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Black parents ask for a second look: Parenting under 'White' Child Protection rules in Canada

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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 study 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 Child Welfare Agencies hardly consider this information in their engagements with Black families. Further, most participants had negative perceptions of Child Welfare Agencies as people who disunite families and racially target Black families. The study reifies that Child Welfare Agencies in Canada need to take necessary steps to understand the complex contexts of Black parenting in order to engage 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, Child Welfare agencies will develop strategies to make better use of the potentials that birth parents possess in order to enhance Black children's lives.

1. Introduction

Over the years Child Welfare Agencies in Canada has created an impression that its policies, parenting guidelines, and practice models are impartial and apolitical. But Black parents in Toronto suggest otherwise that the colour of Canada's Child Protection rules is White. The way Black and Indigenous children are apprehended from their families and placed in cares constitutes a structural discrimination in Child Protection legislation. This practice continues because there is a false assumptions among Child Welfare Agencies that Child Protection legislations are culturally and racially universal, yet hidden in this rhetoric is a blatant White-favoured standard of parenting that puts Black and Indigenous families at risk (Blackstock, 2009, 2011; Chistian, 2010; de Finney, Dean, Loiselle, & Saraceno, 2011; Pon, Gosine, & Phillips, 2011). In fact, it is not far-fetched to argue that Child Welfare practices including recurring assessment procedures and follow-up investigative methods are evidence seeking strategies that put Black and Indigenous children at risk (Blackstock, 2009, 2011; Chistian, 2010; Kline, 1992; Pon et al., 2011). This position is based on a considerable scholarly research that has examined current Western ideals of childhood development often presented as universal standards for child rearing as well as evidence of overrepresentation of Black and Indigenous children in the Child Welfare System in Canada (Blackstock, 2009, 2011; Clarke, 2002, 2011, 2012; Dettlaff et al., 2011; Dumbrill, 2010; Greenbaum, 2014; Hill, 2005; Osterling, D'Andrade, & Austin, 2008; Pon et al., 2011). Research carried out across Canada suggests that Black and Indigenous families are reported to Child Welfare Agencies at a higher rate than any other group despite the fact that there is no evidence to suggest that Black and Indigenous parents abuse or neglect their children at higher rates than other racial parents (Greenbaum, 2014; Peters, 2002; Rambally, 1995; Sinha & Kozlowski, 2013). For example, cases of alleged child abuse and neglect that involve Black and Indigenous families continue to be reported to and substantiated by public Child Welfare agencies at a rate twice that of White families (Drake et al., 2011; Fluke, Yuan, Hedderson, & Curtis, 2003). Further, Black and Indigenous children are known to reside in foster care for longer periods of time and are less likely to be reunified with their families following Child Welfare involvement (Blackstock, 2009; Chistian, 2010; Hill, 2006; Muir & Bohr, 2014).

In Toronto, Ontario, Canada, Black Canadians make up only 8.2% of the provincial population yet represent a staggering 41% of all children and youth in care – five times their representation in the general population (Contenta, Monsebraaten, & Rankin, 2014). According to The Child Welfare Anti-Oppression Roundtable's (2009) report, it is estimated that Black children make up approximately 65% of the total number of children and youth placed in group care living arrangements in one Ontario City. The racial disproportionality rate of Black children in group care is such troubling that Margaret Parsons, the Executive Director of the African Canadian Legal Clinic, describes the current rate of apprehending Black children into care as "a modern-day residential

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schools system[1]" (Contenta et al., 2014, p.5). One Vision One Voice, a provincially funded anti-Black racism initiatives for Ontario's child protection system, in its 2015's study of more than 800 Black families and youth, foster parents, child protection workers, and community members, it notes that the Child Welfare System in its current form in Ontario undermines and sometimes destroys African-Canadian families (Monsebraaten, 2018, para.14; One Vision One Voice, 2016). The report therefore among other things recommends the amendment of the *Child and Family Services Act* to acknowledge "the historical significance of African Canadians in Canada's history and Canada's history of anti-black racism, establishing the need to ensure equitable outcomes for African Canadians in the Child Welfare System" (One Vision One Voice, 2016, p.91).

This present essay reiterates what is already mentioned in One Vision One Voice's (2016) report that the Child Welfare Agencies' policies, practice guidelines, and assessment tools in Canada requires a critical second look. The data informing the discussion in the present essay were taken from a study funded by Social Science and Humanities Research Council Insight Development Grant (SSHRC-IDG), a trio council research funding agency in Canada, in which the research team explores Black parenting practices in Toronto, Winnipeg, and St. John's and the importance of such knowledge in improving Child Welfare practice in Canada. Author Two, as part of completing his Master of Social Work (MSW) degree, analyzed the Toronto's data for his MSW thesis. The present essay is based on Author Two's analysis. Whereas not all Blacks and Whites may necessarily fit into the racial essentialism (Harris, 1990) in the present essay, we use socially constructed terms "Blacks" and "African Canadian" 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. The ensuing discussions focuses on the literature review that underpins the study.

2. Literature review

The 2006 Canada population census places Blacks as the third largest visible minority group after Chinese and South Asians — 815,000 and projected to increase to 1,809,000 by 2031 (Statistics Canada, 2012). Of this figure, 57% (539,205) live in Ontario. Of the Blacks in Ontario, 74% (399,011) live in the Toronto census Metropolitan area (Statistics Canada, 2011). This 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). Maiter and George (2003) have previously noted that despite the seemingly similar parenting practices across cultures, there are still cultural and racial differences in parenting goals, values, and behaviours that need to be considered when constructing the meaning of effective parenting in a society. Ignoring this reality will imply that certain parenting behaviours considered to be effective and functional among one racial group will easily be construed as an aberrant behaviour by another group (Maiter & George, 2003). This therefore calls for a critical examination about how Child Welfare policies and procedures elucidate and enforce a worldview that sometimes place the cultural heritage and traditional parenting practices of Blacks and Indigenous people at risk.

[1] Residential school system was a Canadian government sponsored religious school program designed to assimilate Indigenous children of Canada into Euro-Canadian culture between 1880 and 1996. Done with the complicit roles of Child Welfare Agencies, Indigenous children were deliberately and forcefully removed from their parents and placed into Residential schools. Children in the Residential schools were beset with fear, despair, violent humiliations, and dehumanized treatments (Shkilnyk, 1985).

2.1. Parenting style

Diana Baumrind's (1971, 1991) describe four general styles of parenting that are associated with observable outcomes in children and youth from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds – (*1) authoritative, (2) authoritarian, (3) permissive and (4) rejecting-neglecting*. According to Baumrind (1991), authoritative *parents* can establish a nurturing home environment that fosters healthy childhood development. Authoritative parents are good at setting a clear guideline for their children's behaviour. *Authoritarian parents,* on the other hand, are believed to value domination of their children and often use punishment tactics to correct the wrong doings of their children. Authoritarian always expect and demand their children to obey their instructions and parental guidelines without questioning. *Permissive or nondirective parents* exhibit warmth towards their children and use non-punitive approaches to child rearing. Permissive or nondirective parents prefer to give their children with choices to encourage them to explore and grow in their decision–making process. *Rejecting-neglecting parents* are neither demanding nor responsive as they abandon or deny their parental responsibilities.

