and carry out "effective parenting" and how their knowledge fits (or not) with how Child Welfare Agencies understand that. The study forms part of the adaptation and integration processes and challenges that new immigrant communities in Canada face. We focus on Black immigrants in Canada because of the specific challenges facing this population group many of which are borne out of cross-cultural misunderstanding from the mainstream Canadian population

**Purpose of study:**

The study objectives are to: (i) explore ways in which people of African descent conceptualize and operationalize effective parenting and how their knowledge converges on and diverges from the way Child Welfare Agencies understand and interpret "effective parenting"; (ii) explore how systemic racism, sexism, and classism (if any) inform, shape, and structure Black parenting practices in Toronto, Winnipeg, and St John's; (iii) identify ways in which Black parenting practices can inform and shape ways social work schools prepare students for practice; (iv) explore in detail ways in which Black parenting can inform social policy building and social work practice in Child Welfare agencies; (v) train graduate students in social science research by conducting review of literature, practical knowledge on field data gathering methods, data analysis, and dissemination of study findings.

Our findings will challenge stereotypical thinking about Black parenting practices, as well as inform and inspire new strategies for engaging Black parents positively in the child protection process, perhaps enabling more Black children to remain at home safely. Even where removal (protective custody) is the preferred plan, this study will enable Child Welfare agencies to develop strategies to make better use of the potentials that birth parents possess in order to enhance their children's lives. Finally, the study will inform discussion as to how to offer better support services to Black parents, in ways most likely to be acceptable and useful to them. It will also contribute to the academic sector by enriching the debate on effective parenting as well as addressing the gap in the literature about Black parenting practices in Canadian context.

**What you will do in this study:**

This study involves semi-structured interviews of one hundred (100) Black parents—50 from Toronto, 30 from Winnipeg, and 20 from St John's for both individual and three focus group interviews. Three focus group interviews will be conducted—one each in Toronto, Winnipeg, and St John's. Each focus group will consist of five participants. In addition, we will recruit and interview 15 key informants from resettlement agencies and service providers —five each from Toronto, St. John's and Winnipeg.

You are being contacted to participate in individual interviews. With your consent, your interview will be digitally recorded. Interview notes will be taken to support data analysis and interpretation.

Your interview will be transcribed and you will be given a copy of the transcribed interview for your comments before I will proceed with data analysis. We will then disseminate our findings.

**Length of time:**

Your individual interview will last between 45 and 60 minutes and will be conducted at a place of your choosing.

**Withdrawal from the study:**

- You may end participation in the interview at any time without any explanation or possible consequences
- Once you withdraw from the study, you may request removal of all recorded information about your participation until October 31, 2016 after which you can no longer remove your data from the study

You reserve the rights to instruct that certain part of your individual interview should not be recorded or/and any section of the interview should be excluded from the study findings.

**Possible benefits:**

Given that many immigrant families move to Canada with the hope of securing a better future for their children (McLaren, 2004), any research examining the parenting practices of migrant families is useful for service providers who work with these families. Your participation in this study will offer rich information on how to locate appropriate sources of knowledge that will help Child Welfare workers know how they can work with Black families. The findings will also challenge stereotypical thinking about Black parenting practices, thereby enabling more nuanced approaches in the future by child welfare practitioners. Even where removal (protective custody) is the preferred plan, this study will enable Child Welfare agencies to develop strategies to make better use of the potentials that birth parents possess in order to enhance their children's lives. The study will inform discussion as to how to offer better support services to Black parents, in ways most likely to be acceptable and useful to them. Further, the study is expected to influence structural changes in Child Welfare services as well as the activities of not-for profit organizations that work with families in areas of cultural sensitivity. It will help child protection and other professionals to better understand the perspectives of Black parents during family support and child protection activity. It will inform and inspire new strategies for engaging Black parents positively in the child protection process, perhaps enabling more Black children to remain at home safely.

It is hoped this study will generate significant new data about Black parents' perspectives, enabling more focused follow up research on Black parenting practices in Canadian context. In addition, since our publications will be openly accessible, postsecondary students and educators within and outside Canada can use them in their studies. Further, the data of the study will also be useful in improving the teaching of social work courses such as Social work knowledge and skills for assessment and intervention; Social work knowledge and Skills for Integrative theory and practice; Children Welfare: Prevention, crisis intervention and protection; Social Work knowledge and skills practice with families. Lastly, the study will be useful in training three graduate students in research; in particular, in the areas of literature review, data collection, analyses, and dissemination. The goal is to give students confidence to become their own researchers without fear.