The consensus among experts is that authoritative parenting practices produce positive emotional and behavioural adjustment among children (Baumrind, 1989; Karavasilis, Doyle, & Markiewicz, 2003; Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Some researchers also suggest that an authoritative approach to parenting helps children to internalize behaviours that exemplify positive outcomes (Gonzalez, Holbein, & Quilter, 2002; Milevsky, Schlechter, Netter, & Keehn, 2007). While authoritative and permissive parenting styles are preferable child rearing strategies among White European, American, Canadian families, Black parents in North America see these parenting styles as a resignation of parental responsibilities and can result in Black children being harmed, killed, or imprisoned before entering adulthood (Adjei et al., 2018; Cooper, 2014; Hill & Bush, 2001; Rudy & Grusec, 2001). Yet the idealized Western mindset of child rearing, which favours permissive and authoritative parenting styles, views Black harsher, authoritarian parenting styles as extremely controlling, inappropriate, dehumanizing, infantilizing, violent, and in some cases foster negative behaviour outcomes among Black children (Gershoff, Lee, & Durrant, 2017; Kolhatkar & Berkowitz, 2014; Scales, 2000; Terry, 2004). In 2004, Durrant, Ensom and Coalition on Physical Punishment of Children and Youth developed a joint statement on physical punishment of children and youth that has received overwhelming endorsement from several organizations, public institutions including social work schools, and Ontario child protection agencies. The statement among other things discourages the use of physical punishment as a disciplinary measure to raise children. The term "physical punishment" is used loosely in the joint statement to include "spanking," which importantly, the Supreme Court of Canada in January 2004, in a split 6–3 decision, ruled does not violate the constitutional rights of Canadian children (Small, 2004). The Supreme Court's decision does not however prevent a provincial or a territorial child welfare authority to investigate and to even recommend apprehension of a child who has been spanked claiming the child is at risk in her or his family (Durrant, Ensom, & Coalition on Physical Punishment of Children and Youth, 2004).

Although the joint statement on physical punishment of children and youth is merited in the protection of children and youth, the loosely conception of "physical punishment" in the statement in many ways puts at risk the parenting styles of Black families that do not completely shun spanking as a disciplinary tool (Adjei et al., 2018; Kaufman et al., 2000; Rudy & Grusec, 2001). This therefore begs the question whether the voices in Durrant, Ensom and Coalition on Physical Punishment of Children and Youth's (2004) joint statement included Black families. Lalonde, Jones, and Stroink (2008) note that Blacks parenting styles are considerably unique as their approaches to child rearing are inherently linked to the daily challenges and experiences they encounter in North America. Having to cope with systemic racism and classism in North America, Black families have adopted parenting practices that teach

Black children the importance of self-esteem, survival, self-respect, and how to deal with the threats of racism in North America (Peters, 2002). These adopted Black parenting practices easily get lost and misrepresented within the rigid Child Welfare policies, procedures, and regulations.

2.2. Racism, Whiteness, Black parenting, and Child Welfare systems

Saraceno (2012) examines ways in which White colonial and racist ontology affects the delivery of professional services on organizations such as Child and Youth Care in the United States. Saraceno (2012) asserts that dominant colonial and racist practices have become part of the everyday operations of Child and Youth Care resulting in racist targeting of Black and Latino families in the United States. Relatedly, in her study of "Whiteness and the politics of 'race' in child protection guidelines in Ireland," Christie (2010) notes that despite the multicultural make up of Ireland, White Irish ideals of parenting continue to be the standard norms by which all parenting practices are measured in Ireland. Consequently, the Child Welfare Service providers in Ireland continue to view Black and non-White minority children as vulnerable group in need of constant protection. Christie (2010) argues that through its child protection regulations and practices Child Welfare System in Ireland has moved from a 'racial state,' whose policies used to have no intended negative effects on racial minority groups, to a 'racist state' whose policies are intentionally targeting Blacks and racial minority groups. In Canada, Black families have similarly expressed concerns about what they perceived to be racist treatments from Child Welfare Services workers (Adjei et al., 2018; Clarke, 2012; One Vision One Voice, 2016). Kiki Ojo, the manager of "One Vision One Voice," reiterates that systemic anti-Black racism is real and rampant in Child Protection system in Ontario (Monsebraaten, 2018, para. 5). Williams (2004) also notes that Black parenting practices are critiqued differently and often assign negative meanings.

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 Blacks parenting practices. If we are truly to make sense of the overrepresentation of Black children in the Child Welfare System in Ontario, then we have to recognize and unpack the broader White hegemony and pro-White normativity in the operation of Child Welfare Agencies that in many cases put the parental practices of Black families at risk. The discussion that follows focuses on the theoretical framework that guides the study.

3. Theoretical framework

The study draws on the tenets of Critical Race Theory (CRT) to ground the discussion on Black parenting experiences. CRT emerged from the writings of Derick Bell and Alan Freeman in reaction to the ineffective approach of Civil Rights Movements in the United States. While CRT was developed in the United States, it has over the years gained intellectual currency in Canada. Carol Aylward and local legal groups such as the African Canadian Legal Clinic in Toronto are among notable entities that have used CRT in Canada. CRT is interdisciplinary in nature and has become a useful theoretical framework in unpacking issues of race and racism from multiple disciplines such as ethnic studies, women's studies, legal theory, philosophy, sociology, history, education, and social work (Stovall, 2005). The adoption of CRT in the study helped us to appreciate how victims of systemic racism are affected by cultural perceptions of race and racism within the Child Welfare Agencies. CRT was used in two distinct ways in the study: First, CRT was employed to offer a thorough analysis of how the quotidian nature of racism informs and shapes Black parenting experiences in Toronto. There is a continual denial of racism in Canada as racism is perceived less intense in nature compare to the United States (Saraceno, 2012). Despite this perception, several researchers confirm both the covert and overt forms of racism in Canada (Adjei, 2013, 2018; Adjei et al., 2018; Adjei & Gill, 2013; Kobayashi & Johnson, 2007; Pon, 2009; Pon et al., 2011; Saraceno, 2012; Williams, 2004). The normalization of Whiteness has had dire consequences for Black parents as their parenting practices are measured through the lens of Whiteness (Adjei et al., 2018; Kobayashi & Johnson, 2007; Miehls, 2001; Saraceno, 2012; Walter, Taylor, & Habibis, 2011). The supremacy of Whiteness in parenting practices dates to the past, where Child Welfare Agency workers participated in harming Aboriginal children, including placing them in residential schools, and removing them from their families for adoption in non-Native families or foster homes during the 60's scoop (Bennett, 2015; Blackstock, 2009; Herring, Spangaro, Lauw, & McNamara, 2013; Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015a; Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015b; Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015c). de Finney et al. (2011) shows that "our critical exploration of minoritization shows that, in fact, who ends up in care and why they end up there is neither a coincidence nor the exclusive result of individual failings, but rather an outcome of a system designed to reproduce normative roles for children, youth and families" (p.362). de Finney et al. (2011) use the term "minoritization" to imply children positioned "as outsiders to White, heterosexual, able, middle-class norms, and who, as a result, face high indicators of social exclusion such as poverty, racism, and homophobia" (p.362).

The use of CRT helps to challenge Child Welfare Agency's claims of neutrality, objectivity, colorblindness, and meritocracy that often become camouflages to sustain pro-White hegemony about parenting while ignoring the diverse parenting practices of Blacks and Indigenous families. Child welfare workers, irrespective of their personal and professional experiences, must be equipped to recognize the significance of ethnic and racial differences as they relate to child-rearing and must acknowledge the role of cultural and racial variability in the assessment and delivery of frontline services. Particularly, as noted by Harris (2014), child protection practitioners must be prepared to combat cultural racism by embracing rather than negating the role of culture and racism in the daily lives and upbringing of children and families living in North America. Employing CRT in the study assists us to explore how systemic racism and Whiteness within the Child Welfare System affect parenting experiences of Black families in Toronto.