**Possible risks:**

Although the research does not intend to collect your personal data, there is possibility that, in talking about your understanding of effective parenting may speak to issues that are personal and private. Although we will be open-minded and non-judgemental as our focus is to collect information about different parenting styles among Black families, we do acknowledge that asking people to talk about their parenting style can be intimidating and intrusive. Within this context, we want you to be aware of your rights to withdraw from the research at any time, and as well as your rights to demand that all information you have shared in the research be struck out of the research. You also have rights to demand that certain part of your interviews should be excluded from the research. Further, you will be given a pseudonym in the research reporting and any particular detail that may give out your identity and place of work will be removed or modified to avoid any trace back to you. Furthermore, any direct quotation will only be used with your permission, and we will review each quotation to ensure that it does not give away your anonymity and confidentiality.

In spite of these measures to protect you, we urge you to take further steps in the study to protect yourself. Do not give any personal or self-incriminating information during the individual interview process as research team is legally bound to report any information that suggests that you have harmed or abused a minor

**Confidentiality:**

Data access, uses and interpretation will be restricted to me as a Principal Investigator and my research team. Field notes, digitally-recorded individual interviews and transcriptions will be kept in a locked file drawer as required for confidentiality. The “data will be kept for a minimum of five years, as per Memorial University policy on Integrity in Scholarly Research.”

**Anonymity:**

Your name and a place of work will not be reported. I will give you a pseudonym or a code throughout the study. In addition, you will have the opportunity to ask me not to record any particular interaction or remark that may give away your identity. You will also have the opportunity to ask me to exclude particular interactions or remarks that have already been recorded when reporting the findings of the study.

**Recording of Data:**

The digitally-recorded interviews will be transcribed and use as part of the data for analysis and interpretation. Copies of interview transcription will be given to you for your comments before I proceed to analyze and interpret it.

**Storage of Data:**

The audio data of the study will be transferred to my research computer and protected with a password. The audio data on the digitally recording machine will be erased. The transcripts of the recorded interviews will be stored and locked in a cabinet at my office. Data access, uses and interpretation will be restricted to me as a Principal Investigator and the research team. Field notes, digitally-recorded interviews and transcriptions will be kept in a locked file drawer as required for confidentiality. The data will be kept for a minimum of five years, as per Memorial University



policy on Integrity in Scholarly Research. After that the audio data on my research computer, field notes, and the transcripts will be erased.

**Reporting of Results:**

The findings of the study will be published in open-access peer reviewed journals. Papers from the findings will be presented at a national conference. We will also promote the study findings through ‘opeds’ in community newspapers, community radios as well as through Facebook, Academia.edu, and LinkedIn to inform discussion on Black parenting practices. We will also speak to policy makers about the development of strategies that will make better use of the potentials that Black parents have to enhance their children's lives as well as to offer better support services to Black parents, in ways most likely to be acceptable and useful to them. Any direct quote from your individual interview will be used with your permission when reporting the study findings. Where we will use a section of your interview as direct quotations, we will give you a pseudonym or a code to hide your real identity. Further, student research assistants may use some of your interview data for their own dissertation. In view of that all students’ research assistant will be made to sign Memorial University confidentiality agreement form before they can participate in the research.

**Sharing of Results with Participants:**

I will give you a copy of your transcribed interview. Once the findings of the study are published in open-access peer reviewed journals, I will provide you with the links to the publications. Some of the findings will also be promoted through ‘opeds’ in community newspapers, community radios as well as through Facebook, Academia.edu, and LinkedIn to inform discussion on Black parenting practices

**Questions:**

You are welcome to ask questions at any time during your participation in this research. If you would like more information about this study, please contact: Dr. Paul Banahene Adjei either by email at [pbanahene@mun.ca](mailto:pbanahene@mun.ca) or by phone at 1-709-864-4512

The proposal for this research has been reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research and found to be in compliance with Memorial University’s ethics policy. If you have ethical concerns about the research, such as the way you have been treated or your rights as a participant, you may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at [icehr@mun.ca](mailto:icehr@mun.ca) or by telephone at 709-864-2861.

**Consent:**

Your signature on this form means that:

- You have read the information about the research.
- You have been able to ask questions about this study.
- You are satisfied with the answers to all your questions.
- You understand what the study is about and what you will be doing.
- You understand that you are free to withdraw participation in the study without having to give a reason, and that doing so will not affect you now or in the future.

- You understand that if you choose to end participation **during** data collection, any data collected from you up to that point will be retained by the researcher, unless you indicate otherwise.
- You understand that if you choose to withdraw **after** data collection has ended, your data can be removed from the study up to October 31, 2016

I agree to be audio-recorded

Yes  No

I agree to the use of direct quotations

Yes  No

By signing this form, you do not give up your legal rights and do not release the researchers from their professional responsibilities.

**Your signature confirms:**

I have read what this study is about and understood the risks and benefits. I have had adequate time to think about this and had the opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered.

I agree to participate in the research project understanding the risks and contributions of my participation, that my participation is voluntary, and that I may end my participation.

A copy of this Informed Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Researcher's Signature:**

I have explained this study to the best of my ability. I invited questions and gave answers. I believe that the participant fully understands what is involved in being in the study, any potential risks of the study and that he or she has freely chosen to be in the study.

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date