Second, in White settler societies such as Canada, where White hegemony continues to determine how system and structures function, Critical race theorists argue that counter-storytelling is an effective method of telling stories of people whose experiences are not often told (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) or when told are often ignored within law and educational scholarship (Stovall, 2005). For Black parents in Toronto, there is a sense of imposed silenced and a sanctioned repression of their voices concerning their parenting practices. However, "if the right to speak, is having credibility, if being heard is a kind of wealth" (Solnit, 2017, para. 17), then CRT's counter-storytelling allows Black parents to have their fair share of wealth. As Delgado (1989) aptly puts it, oppressed groups have known instinctively that stories are an essential tool to their own survival and liberation (p.2436). CRT allows Black parents to express their thoughts and experiences of rage, disenfranchisement, disempowerment, and disengagement in ways that will be heard by dominant groups (Delgaldo, 1995). Hunn, Guy, and Manglitz (2006) rightly note, CRT's counter-storytelling "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" (p.249). The use of CRT in our study helped Black parents to recount their experiences of parenting in Canada as well as what they perceived to be a racist targeting from Child Welfare Agencies' workers.

4. Methodology

We use CRT in our qualitative research design (Neuman, 2003). Solórzano and Yosso (2002) argue that CRT's counter-storytelling is a

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useful tool to expose, analyze, and even challenge the dominant stories of racial privilege and in some cases further the struggle for racial reform. By using CRT in our qualitative research design, we explore the potential of counter-storytelling as a research tool to challenge White hegemonic discourses around parenting. 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, 2013; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Shaw & Gould, 2010). Researchers who engage in small-size sampled research have been criticized for low statistical power in predicting the probability of an effect on a population, which then raises issues of validity (Maruyama & Ryan, 2014). However, in using CRT's qualitative research, our goal was not necessarily to devise a theoretical generalization but to understand Black parenting practices and what they represent in social construction of "effective parenting" within Child Welfare practices and regulations. More importantly, Black parents' shared-stories helped us to contradict and challenge White hegemonic normalization of parenting practices within Child Welfare policies, regulations, and practices. Six (6) major questions guide the study including individual interviews in Toronto, Winnipeg, and St John's:

i. What does "effective parenting" mean to Black parents and how are their definitions similar or different from that of other racial groups in Canada?
ii. What are the usual parenting rules and regulations Black parents set for their children, and what actions are often taken if the rules are not followed?
iii. What are the motivations and consequent strategies for different parenting practices among Black parents?
iv. What are the historical and contemporary experiences as well as social and systemic conditions that inform and structure Black parenting practices in Canada?
v. How do Child Welfare workers respond to Black parenting practices?
vi. What are the main challenges and concerns of raising children in Canada and how are they different from individuals' countries of origin?

As already mention, the broader research was done in three major cities in Canada: Toronto (Ontario), Winnipeg (Manitoba), and St. John's (Newfoundland and Labrador). Toronto is appropriate because, first, it has the largest populations of Blacks in Canada, and second, the Principal Investigator, and the first author of the present essay, has lived and worked in Toronto for ten years and has a lot of contacts to the Black communities. This made recruitment of participants easier. Winnipeg and St John's were included in the study despite the presence of fewer Black populations for three reasons: (a) Black immigrants' presence in these cities has increased over the last five years; (b) the PI and two co-applicants are currently living and working in St John's, while one co-applicant lives in Winnipeg, making it easier to recruit study participants in these places; and (c) it was helpful to compare the findings of effective parenting among Blacks in three cities with large, medium, and small populations of Blacks in Canada.

4.1. Specific methodology

Our data collection occurred between September 2015 and December 2016 using a multi-faceted research design that employs three types of methods. First, we did a comprehensive review of all related literature on selected immigrant communities of African and Caribbean descent. We reviewed literature on resettlement and policy documents on integration and social capital to situate issues facing immigrants in their integration process. We also uncovered demographic information on the study communities from Statistics Canada documentations and reports. This approach allowed us to map the profiles of the study communities within the broader context of the immigrant population in Canada and regional differences between sites. Second, we carried out semi-structured interviews with 100 individual parents —50 from Toronto, 30 from Winnipeg, and 20 from St. John's. Further, we did semi-structured interviews with 15 key informants in resettlement agencies and service providers in Toronto, St. John's, and Winnipeg to get their views and contacts within the selected communities. In addition, we did three focus group interviews, one each in Toronto, Winnipeg, and St John's.

4.2. Recruitment

After the study received an approval from Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) of Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN), the research team relied on our informal contacts as well as our insightful knowledge about the Black communities in Toronto, Winnipeg, and St. John's as well as recruitment flyers distributed at local centres in the Black communities to recruit potential participants. We use purposive sampling instrument to ensure that recruitment is an appropriate mix of Black parents of diverse backgrounds (nationality, socio-economic status, religion, age, gender, and ethnicity). In all, 130 individuals were recruited for the individual, key informant, and focused group interviews.

4.3. Data collection

Author One used in-depth semi-structured interview method to collect the data from Toronto between September 2015 and December 2016. The in-depth interview method was helpful, as Boyce and Neale (2006) and Denzin and Lincoln (2011) suggest, to gain an in-depth knowledge of Black parenting experiences in Canada. It also enabled Author One to have comprehensive exchanges with Black parents (Atkinson & Delamont, 2010; Barbour, 2013). The interview process included several probing questions to gain clarification on some of the responses of participants (Chu & Ke, 2017). The individual and key informant interviews lasted between 45 and 60 min, and the focused group interview lasted between 90 min and 2 h. All interviews were conducted at the places of choosing of participants and with the consent of participants, all individual and focused group interviews, with the exception of three individuals, were digitally recorded and notes were taken to assist data analysis and interpretation.

4.4. Data analysis

Since Author Two did not take part in the data collection at Toronto, he was given an opportunity to peruse the interview transcripts on several occasions to acquaint himself with the data. As part of his training and with close supervision of Author One, Author Two manually analyzed the Toronto interview transcripts, as Barbour (2013) suggests, manual analysis of interview transcripts helps novice qualitative researchers to learn quickly about how to do qualitative analysis. Relying on the existing literature on parenting, Author Two coded the interview transcript into themes according to the interview structure and emergent themes using combined coding methods: open coding, which aims at opening meaning in data and reflexive processes (Tracy, 2013); axial coding, which focuses on intensive analysis of a category at a time, and selective coding, which focuses on core codes (Shaw & Gould, 2010). Utilizing Microsoft Word, he created a table of three columns with each column assigned to (1) emerging themes, (2) voices of participants that relate to the themes and (3) key ideas in participants' statements. The key ideas highlighted our own interpretations of each code in relation to the broader theme. He highlighted similar voices speaking to a particular theme with the same colour for better

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analysis and organization. For instance on the emerging theme of "conception of effective parenting", he selected opinions of participants that addressed this theme and analyzed it to figure out the core idea of their opinions. In some instances, he created sub-themes to reflect broadly the diverse participants' responses. He repeated this procedure for other themes. He also cross-referenced participants' responses with interview notes and existing literature to elicit points of convergence and divergence as well as sources of tension and pedagogic relevance. He used existing literature on parenting practices as a comparative basis for interrogating and interpreting local cultural knowledge and experiences on Black parenting practices.

Qualitative research demands a high sense of transparency as it requires researchers to be honest and open to the activities of the research (Tracy, 2013). In order to offer cogent analysis, we used extracts of the transcripts to buttress our points in the data reporting. In order to maintain the confidentiality and anonymity of participation, we gave pseudonyms to participants as well as removed or altered all information that could compromise participants' identity when reporting the findings. Further, we edited each quote and statement of participants to remove pauses such as "like," "uh" and "um", and where necessary we corrected grammatical errors for fluency. In editing quotes and statements, we were careful not to tamper with the substance of what participants' said.

The Table 1 below gives an overview of participants whose voices were captured in the present essay:

In the ensuing section, we share some of the related study findings.

5. Findings: conceptualization of effective parenting

As denoted in the literature review, Western conceptualization of effective parenting places Black and Indigenous parents at a disadvantage. Muir and Bohr (2014) opine that 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. It is important therefore to understand how Black parents themselves understand and operationalize "effective parenting." In the study, participants explained diverse ways they understood and conceptualized "effective parenting". Black parents used themes such as "providing necessities of life" and "building relationship" to explain their understanding of effective parenting.

5.1. Providing necessities of life

Solomon, a Ghanaian parent, claimed 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, also alluded to the importance of providing necessities of life, as well as instilling values in children as one of the crucial requirement of effective parenting:

> "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]

For some Black parents, that the provision of the necessities of life alone is not enough to make effective parenting. Other activities such as discipline measures are also needed to realize effective parenting. Eva, a Ghanaian mother, subscribed to the idea of adding discipline measures to the provision of the necessities of life:

> "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]

From Black parents' responses, the provision of necessities of life is one of the core requirements of being an effective parent. Indeed, the *Criminal Code of Canada, C-46 section 215, Sub-section 1A*, makes it clear that the provision of the necessities of life is a legal requirement of any parent: "As a parent, foster parent, guardian or head of a family, to provide necessaries of life for a child under the age of sixteen years" (Criminal Code of Canada, 2018, p.274). What was not apparent to us is whether these parents were aware of the existence of such law, or they believe that even without backing of the law, all parents are required to provide necessities of life for their children because that is the

Table 1
Overview of Study Participant Characteristics

No	Pseudonym	Place of Birth	Educational Background	Occupation	Family Structure	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	Retired	Two-parent	3
5	Jackson	Ghana	Postsecondary (Masters)	Not mentioned	Two-parent	4
6	John	Zimbabwe	Postsecondary (first degree)	Not mentioned	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	Not mentioned	Private-unskilled	Two-parent	4
16	Joshua 2	Ghana	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	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, Barbados, Ghana	Postsecondary (Masters)	Public-skilled	One-parent	2
20	Sina	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

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responsible thing to do?.

5.2. Building relationship

Some Black parents also see building positive relationship with one's children as an effective parenting strategy For Dorcas, a Ghanaian parent, building relationship with one's children means creating an atmosphere of trust where children can confine in you. It also means parents cutting down domineering attitudes to allow Black children to feel confidence and comfortable approaching parents with concerns:

> "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, agrees with Dorcas and also emphasizes the importance of trust in healthy relationship building with children. Hannah, however, added that part of building a trusting relationship with children is to make them believe that they can trust you [parents] with all their issues without being judge or punish for their mistakes:

> "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]

Harriet, a Nigerian woman, offers an extensive opinion of what healthy relationship with one's children means. According to Harriet, such healthy relationship include freedom for children to explore life and its possibilities with little dictates and constraints from parents. This includes decisions that bother on career choices as well as other important matters that affect their lives without parents getting in their ways. For Harriet, Black parents must trust their children to make best decisions even if they do not agree or accept their choices:

> "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." [Harriet, Interview, 05/26/2016]

On the surface, readers may find it difficult to understand the context of Harriet's statement. However, Denga (1988), Akande (2017), and Akutu and Odia (2018) have passionately appealed to Nigerian parents to stop choosing careers for their children. For many Nigerian parents, any career choice of their children that does not include medical, legal, engineering, pharmaceutical, and architectural profession or other 'highly prestige' jobs will be nothing but a disappointment. In view of that many Nigerian parents have imposed their career preferences on their children. In fairness, the practice of parents determining the career choices for their children is not limited to only Nigerians. Many Black parents are equally known to engage is similar practices (see Clark, 2015; Fisher & Padmawidjaja, 1999; Hairston, 2000). Many Black parents, already aware of the challenges and discriminations awaiting Black children in Euro-American/Canadian society —arguably because of the parents' own experiences of anti-Black racism and discrimination — are oftentimes interested in helping their children make career choices that will offer better opportunities for their futures. This often results in tension between Black parents and their children especially where Black children want different career paths outside what their parents are suggesting. Harriet suggested that part of building relationship with one's children is to trust and respect their choices including those choices that parents do not agree or accept. Following Black parents' responses to how they conceptualize "effective parenting," we wanted to know how they action these ideas of parenting into their everyday parenting practices. We thus ask them to describe their parenting styles.

6. Description of parenting style

Earlier in the literature review, we referenced Diana Baumrind's (1971, 1991) different parenting styles. Although Black parents did not use Baurmrind's typologies, their responses contained diverse views about what they do to safeguard and protect their children. In general sense, Black parents described their parenting styles as strict in nature and generally have less tolerant attitudes towards their children especially in situations where they exhibit unacceptable behaviours. Philip, an Ethiopian father, insists that it is the obligation of children to learn good manners. He therefore hardly entertains inappropriate behaviours of his children. Philip teaches and shapes his children to behave responsibly at home and at school:

> "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 misbehaviour 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 situations. She is strict with issues of education as she believes it is the avenue for improving their lives while she overlooks other mistakes:

> "How is different, I think I am a little bit more relaxed sometimes and sometimes I am more strict. 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 ones 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]

Rhones, a Ghanaian parent, also ascribes to a parenting style that is a combination of authoritarian and permissive styles. While she creates an atmosphere of open dialogue, there are also clear boundaries that she sets for her child:

> "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]

Sally, a Nigerian parent, also shared a parenting style that replicates that of Rhones and Hannah. Although she allows room for dialogue with her son, she sets clear boundaries for him. When his son crosses those boundaries, she does not hesitate to instill responses that teach his son that actions have consequences. For Sally, her willingness to permit his son to exercise his freedom openly does not overlook moments where she has to enforce certain disciplinary measures when he falters:

> "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]

Although Black parents consistently describe their parenting styles as accommodating, dialoguing and offering freedom of choices to their children, they also suggest that where necessary, they are willing to limit their children's freedom to decide for themselves. It therefore begs the question whether when Black parents say they want their children to have freedom and confidence to make their own choices, they actually meant that freedom is not a blank cheque. In our study, we were interested in what motivates Black parents to adopt parenting styles that in many ways can be described as authoritarian. Black parents offered several reasons that inform and shape their parenting practices. The discussion that follows reveals some of their responses.

6.1. What motivates Black parenting practices?

There are a variety of factors that mediate the Black parents' use of particular parenting styles. Although factors vary, they can be grouped into three sub-themes: (1). Modeling from one's parents (2). The influence of religion (3). The influence of racism.

6.1.1. Modeling from one's parents

There is a saying among Akans of Ghana that "*opanin na obi nye bi da, yen nyinaa aye abofra da*" loosely translates, "Although we are not all adults, we were once children." This saying in many ways reflects how some Black parents adopt their parenting styles. We noted in our study that some Black parents model their parenting styles from what they learned from their parents. For these Black parents, their current statuses in life in some way vindicate their parents' style of parenting. In that sense, modeling best parenting practices must start from what they received from their parents. Martha, a Nigerian-Canadian parent, who has lived in Canada for the past twenty-seven (27) years, believes that her parenting practices are motivated by the successful ways she was raised as a child. As a child growing up in Nigeria, Martha recalls the value of discipline and strict parenting practices that instilled virtues and high moral standards in her. Now as a mother, she feels obliged to raise her children in the same way she was raised. Martha believes her upbringing in Nigeria has contributed to her becoming a responsible adult; therefore, it is appropriate for her to use the same strategy of parenting on her children. She therefore raised her children in strict authoritarian environment with particular emphasis in discipline:

"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 [parents] instill in me, I was able to use that to raise my daughter." [Martha, Interview, 05/20/2016]

Naomi, a Ghanaian parent, corroborates with Martha. She also remembers how she was raised in Ghana and has applied similar strategies in raising her children. She too is a disciplinarian, something she sometimes believes brings tensions between her and her spouse who had different parenting experiences:

Definitely and I'm married to somebody on the other hand, who had a completely different experience… the parents were also very much involved in their children life but they allowed them to do whatever they wanted so he finds me to be too much of a disciplinarian and so sometimes it's a problem yeah, but definitely it's has impacted my parenting style, And I find this generation difficult to deal with. [Naomi, 04/05/2016]

However, not all Black parents in our study are willing to raise their children in the same way they were raised. Rhones, for instance, wants to raise her children differently from how she was raised in Ghana. This is largely because she believes her children are living in a different cultural environment with different opportunities that needs different training methods to bring the best in them:

"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…But I try as much as possible to do my best for every child" [Rhones, Interview, 05/07/2016]

Although Rhones claims her parenting strategies is a modification of what she receives from her parents because she wants her children to have more liberty than she got, it is also interesting to note that her modification did not completely shun authoritarian tendencies. As we have noted earlier, Rhones did not allow her children to sleep at their friends' home although she allows her children's friends to sleep in her house. We noted from the rest of the interview with Rhones that her claim to flexibility in fact eschewed more towards parental strategies that are not entirely different from what she received from her parents. Another Ghanaian parent, Solomon, who was raised in a disciplined environment in Ghana tries to amend his parenting strategies to conform to the Canadian child protection laws and policies:

And there is no way you can mess around in the hall and you hear dad is coming; I have to get mute and find a shelter to keep yourself. But all around it wasn't bad because they gave us the discipline we needed to have. It moulded us in a way to become who we are today. …As I came here I realised 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. [Solomon Interview, 05/23/2016]

Although Solomon tries to raise his children to conform the Canadian laws and policies, he also noted in the later part of the interview —some of which will be cited — that the Canadian racist system does not give Blacks the same opportunities and privileges available to Whites. Within that context, his parenting style partly prepares and arms his children with tools for survival. The question whether Solomon can raise his children within the Canadian children protection laws and guidelines and still arm them with knowledge, skills, and tools to survive anti-Black racism.

6.1.2. Religion

Most participants stated that religion plays strong roles in their lives including their parenting practices. Some of the Christians among the participants quoted the Biblical phrase of "spare the rod and spoil the child" as justification for spanking their children which they did not see as constituting an abuse. For instance, Jackson, a Ghanaian Black parent, suggested that religion informs his way of parenting. In many ways Jackson relies on the biblical principles to raise his children in ways he understands and interprets the Bible:

"I think my religion shapes my style of parenting. Yeah my religion shapes my style of parenting because as a Christian, I believe in the biblical principle of raising a child and that is the way our children have been raised you know. They have been raised according to our faith and religious beliefs." [Jackson, Interview, 05/16/2016]

Naomi, another Ghanaian parent also talked about how her parenting practices are grounded on the Bible. Like Jackson, Naomi wants her children to live a life in accordance to what is in the Bible. She reminds her children about the importance of the sixth commandment in Exodus 20:12 "Honour father and your mother, that your days may

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be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you." For Naomi, the honoring in the sixth commandment implies children respecting their parents:

> "Yeah definitely because …the Bible says as a Christian and a closely practicing one. I always remember the things that the Bible says about parenting that number one teach a child the way he [or she] should go so when he [or she] grows he wouldn't depart so a lot of time when I'm actually talking I'm trying to bring up a lot of Bible principles to what I'm telling them … I remind them of the things that the Bible says about respecting your parents, honoring them if you want long life, if you want prosperity, if you want blessing." [Naomi, Interview 05/04/2016]

What is not clear is whether Naomi thinks the "respect" implies children should not have freedom to disagree with their parents. Dorcas, another Ghanaian parent also speaks about how the Bible guides her parenting practices. Like Naomi, Dorcas draws on the Bible's concept of discipline to guide her parenting style:

> "The Bible says the child that God loves He disciplines so as children of God when we go contrary to the stipulated standard God disciplines us so disciplining your children as a Christian is not something that is not acceptable within the Christian community but you have to do it in a way that the child would know that is because of the love you have for them you don't want them to go wayward you want a better future for them so after disciplining them you have bring them closer to you, you don't just cast them away for you." [Dorcas, Interview 05/17/2016]

Although Dorcas did not outline in details what Bible's concept of discipline means to her. However, if we are to judge by some of the Biblical texts on discipline such as Proverbs 13:24 —"Whoever spares the rod hates their children, but the one who loves their children is careful to discipline them" and Proverbs 22: 15 "Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far away" — then they do not exclude physical punishment and other forms of punitive measures. This therefore begs the question whether Dorcas was referencing the Bible's position of discipline metaphorically or literally? Kelvin, a Jamaican parent was clearer in his explanation about how the Bible informs his parenting practices. Like Dorcas, Jackson, and Naomi, Kelvin also spoke highly about how his religion has influenced not only how he raises his children but also how to relate to them. Kelvin also reference the biblical text "spoil the rod and spoil the child" as an important text that guides his parenting strategies. However, unlike Dorcas that left us second-guessing her interpretation of the Bible, Kelvin was clear that he understands the "spare the rod, spoil the child" text in the bible as a metaphor to mean taking responsible actions which include soft spanking intended to get his children's attention when they go wrong:

> "A lot and in the reverse way as well. For example, if you go to Bible, the Bible will tell you should not spare the rod and spoil the child. But that doesn't mean it ever said you should use the rod and kill a child. So I believe in discipline using that form of discipline but not to hurt or destroy any children. So you know in a more sense I do know how to capitalize that to get around and deal with that." [Kelvin, Interview, 05/22/2016]

A couple of Black parents, however, indicated that religion had no influence on their parenting practices. Ruby, a Nigerian parent claimed that her perspective on religion had changed due to her scholarly research as a criminology student. She thus has doubts about the importance of religion in parenting:

> "Well now because of who I am 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]

In general, the majority of Black parents acknowledged that religion plays pivotal role in their parenting practices. Religion however remains nemesis for Black parents. Sometimes the strict interpretations and applications of selected texts from religious books by some Black parents has resulted in the intervention of Child Welfare agency workers.

6.1.3. Racism

Another theme that emerged in our study is how the perception of racism in Canada affects and shapes Black parenting practices. Some Black parents have had first-hand experiences of racism or heard friends and relatives encounter it. Considering the sometimes pernicious effects of such racism, Black parents raise their children in ways to assuage the impact of racism. Indeed, Chipungu and Bent-Goodley (2004) have noted that race and culture play an important role in the development of Black children in White society. They further note children from the early age of 2 years become aware of skin differences and as they grow older this knowledge even become more pronounce as they become fully aware of the racial inequities in society. In view of that many Black parents in our study have adopted parenting strategies that orient their children to understand and know how to respond and navigate the complex world of anti-Black racism. Some Black parents, as part of their parenting strategies, encourage their children to rise above average performances in every facet of their lives if they are to be at par with average White counterparts who are beneficiaries of White privilege. Jackson received this message from his parents as an adolescent when he first arrived in Canada. After several years in Canada, Jackson recognizes the significance of this message and tries to remind his children that their good performances will not be enough to guarantee their successes in Canada because their black skin-colour puts them at a disadvantage position. In visceral anti-Black racism context, Black children have to be the best at what they do before they will be even recognized as good:

> "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." [Jackson, Interview, 05/16/2016]

Harriet shares the view of Jackson. She also believes that Black children are not treated fairly and the only way Black parents can effectively prepare their children for institutional anti-Black racism is to teach them to avoid being an average in what they do. For Harriet, Black children are confronted with certain societal expectations that oftentimes are not required of White children. She therefore reminds her children to live to certain high standard that will make it difficult for anybody to discriminate against them. Although Harriet consider such expectation as unfair for Black children, she argues it is the reality of being Black in Canada:

> "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. 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." [Harriet, Interview, 05/26/2016]

It appears that as a way of preparing their children to face systemic anti-Black racism, some Black parents put undue pressure on their children to rise above the average. This is more pronounce in the area of education where some Black parents even try to determine the career programs for their children. This approach sometimes brings tension between Black children and their parents with the former accusing the latter of being overbearing.

Not only in the area of education that Black parents have tried to prepare their children for systemic racism. We also noted that some Black parents even try to impose certain dress code on their children in order to avoid being racially-profiled in public spaces. Hannah, a Trinidad & Tobago parent, encourages her son of a mixed-race background to dress in particular way to avoid racial profiling. Hannah cautions her son from growing beard for fear that such identity can mistake him for an Arab or a Middle-Eastern male:

> "My children are mixed so they tend to be Mulatto type coloured in fact my son does not look Black at all. He looks more Arab and so I tend to, I am more fearful because he looks Arab that he will be discriminated against because of what is going on in the Middle East right. So anytime I call him, when he tries to leave a beard I say shave it; don't put his hair in a ponytail and all that. Because I fear he looks more Arab than Black. Either way it is still racism right." [Hannah, Interview, 05/27/2016]

Of course, Hannah did not see anything wrong with being an Arab or appearing like a Middle Eastern person. However, her concerns are rooted in ongoing Islamophobic and racist targeting of Middle Eastern and Arab bodies in Euro-American/Canadian society especially post 9/11. Indeed, Wilkins (2009), Naber (2006), Moisi (2010), and Fekete (2006) have written extensively about mainstream culture of sanctioned institutional racist and Islamophobic sentiments in Euro-American/Canadian society that position Arab, Muslim, Middle-Eastern body as something to be feared, surveilled, and where necessary harmed in the name of national security. As a caring parent, Hannah does not want her son to fall victim of the malicious Islamophobic and racist campaign against Middle Eastern people, and therefore discourages her son from dressing in ways that would mistake his identity as a Middle Eastern person. Related to dress code, another Black parent, Wilson of Trinidad and Barbados' heritage, also spoke about the importance of dressing to young Black men and women. In his case, he intentionally enrolled his children into a Catholic school because of the standard dress code in Catholic schools in Toronto. For Wilson, by sending his children to a Catholic school he helped eliminate any potential racial profiling they may encounter because of their dressing. More importantly, his children will also avoid materialistic culture that sways Black children to dress a particular way because they want to be accepted by their friends and colleagues:

> I sent my kids to a catholic school as a protection (Both interviewer and interviewee laugh at it) of course it did, I sent my kids to a catholic school. My eldest son and it was purposeful. One, I thought to myself that I didn't want my kids to fall into the materialistic ways that kids in public schools are swayed by. Sorry but you are all in the same uniform. Those stereotypes within the system and from the teachers are all eliminated. Because of the same clothes. So already I was thinking just from your dressing, your appearance, am goanna eliminate any biases [Wilson, Interview, 05/18/2016]

Still on the issue of preparing Black children to deal with systemic racism, we noted that some Black parents were also particular in how their children conduct themselves before people in authority especially before law enforcement officers. For instance, Solomon, having experienced racism in the past in Canada, reminds his children to know how they conduct themselves in public especially how they talk to those in authority:

> Anytime I talk to my kids, when you go out there be very mindful of the way you behave. When they [police officers] stop you, don't pick up quarrel with them. Whatever they ask you show them and go your way. It doesn't take anything from you. It is kind of painful but that is what thing we live in, so take it all leave it. [Solomon, Interview 05/23/2016]

Naomi also reiterates the importance of teaching Black children about how they should conduct themselves in front of law enforcement officers. In the opinion of Naomi, the way her children respond to her authority at home can be used as a predictor to the way they will respond to people in authority at public places. She therefore inserts her authority at home as a way of preparing her children for the world out there:

> We raise out children letting them know that learn is better respect authority because out there if you go out and try to talk back you know the law enforcement officer are talking to you or you would get yourself killed or you would go to the school system you want to challenge teachers you would get yourself you know dismissed because we realize that the system is not that tolerant and has opened to our children and so training home is a way to prepare them for the reality out there. [Naomi, Interview 05/04/2016]

We also noted that frequent media coverage of shooting of young Black men by law enforcement officers or Black-on-Black crime, as well as the general media's mischaracterization of young Black men and women as quintessential evil have influenced ways some Black parents raise their children. We noted that some Black parents put early curfew on their children to ensure their safety and security. Such parents do not allow their children to leave the house at the particular time. Marcus, a Trinidad and Tobago parent, told us stories about how some Black parents who decided not to allow their children to leave the house at early as 8.00 p.m. for fear of their safety and security:

> I would hear parents …Black parents…making comments to me where their Black boys are concerned by saying I'm not gonna allow my son to go out at night after 8 o'clock because I'm afraid for his safety if he's met by police or I'm not gonna allow my daughter to go with a group of friends to this event because I'm afraid that the group may be painted with the same brush [Marcus, Interview, 05/09/2016]

In all, hidden forms of racism have influenced different ways Black parents raise their children. For many Black parents racism informs how they raise their children in order to prepare them for any potential challenge they may encounter in society. Unfortunately, such parenting practices on many occasions have warranted tensions between Black parents and Black children that sometimes get the intervention of Child Welfare Agencies' workers. So far we have seen Black parents' understanding of effective parenting. We have also heard their preferred parenting styles and most importantly, the rationale for adopting their preferred parenting styles. In our next discussion, we are exploring how Child Welfare Agencies responded to Black parenting practices.

7. Responses of Child Welfare Services to Black parenting style

Child welfare agencies such as the Children's Aid Society (CAS), the child protection organization in Toronto, 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, which are incongruous with Black parenting practices. In considering the various forms of discrimination and prejudices that manifest and prevail in Child Welfare settings, it can be argued that cultural racism reigns as a dynamic phenomenon under which individual and institutional racism flourishes. In many cases, we noted that Child welfare workers, irrespective of their personal and professional experiences, are more often ill-equipped to recognize,

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accept, and work with the child-rearing strategies of Black parents. In the study, Black parents talked about the tensed relationship between them and Child Welfare Agencies because of the unwillingness of the latter to adjust its practice models to accommodate their unique cultural and racial conditions.

Jackson laments that the Child Welfare Agencies that are supposed to be a supporting institution to Black families appear not to have racial and cultural understanding of the population they are supposed to serve. For Jackson, despite the fact that culture influence ways people understand the world and act within including how they raise their children, Children Aid Society (CAS) workers mostly have minimal understanding of Blacks' cultural and racial experiences. In view of that CAS workers most often misunderstand and misinterpret the cultural and racial intent of Black parenting practices:

> "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 [Child Welfare Agencies] not to know what our culture is but makes judgment based on how [they] interpret our culture in the society is what is causing the big problem that we have." [Jackson, Interview, 05/16/2016]

We noted that cultural and racial misunderstandings account for sometimes the charges of abuse and neglect leveled against Black parents. For instance, had it not been the intervention of Olivia, a Black social worker working with CAS, the normal practice of shaving African girls' hair would have resulted in an African parent being charged with child abuse. According Olivia, who was a key informant, an African Canadian mother shaved off her daughter's hair. When her daughter went to school, her colleagues made fun of her, which drew tears from the child. When the issue came to the attention of the school principal, she alerted CAS about potential child abuse. Fortunately, Olivia, a Black social worker, who originates from a similar culture where shaving girls' hair is an accepted practice, was around when the file was called for discussion. She has to explain to her White colleagues, who were ready to rule the incident as an abuse, that shaving girls' hair is not an abuse in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa. In fact, the practice is done to protect children from lice infestation. Of course, parents can be educated to modify this practice in Canada where lice infestation is not common. However, if CAS workers are not culturally and racially informed about the parenting practices of communities they serve, then they cannot relate to some of their racial and cultural practices:

> "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 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." [Olivia, Interview, 05/09/2016]

The cultural misunderstanding also goes both ways. In some cases, some Black parents also fail to recognize that the "new homeland" (Canada) has a different system that is not always congruent with ways things are done in their countries of origin, and therefore need to amend their parenting strategies to meet the new demands. Take the case of Ruby, a Nigerian mother. She is a single mother raising three children age between 2 years and 8 years by herself. She one day left two children 4 years and 8 years in the house while she went out with the youngest one to quickly pick a grocery from a nearby shop that is approximately 15 min walk from her house. Before leaving, she called her neighbor to frequently check on her children while she was away. In her absence, somebody called the house and one of her daughters picked the call. When the caller realized that her two daughters were home alone with no adult supervision, the person immediately alerted CAS. Ruby was therefore surprised when she received a visitation from CAS worker to investigate her about the allegedly child's neglect. For Ruby, she did not understand the gravity of her offence because she presumes that when adults are nearby, children playing alone cannot constitute child's neglects:

> "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 neighbor. 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]

In Ruby's defense although still inexcusable: in Africa, there is a saying that it takes a village to raise a child. This means that the child belongs to the whole community and raising a child is a communal responsibility and not something only biological or adopted parents are supposed to do alone. Indeed, there is nothing unusual for children to be left wandering alone in a typical African village. The assumption is that the child belongs to the community and every adult in the community has an obligation to participate in the child's supervision. This may be the rationale that informed Ruby's action of leaving her children alone unsupervised. However, Ruby also forgot that she is currently living in a different cultural environment that discourages leaving children to 'strangers.' Although CAS cannot be faulted for investigating Ruby, this example also raises questions about Child Welfare Agencies' strategies. Is there mechanism in place within Child Welfare Agencies to educate newly arrived immigrants about different parenting expectations in Canada? Are there resources devoted to educating immigrant families about the parenting laws in Canada? It appears that in many cases parents become aware of the existence of such different requirements to parenting when they are caught breaking them.

In many cases, the absence of cultural and racial consideration in the assessment process of Child Welfare Agencies puts at risk many Black parenting practices that are culturally and racially incongruent to Canadian lifestyle. We raise this point fully aware that 'cultural competency training' is included in the training of CAS workers. In fact, in many cases, CAS workers have been told to consider the cultural background of parents under investigation. The limit to cultural competency model is that it ignores the reality that the Ontario's *Child and Family Services Act* (CFSA), the child protection laws, are not culturally and racially neutral. In fact CFSA is rooted in White hegemonic cultural values, knowledge, and worldviews. Put it differently, asking Black parents regardless of their different cultural backgrounds to follow CFSA, the CAS is literally asking Black parents to model White hegemonic ways of parenting. Therefore, no amount of cultural competency training will be sufficient to support Black parents so far as CFSA is rooted in White hegemonic cultures, values and worldviews. As Ruby rightly suggests, the Child Protection laws and the manner they are applied in assessing Black families give zero-tolerance to unique cultural conditions of Black families. In fact, Black parents' parenting practices are often put under gaze because of the (mis)perception that Black parents do not raise their children well. Dorcas agrees with Ruby. She also argues that there is anti-Black racist assumptions about Black parenting practices and this often makes the Black parenting practices

the subject of investigation:

> " 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 argues that racism plays a role in how Black parenting practices often becomes the subject of investigation in Canada. Although some will attribute this to cultural misunderstanding about the unique Black parenting practices, Philip insists the existence of racist assumption in Canada that anything different from what is done in Canada is aberrant fuels uncompromising response to Black parenting practices:

> "I cannot differentiate if it is a misunderstanding; I think already it is [racism] 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." [Philip, Interview, 05/13/2016]

Philip points us to the manner in which the culture of White supremacist thinking is deployed in Canada to create the racial "other" as inferior and devoid of human values.

Yet what remains problematic is the manner in which White European cultures, values, and worldviews fade into Canadian laws and policies. This has become more pronounce in White Canadian standards of parenting in Toronto, also called CFSA, which in many cases put Black parenting practices at risk. Jackson agrees with Philip. He too argues that the Child Welfare system does not support Black parenting practices. If anything, Whiteness is enacted within Child Welfare Agency at the expense of Black families. Jackson is more concern because all the Black children he knows were taken into Child Welfare system did not have better outcomes. Thus, in his view, if there is a system that is more eager to take Black children from their parents yet does not offer the children better futures, then such system is doing more harm than good:

> "Mostly, yes. I think you know the system [Child Welfare Agency] 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 [Child Protection Services in Toronto] 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]

Something needs to be clear here. We recognize that Child Welfare Agencies' workers are mandated to uphold the right of children to be free from violence and threat of violence. We agree that in some cases to achieve this mandate will mean removing children and placing them in foster care. However, when there are increased rates of arrest and conviction, school dropouts, homelessness, and mental health challenges among children coming from foster cares (Bartholet, 2011; Finney et al., 2011; Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, 2011; Roberts, 2002), yet the Child Welfare Agencies are reluctant to overhaul its system, it leaves individuals like Jackson to wonder if the agency has racist agenda against Black families.

8. Discussions

The operation of Children's Aid Societies (CAS) and the provision of child protection services in Ontario, Canada are bound under the *Child and Family Services Act* (CFSA) to protect children who are at risk of harm or neglect by their caregivers (CFSA, 1990). As outlined in section 15 of the CFSA, Children's Aid Societies (CAS) are responsible for investigating allegations of need for protective intervention services in support of the care and wellbeing of children living in Ontario. In addition to the CFSA, the investigation of and response to allegations of child abuse are guided by Ontario's Child Protection Standards (2016), the Child Protection Tools Manual (2016), and the Ontario Child Welfare Eligibility Spectrum (2016).

First, the Ontario Child Protection Standards (2016) is designed to "promote consistently high quality, responsive service delivery to children and families receiving child protection services from Children's Aid Societies" (p. 5). These guidelines outline practice standards relevant to all cases of child protection service delivery in the province. Used in combination with the Child Protection Tools Manual (2016) and the Ontario Child Welfare Eligibility Spectrum (2016), Ontario's Child Protection Standards (2016) are said to provide a strengths-based approach to decision-making and service planning. Second, the Ontario Child Protection Tools Manual (2016) exists as a companion to the Ontario Child Protection Standards (2016) document to assist child protection workers in the assessment and screening of referral information. The manual provides workers with a variety of tools including the Ontario Safety Assessment Tool to guide professionals in determining the present level of danger being posed to a child upon assessment. This tool is the primary decision-making aide in determining the most appropriate response to a child protection referral. Using this tool, workers are expected to investigate an assortment of key factors, including child vulnerability, protective factors, safety risks, and pattern of previous child welfare involvement. According to the Ontario Child Protection Tools Manual (2016), a comprehensive analysis and weighing of these factors are completed to determine the degree of risk present in the home, and thus, the type of intervention services required.

While Ontario's child welfare system has been recognized for recent structural change, legislative amendments, enhancement of service protocols, and expansion of available services (Dumbrill, 2006; Wegner-Lohin, Kyte, & Trocmé, 2014), concern remains over child welfare service delivery and affiliated outcomes for vulnerable children and families living in Canada. Nico Trocmé, one of Canada's leading researchers in the field of child welfare, has described Ontario's child protection system as "fragmented" and has called for a clearer picture of how the system is functioning on a provincial level (Contenta, 2016). Although there are strengths to the Differential Response Model being employed in Ontario and the range of services being provided to families involved with the child welfare system, Trocmé asserts that the system itself has become so decentralized that no one has a sound understanding of how it is functioning (Contenta, 2016).

Wright (2012) notes that difficulties can arise when the best interests of children are determined and decided upon without comprehensive consideration of parents' parenting standards or their ability to provide care to their children. With respect to Black populations in Toronto, the child welfare paradigm in Canada does not include cultural and racial practices as a standard of care for Black children. As Black parents suggested in their responses, their unique parenting styles that are different from the often-practice authoritative and permissive parenting styles common among White Canadians, are problematized by the Child Welfare system. This particular finding echoes the findings in One Vision One Voice's (2016) report. Although some Black parents

attribute this to cultural misunderstanding, some also insist that there is White hegemonic understanding of parenting that renders other forms of parenting practices as aberrant. As One Vision One Voice (2016) notes, the bar for marking Black parenting practices is lower because of the anti-Black racist assumptions among White Canadians that Black parenting styles are threatening to Black children's wellbeing. Not surprisingly, there is hypervisibility of Black parenting practices within Canadian service delivery system.

Elsewhere in Kobayashi and Johnson (2007), they point out that despite Canada being a pioneer in adopting multiculturalism, discrimination occurs in subtle invisible ways which render it futile any formal interventions to address discrimination. The general responses from Black parents suggest that the Canada's multiculturalism is a façade because Canada is still considered and treated as a society made up of solely people of European descent and in so doing renders non-White groups as outsiders. Not surprisingly, there continues to be tension between values of equity and impartiality against racist principles and thoughts. As Henry and Tator (2006) rightly note, racism in democracy impinges on Canadian philosophical environment in concealed ways as race is considered insignificant in liberal societies. Indeed, Whiteness permeates the entire fabrics of Canadian daily lives that it tends to be considered incontrovertible practice other than one created as a result of social relations. The paradoxical nature of racism is highlighted by the stories Black parents have been sharing about their parental experiences with Child Welfare Agencies. Clearly, the social construction of blackness as quintessential evil arguably heightens the cultural visibility of Black families and thus contributes to the increased probability of Black children being overrepresented in foster care in Toronto.

Although Bonnie and Pon (2015) critique the 2007 Child Protection Standards in Ontario and Ontario Child Protection Tools Manual for being race-neutral, our study findings suggest otherwise. We noted from responses of Black parents that these documents of Child Welfare Agencies are not race-neutral, rather they are rooted in White hegemony. As Gair, Miles, Savage, and Zuchowski (2015) rightly note, overreliance on Euro-Western ideas of parenting, despite its apparent incongruity with the parenting experiences of non-White groups such as Black families, implicates Child Welfare Agencies of institutional racism. Black parents are clear in their responses in this study that they understand and know the importance of children to families and the society at large as well as their responsibility as parents to shape the growth and development of their children to be responsible members of society. However, their different ways of parenting which are tailored to assuage the impact of racism and promote ancestral connections bring them into conflict with Child Welfare agencies because the laws and polices guiding the Child Welfare Agencies are White.

9. Conclusion

Child rearing systems and practices are shaped by culturally and racially-based family strategies as well as access to economic resources and support opportunities. As such, cultural and racial variances set the stage for diverse approaches to child care and parenting practices which must be consulted and understood in the context of the delivery of Child Welfare Services (Hunter, Pearson, Ialongo, & Kellam, 1998). It is critical therefore that the concept of appropriate and effective parenting practices be conceptualized and operationalized in ways that are both culturally and racially specific and sensitive. Black parents' narratives in this study clearly show that their unique cultural and racial conditions require a different parenting approach that may not be congruent to what is popularly accepted to Child Welfare Agencies. However, for Black parents, their parenting practices are inherently informed and linked to their daily struggles and challenges of anti-Black racism in Canada. They raise their children in ways that will prepare them with skills and knowledge to survive in anti-Black racism context. Black parents also argue that Child Welfare Agencies' workers have issues with Black parenting practices because the agencies rely on laws, regulations, and policy guidelines that are based on White hegemonic cultures, values, and worldviews.

Therefore, moving forward, the policies, regulations, and practice guidelines of Child Welfare Systems need to be challenged and revised in ways that acknowledge the pluralistic nature of Canada. Most importantly, Child Welfare Agencies' workers need to understand the collective racist history and struggles of Black parents and how they filter through their parenting practices. In the end, the frosty relationship that impairs meaningful intervention plans could be averted.

We acknowledge that in research of this nature, sampling the voices of Black and White parents for comparative reference would have enriched the study findings. However, this was not the goal of the study. In this study, we were interested to explore the ways Black parents understand and practice “effective parenting” and how their knowledge is different or similar to that of Child Welfare Agencies. Therefore, our analyses was on Black parenting practices as they related to Child Welfare System's policies, laws, and regulation. In our future research, we hope to sample the voices of White parents and parents of other racial backgrounds for comparative analyses. Again, in our recruitment process, we relied on our local contacts in the Black communities as well as recruitment flyers posted in some key locations (churches, mosques, community centres) often patronize by the Black community. This means that individual Blacks that do not fall within the radar of our local contacts as well as do not patronize these locations were excluded in the study. Besides, the limited funds available as well as limited time associated with the grant implies that we could expand our sampling size to include many Black parents some of which were living within/without the Toronto communities. These are limitations of the study that should be taken into consideration when reading the study findings. Having said that these limitations do not minimize the study findings. In fact, our study findings corroborate with similar study done by One Vision One Voice which sampled over 800 Black parents across Ontario. There are other similar studies done among other racial and ethnic groups in Canada, many of which have been cited in the present essay that corroborate our study findings.

It is therefore necessary that the Child Welfare Agencies take the appropriate steps to abreast itself with the cultural and racial nuances that inform Black parenting. Although the Steering Committee in the One Vision One Voice's (2016) report recommends an amendment of *Child and Family Services Act* to acknowledge “the historical significance of African Canadians in Canada's history and Canada's long history of anti-Black racism” (p.91), we are asking for a further steps to break down the White hegemony in the Act itself. Treating Child Family Services Act and other policy document of Child Welfare Agencies as race-neutral and colour-blind documents does not only endorse epistemic violence these documents perpetuate on Blacks and other people of colour but also does conceal that these documents are embedded in Whiteness.

Disclosure statement

The authors report no conflicts of interest. The authors alone are responsible for the content and writing of the article. There's no financial/personal interest or belief that could affect our objectivity.

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